

Graduate School of North American Studies

Preliminary Academic Rules and Regulations

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1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1.1. Aims and Objectives

- (1) The Graduate School of North American Studies aims at preparing highly qualified students of special promise for scholarly careers in universities, research institutions and other science related organizations within the following fields/disciplines: History, Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Cultural and Literary Studies. Drawing on this disciplinary expertise, students are also prepared for leadership positions in politics, social organizations, international organizations, the media, and the arts.
- (2) The Graduate School of North American Studies is designed to offer the best students an opportunity to specialize in a field of choice, while at the same time providing an in-depth and interdisciplinary training. Graduate candidates will formulate and conduct the research on their own but in close consultation with their Advising Committee.
- (3) It is the objective of the Graduate School to provide excellent theoretical and methodological research training of the highest international standards within the fields of study while at the same time promoting independent research by offering individualized research training and providing research opportunities in American/Canadian research institutes, archives and libraries.
- (4) Apart from scientific expertise, the research training of the Graduate School is dedicated to mediate key qualifications such as didactic and teaching skills as well as essential management skills pertinent to the students' future academic careers as well as leadership positions.
- (5) Admitted candidates are to successfully complete their dissertation by the end of the 3-year program.
- (6) In order to realize these goals the faculty members of the Graduate School of North American Studies elect a Director of Graduate Studies and an Executive Board consisting of three members of the faculty, the Administrative Coordinator of the doctoral program, and one student representative. The Executive Board is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies. It elects a Deputy Director of Graduate Studies who is a member of the board. The Executive Board appoints an ombudsman/ woman who will participate in the board's meetings in an advisory function.

1.2. Research Areas

The Graduate School of North American Studies promotes research on:

- North American History
- North American Politics
- North American Economy
- North American Society
- North American Cultures
- North American Literature

Under the general theme "The Challenges of Freedom: The American Century and Beyond" the following research areas will be investigated:

- American Exceptionalism in a Changing World
- Nation, Ethnicity, Diaspora, Borderlands
- The Conservative Revolution and the New Social Movements
- The Role of Religion in American Public Life
- Art, Aesthetics and American Culture
- The Struggle Over the Public Sphere: The Media and Cultural Narratives
- Neo-Liberalism as an Economic and Cultural Paradigm
- Globalization and the "American Centuries"

Research areas will be reviewed after five years, and necessary adaptations will be implemented.

2. ADMISSION

The Graduate School publishes the brochure "Grants and Curricular Requirements at the Graduate School for North American Studies." The brochure includes departmental profiles and the research activities of the academic staff, and specifies the required qualifications of potential candidates. All this information is available on the Institute's Web site. The Web site also contains all relevant information on general rules and regulations of doctoral degrees that can be obtained at the Graduate School (cf. 5.1)

In order to render the selection procedure properly competitive and comparative, and the application of the selection criteria thoroughly transparent, all admissions to the program will be made once a year during the annual spring campaign.

Applications must be sent to the Administrative Coordinator of the Graduate School before January 31. The application files are distributed to the departments in mid-February. The short-listing committee meets in the second half of March. The interviews are held at the John F. Kennedy Institute in early/mid-April. The admission committee makes its final decision by the end of April.

2.1. Formal Requirements

- (1) Students with an excellent MA degree or equivalent (e.g. German Diplom or Magister) in either American Studies or one of the disciplines represented at the Kennedy Institute are eligible to apply to the program.
- (2) Enrollment in the doctoral program requires fluent English proficiency at an advanced level (as specified under 2.2.6. Proof of language skills).

2.2. Application Materials

Applicants are requested to submit the documents described below:

