



**CINEMA & MEDIA STUDIES**

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UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

# Graduate Student Handbook

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## Letter from the Director of Graduate Studies

Welcome to the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Washington. Our commitment to graduate training is a point of pride. In addition to providing high-quality and rigorous academic training, our faculty stress the importance of maintaining robust research programs while gaining extensive teacher training and classroom experience. Our graduate students have had a strong record of attaining graduate fellowships and awards to help support dissertation writing and research. CMS fosters graduate student research through multi-year projects and colloquia on the moving image, Chinese visual culture, television history, feminist writing, and more.

### **How to Use This Handbook:**

This handbook is intended for graduate students in the Cinema and Media Studies MA or PhD Program. Graduate Students enrolled in Comparative Literature Programs are still bound by the policies existing at the time of their matriculation.

Graduate students in Cinema and Media Studies should think of this handbook as both a guide for their path through the program and a reference for answering most questions regarding policy and procedure. Should any discrepancy between the handbook and departmental faculty or staff arise, consult the Director of Graduate Studies.

Blue underlined text should allow readers to jump to the section of the handbook corresponding to the topic in question (e.g. clicking on [The Expected Schedule](#) will bring you to that section of the handbook). In some cases, these links will take readers to webpages outside of the handbook, such as those of the UW Graduate School. If viewing this in Google Docs, readers can also use the "View -> Show Document Outline" from the dropdown menu to get a list of clickable headers in a left hand sidebar.

Students can find forms pertaining to TA assignments, general exams, and other relevant materials on the CMS Canvas Website designed for graduate students in Cinema and Media Studies.

Yomi Braester  
Professor  
Director of Graduate Studies

## Key contacts and administrative roles

### **Department Chair:**

Professor Eric Ames, [eames@uw.edu](mailto:eames@uw.edu), Padelford Hall Room B537

Administrative head of the department. Oversees personnel matters (including ASEs), conducts academic, financial and resource planning for the department including assignment of teaching responsibilities.

### **Associate Chair:**

Associate Professor Stephen Groening, [groening@uw.edu](mailto:groening@uw.edu), Padelford Hall Room B515

Assists the Chair in executing the Department's policies and managing departmental governance. The Associate Chair serves as acting chair in the absence of the Chair. Also serves as the Director of Undergraduate Studies and performs other duties delegated by the chair.

### **Director of Graduate Studies:**

Professor Yomi Braester, [yomi@uw.edu](mailto:yomi@uw.edu), Padelford Hall Room C504

The DGS/GPC chairs many committees that affect graduate student academic life. These include curricular decisions, fellowship nominations, TA/RA appointments, and, of course, admissions. In addition, the DGS/GPC has the ability to grant waivers to departmental policies pertaining to graduate students.

### **Graduate Program Advisor:**

Yuko Mera, [ymera@uw.edu](mailto:ymera@uw.edu), Padelford Hall Room B530

Perhaps the primary contact person for graduate students, the Graduate Program Advisor often serves as graduate student counselor. The GPA assists graduate students in registration, making sure they adhere to degree program requirements and guidelines, and assists the DGS/GPC and Chair on matters regarding graduate student funding and admissions. The GPA is also the primary liaison between the Department and the Graduate School.

**Department Administrator:**

Marcia Feinstein-Tobey, [maf@uw.edu](mailto:maf@uw.edu), Padelford Hall Room B531

Responsible for general department administration, financial management of department funds (payroll and travel reimbursements), facilities liaison for repairs and maintenance, coordinates time schedule and classroom assignments.

## The Expected Schedule

MA students have six quarters to complete degree requirements (two academic years, see schedule below). This includes the five required CMS core seminars, four electives, and the MA project.

### **M.A. Sample Progress Chart**

	Autumn	Winter	Spring
Year One	CMS 525 CMS 57X	CMS 520 CMS 57X	CMS 57X 500-level Elective
Year Two	500-level Elective 500-level Elective	500-level Elective CMS 590	

PhD students are expected to complete degree requirements in fifteen quarters (five academic years, see schedule below). This includes the five required CMS core seminars, four electives, language competence training, general exams, dissertation prospectus, and the dissertation defense.

### **Ph.D. Sample Progress Chart** (also see [post-coursework timeline](#))

	Autumn	Winter	Spring
Year One	CMS 525 CMS 57X Language training	CMS 520 CMS 57X Language training	CMS 57X CMS 57X Language training
Year Two	500-level Elective 500-level Elective Language training	500-level Elective CMS 600 Language training	500-level Elective CMS 600 Language training
Year Three	CMS 800 <b>General Exams</b>	CMS 800	CMS 800 <b>Prospectus Meeting</b>
Year Four	CMS 800 <b>Initial Chapter Meeting</b>	CMS 800 Dissertation Writing	CMS 800 Dissertation Writing
Year Five	CMS 800 Dissertation Writing	CMS 800 Dissertation Writing	CMS 800 <b>Dissertation Defense</b>

## Coursework

MA students must complete 45 credits of graded coursework at the 500 level.

PhD students must complete 50 credits of graded coursework at the 500 level in their first six quarters.

There are two required courses all students must enroll in their first year:

1. CMS 525 Pedagogy (normally offered in Autumn Quarter)
2. CMS 520 Methods and Issues (normally offered in Winter Quarter)

Students are also required to take three of the four core CMS seminars:

- 570 Media Lab
- 571 National Frameworks
- 572 Historiography
- 573 Aesthetics

The core seminars are repeatable. Remaining graded coursework may be selected from 500 level courses outside the department, in consultation with the GPA and GPC.

- Students must be enrolled full-time in order to qualify for [teaching assistant positions](#).
- MA students must enroll in CMS 590 for completion of the [MA Project](#).
- PhD students must enroll in 10 credits of CMS 600 during preparation for the [general exam](#).
- PhD students may have additional coursework may be necessary to fulfill the [language proficiency requirement](#).
- PhD students may not enroll in seminars for credit post exams.
- PhD students must complete 27 credits of CMS 800 during the dissertation process and must be enrolled in CMS 800 the quarter in which they defend.

### Course descriptions

The specific topics and material covered in CMS courses vary from quarter to quarter.

**CMS 520** Methods and Issues in Cinema and Media Studies: Provides a basic grounding in the theory, history, and criticism of film and media studies, and introduces central debates, topics, and methods in the field.

**CMS 525** Cinema and Media Studies Pedagogy: Pedagogical approaches to cinema and media studies. Introduces teaching tools, technologies and modes of practice.

**CMS 570** Media Lab: Practical approaches to cinema and media studies. May include archival research, production of videographic or audiographic criticism, film programming, public scholarship, or hands-on work with media devices and technologies.

**CMS 571** National Frameworks: Approaches to national, transnational, global, diasporic, and/or regional cinemas and media.

**CMS 572** Historiography: Assessment of processes through which film and/or media histories are constructed. Incorporates methodologies for retrieving and analyzing primary materials relevant to course subject matter.

**CMS 573** Aesthetics: Inquiry into such areas as the sensory perception, cultural valuation, or close analysis of cinema and media. Formal, theoretical, and philosophical approaches to cinema and media studies.



## Satisfactory Progress