- (1) Completed application form.
- (2) *Statement of Purpose*: The Statement of Purpose should be in English, no longer than three pages and provide a clear picture of the applicant's academic and professional background and interests. It should also describe how the interests and future research plans match with the doctoral program of JFK Graduate School and the offerings and expertise of the cooperating partners.
- (3) *Outline of Dissertation Project*: Applicants are not expected to have a final dissertation proposal upon application but are asked to send a preliminary outline of a dissertation project. The outline encompasses 10 pages at the maximum and should be written in English. The outline should include a short summary of the subject in question (referring to the state of research and highlighting theoretical and empirical debates on the topic and deficits in the literature that the dissertation would address), objectives and methods of the project as well as a short bibliography of recent research within the given field.
- (4) A *curriculum vitae* in English.
- (5) *Two Recent Letters of Reference*: Letters of reference should be sent in a sealed envelope along with the application materials. If referees prefer to send letters directly to the program, they should do so before the application deadline. Letters of reference will be accepted in either English or German.
- (6) *Certified Copies of Earned Degrees*: Copies of higher education entrance qualification (e.g. Abitur, High School Diploma), copies of original university degree (M.A., Diplom, Magister or equivalent). If the required university degree has not been completed at the time of the application deadline, provisional material, documenting academic performance and achievement (transcripts outlining grades, test certificates or other credentials) will be accepted. Documentation of the final degree has to be submitted by mid April. Foreign degree certificates have to be translated into English or German and officially certified.
- (7) *Proof of Language Skills*: All applicants who are neither native English speakers nor have earned a degree at an university with English as language of instruction are required to submit certification of their English proficiency (minimum of TOEFL scores with 600 on the paper based/ 250 on the computer based/ 100 on the internet based test or equivalent CAE or IELTS scores). Foreign students are expected to attain an intermediate level of German by the end of the 3-year program. International students without German proficiency will be offered German language classes at the Dahlem Research School.
- (8) A *Writing Sample* (e.g. M.A. / Diplom Thesis, an article or seminar paper): writing samples will be accepted in English and German.

2.3. Admission Committee and Admission Procedures

- (1) An admission committee will be constituted for the organization and supervision of the admission procedure.
- (2) The admission committee consists of the Director of Graduate Studies, one faculty member per department, plus one student representative. The committee is chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies or his/her deputy and is assisted by the Administrative Coordinator of the Graduate School.
- (3) Applicants are required to submit documents 1-7 listed in 2.2., by January 31.
- (4) The admission committee selects applicants on the basis of the documents submitted in accordance with 2.2. The selection is determined by the academic qualification and motivation of the candidates as well as by the general match of the dissertation project with the research program of the Graduate School, augmented by the offerings and expertise of cooperating partners.
- (5) Short-listed candidates will be invited to a 30-minute interview. On rare occasions the requirement for a personal interview may be waived and substituted with a telephone interview or other procedures deemed appropriate.
- (6) The designated number of places is awarded by the admission committee in rank order of eligibility.
- (7) Successful applicants will receive written notification of admission and set dates for confirmation of acceptance and enrollment. Places that have not been confirmed by the set date will be offered to the next applicant in accordance to the rank list.
- (8) Once they are accepted, applicants will have to apply to the respective faculties (Promotionsausschüsse der Fachbereiche) of their own academic discipline for official enrollment at the Freie Universität.
- (9) Applicants who are not accepted will be informed with a letter of rejection.
- (10) At all stages of the selection procedure the confidentiality of the evaluation of candidates, and of documents relevant to their evaluation, must be fully respected by the professors and student representatives involved.

2.4. Scholarships and Student Body

The Graduate School provides ten scholarships for 10 admitted students p.a., which will be awarded on a competitive basis during the admissions review process. Scholarships will be awarded for a maximum of three years. Continued funding past the first award year is based upon good progress towards completion of the doctoral degree.

Students with outside funding of external organizations, e.g. foundations, are welcome to apply for associate enrollment in the program if they fulfill the admission requirements.

The Graduate School is highly interested in international representation and encourages international students to apply. In order to ensure an equal balance between male and female students, applications by women are particularly encouraged.

The Administrative Coordinator will assist international students in visa and work permits issues. The Administrative Coordinator will also assist applicants and students with children to find adequate child care.

2.5. Student Status

Student status is automatically granted to all graduates duly registered within the program from the time they join the Graduate School until they defend their thesis. They may participate in all activities (seminar, supervision, etc) in the doctoral program of the Graduate School, and benefit from all student facilities (library, computing facilities etc) provided to researchers at the Freie Universität. Student status lasts 3 years from the date of first registration in the doctoral program. No extension of student status beyond the normal three years limit is allowed except on the basis of extenuating circumstances of a personal or a professional nature which have interfered with a record of good progress and have caused unforeseen delay. In such cases, (i) evidence of such extenuating circumstances, (ii) evidence of the current state of progress of the thesis, (iii) a detailed plan for completion and submission within a specified period of time must be placed before the Admission committee.

Some types of absence from the Graduate School do not count towards the calculation of the three years. These exemptions fall under two general categories:

- (1) Under the category of *leave of absence with grant*, those leaves of absence which are granted on personal grounds are excluded from the calculation of the 3 years. These are m/paternity leave (up to 12 months per child), prolonged illness certificated by a recognized medical practitioner, and other exceptional personal grounds. However, research missions and student exchanges are not excluded from the calculation.
- (2) Under the category of *leave of absence without grant (with suspension of registration period and retention of grant entitlement)* all absences, whether due to compulsory military service or thesis-related *stages* or internships, are excluded from the calculation of the 3 years.

3. THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

3.1. Academic Calendar

The Graduate School offers an appropriate structured program of courses and/or seminars relevant for the disciplines. This program will be proposed by the Executive Board. The content is published by August 1.

The Executive Board establishes an academic calendar, which specifies the start, interruptions and end of the seminar and teaching activities. Research students' presence is required during the period of seminar and teaching activities; exceptional absences of more than one week require written consent granted according to the rules of the Graduate School (see also 2.5). The academic calendar defines the holiday periods.

3.2. Curricular Requirements

Admitted doctoral candidates are expected to obtain at least 180 credits of research training during the 3-year program. These credits will partly be obtained through course work and will include opportunities to acquire key qualifications such as didactic and teaching skills as well as essential management skills pertinent to the students' future academic careers.

The curriculum of the Graduate School consists of the following components:

(1) Course Work

- (a) An interdisciplinary module which consists of three interdisciplinary courses, team-taught by members of at least two different departments of the Graduate School, on the following research areas:
 - I. American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization (Depts. Culture/History);
 - II. Neo-Liberalism, the Conservative Revolution, and the New Social Movements (Depts. Political Science/Economics)
 - III. Religion, Art, and American Culture (Depts. Sociology/Literature)

The aim of these seminars is to provide an interdisciplinary context for individual research of graduate students in any of these research areas. The students will learn to look at problems from different disciplinary perspectives and will be able to get a clearer sense of the strengths and weaknesses of particular disciplinary approaches. The courses will be team-taught and thereby emphasize the multiple methodological and disciplinary approaches of the Graduate School. In this way, graduate students will also be made acquainted with the latest literature, disputes and research questions in the different disciplines. They will thus acquire an interdisciplinary context for their own specialized research.

- (b) *Methodological workshop(s)/research seminar(s)* aim to equip students with the methodological tools for mastering their research within the areas in question (e.g. qualitative/quantitative empirical research methods for the social sciences, applicability and operationalization of relevant theories in the humanities and cultural sciences, refining relevant research skills for all academic fields represented). Guest lecturers may be invited to offer these workshops. Graduate students choose methodological workshops that are relevant to their dissertation project. Courses can be offered in the form of workshops and can be organized to meet the specific research needs of the graduate students.
- (c) *Didactic, management, and writing skills seminars* introduce students to skills relevant to the academic profession. The Graduate School of North American Studies strongly encourages the acquisition of quality teaching skills and the presentation of independent and original research of its students at conferences, workshops, or panel discussion.
- (d) *Colloquia* provide opportunities for the presentation and discussion of the graduate's research in progress in an interdisciplinary forum of faculty and students. They can be organized in the form of a conference or one-day workshop.

(e) *Individual mentoring* by the doctoral advisor and specialists in the graduate's field. This form is designed to discuss the development and progress of the graduate's research and allows for disciplinary exchange with specialists in the field. At the start of the semester, the graduate student is expected to present a tentative reading list and formulate personal intellectual goals for his/her individual study program.

(2) Didactic, Management, and Writing Skills Relevant to Academic Professions

The Graduate School of North American Studies is dedicated to equip its graduate students with didactic, management and writing skills relevant and necessary for their future academic careers. Doctoral candidates

- (a) are required to teach a course on the undergraduate level that is closely related to either the thematic fields of the Graduate School or their dissertation project.
- (b) are expected to present part of their own research on (international) conferences, workshops or panel discussions.

In addition, doctoral students shall either

- (a) be involved in the organization of an annual multidisciplinary conference held at the Kennedy Institute dealing with a broader topic/set of topics that is/are relevant to more than one research areas represented at the Kennedy Institute and through its cooperating partners. The organizing committee, consisting of graduate students, is expected to constitute at the end of the first year. The theme of the conference, list of speakers, and the organization are the sole responsibility of this organizing committee. The organizing committee is encouraged to acquire outside funding for the conference. The Graduate School, its faculty, and the Administrative Director will wholeheartedly support and assist the organizing committee in every possible way.
- (b) be involved in the publication of the conference proceedings. Reference to the Graduate School shall be made in the front pages. The Graduate School, its faculty, and the Administrative Director will wholeheartedly support and assist the publication committee in every possible way.

3.3. Research Opportunity Abroad

Students are encouraged and expected to pursue their dissertation project for at least three months at an American/Canadian institution (archive, university library etc.) in order to conduct essential research or field work. Travel and subsistence grants are available to the students.

3.4. Curricular Distribution

The first three semesters offer an intense study period in which doctoral students will critically assess the fundamental theoretical and methodological tools as well as review the latest research, debates and questions of their area of specialization. During this period, the larger part of the mandatory course work is to be completed and students are expected to have refined their research design. This period also focuses on the

acquisition of management skills relevant for academic professions and didactic and teaching skills.

Beginning with the fourth semester, the primary focus should be on independent dissertation research. Students are expected to pursue their dissertation project for at least three months at an American / Canadian institution (archive, university library etc) in order to conduct essential research or field work.

The last year of the training program will be reserved for teaching and the completion of the dissertation.

Envisaged Curricula Structure per year (Independent Work not listed)

	Curricular Segments		
	Module Interdisciplinary Seminars (15 Credit Points)	Module Research Methods (15 Credit Points)	Module Methods and Skills for Academic Profession (15 Credit Points)
First Year/ Introductory Stage 30 CP for Course Work + 30 CP for Independent Work on Dissertation	I. History/Culture: “American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization” (5 CP) II. Political Science/ Economics: “Neo-Liberalism, Conservative Revolution and New Social Movements” (5 CP)	I. “Introduction to the Theory and Ethics of Research” (5 CP) II. “Advanced Disciplinary Research Methods” (5 CP)	I. “Advanced Writing Skills” (5 CP) II. “Management Skills Relevant to Academic Professions” (5 CP)
Second Year/ Intermediate Stage 15 CP for Course Work + 45 CP for Independent Work on Dissertation <i>Includes stay abroad for research/field work (3 months minimum)</i>	III. Literature/ Sociology: “Religion, Art and American Culture” (5 CP)	III. Seminar/ Colloquium: “Research in Progress” (5 CP)	III. “Didactic Skills” (5 CP)
Third Year/ Final Stage 15 CP for teaching + 45 CP for Independent Work on Dissertation	Teaching one class in the B.A. program of the John F. Kennedy Institute		

4. SUPERVISION AND MENTORING

4.1. Graduate and Dissertation Advisor

Upon enrollment all incoming graduate students will be assigned a faculty member as their Graduate Advisor. The assignment is made in consultation with the faculty member and the student and should reflect the faculty's academic expertise and the student's stated research interest. Ideally, the Graduate Advisor should serve as the Dissertation Advisor. Students should avail themselves of his or her advice, counsel, and supervision. The Dissertation Advisor is responsible for keeping track of the student's academic development and progress. Graduate Advisor and graduate student will enter a learning agreement defining the rights and duties of both parties.

Immediately following orientation each incoming graduate student will be given an appointment with their Graduate Advisor. Students are expected to have reviewed the curricular requirements and announcements and have arrived at a tentative course of study.

The Dissertation Advisor provides the intellectual and pedagogical support framework in which the doctoral student conducts the doctoral work, and advises the research student in setting up a feasible doctoral project within the limits agreed by the Institute. The Dissertation Advisor provides verbal or written comments and evaluates the student's work in a timely manner. He or she monitors progress as documented in the periodical reports supplied by the student. The students should communicate on a regular basis with their advisor, in accordance with an agreed schedule and in light of departmental requirements. During term time, meetings should take place at least once a month, and either the advisor or the researcher should normally be able to make an appointment at short notice. At the end of January of the first year, if either the advisor or the student has misgivings about the supervisory relationship, they should inform the Director of Graduate Studies so that appropriate action can be taken.

At the beginning of each semester students are expected to make an appointment with the Dissertation Advisor to discuss their choice of courses and the progress of the dissertation. Should the graduate students seek further advice and counsel the Dissertation Advisor is expected to make herself/himself available for the mentoring responsibilities she/he has taken up.

4.2. Additional Mentors and Advising Committee

By the end of the first year students are expected to have secured at least one additional Mentor (if Graduate Advisor and Dissertation Advisor are not identical) or two additional Mentors with whom the student has worked. The Graduate Advisor and the Mentors make up the student's individual Advising Committee.

In the case that the original supervisor leaves the Institute prior to the student completing the thesis, arrangements are made to ensure that the student continues to receive adequate supervision.

4.3. Commitment to Supervision and Mentoring

We are deeply committed to provide high standards and individually tailored supervision and mentorship to all our graduate students. If need be, we are dedicated to improve and adjust our supervision and mentoring scheme in order to be in a position to continuously provide the most favorable conditions for successful completion of the doctoral program. Therefore, we will closely monitor the Council of Graduate School's "Ph.D. Completion Project" (<http://www.cgsnet.org/>; <http://www.phdcompletion.org/>) in order to minimize attrition and maximize completion.

4.4. Evaluation

It is the Advising Committee's task to carry out the student's evaluation both at the end of the first and second year. The evaluation is a review and assessment of the graduate student's academic development, progress, and achievement.

Following the consultations among the Advising Committee, students will be sent a written notice apprising them of the quality of the academic development and achievement. The written notice shall include advice and recommendations for their future academic development as well as the dissertation project.

For the first-year evaluation, which has to be completed by August 1:

- The Graduate Advisor will solicit letters of evaluation from each teaching staff with whom the student has worked with.
- Students are required to submit a research design of their dissertation project with special attention to the methodology and feasibility as well as a detailed work plan which has to be approved by the dissertation advisor.

A positive first-year evaluation is the prerequisite for continuing the program.

Exceptionally, direct admission into the second year can be proposed on the basis of academic merits upon a departmental proposal, in accordance with the general aims of the Graduate School.

For the second-year evaluation, which has to be completed by August 1:

- The Dissertation Advisor will solicit letters of evaluation from each teaching staff with whom the student has worked.
- Students are expected to have completed the necessary research for their dissertation projects. They are required to submit a progress report respectively. Students may wish to submit parts of their dissertation.

5. THE DOCTORATE

5.1. General Regulations

Doctoral Degrees in the Graduate School for North American Studies can be obtained in the disciplines of History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, and *Amerikanistik* (American Literary and Cultural Studies). In each case, the "Promotionsordnungen"

(General Rules and Regulations for Doctoral Degrees) of the respective faculties (*Fachbereiche*) of the Freie Universität Berlin are legally binding: History: Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften; Political Science and Sociology: Fachbereich Politik- und Sozialwissenschaften; Economics: Fachbereich Wirtschaftswissenschaft; Amerikanistik (American Literary and Cultural Studies): Fachbereich Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften). English Translations of the general rules and regulations of the respective faculties (*Fachbereiche*) will be placed on the Graduate School's Web site.

5.2. Dissertation

The dissertation should demonstrate the student's mastery of relevant resources and methods and should make an original, genuine, and independent contribution to the knowledge of the field(s). Interdisciplinary dissertations contributing to the knowledge of more than one field are expressly encouraged.

The originality of a dissertation may consist of the discovery of significant new information or principles of organization, the achievement of a new synthesis, the development of new methods or theories, or the application of established methods or theories to new materials.

The dissertation should be written in English.

5.3. Final Examination (Defense / Examination)

Depending on the degree (Dr. phil. / Dr. rer. pol.) chosen by the student, the final examination is either a defense of the dissertation (*Disputation*; Dr. phil.) or a final examination of matters of the discipline as whole (*Rigorosum*; Dr. rer. pol.). Procedures, format, and requirements are stipulated in the respective "Promotionsordnungen" in effect at the Freie Universität Berlin.

The final examination should be held in English.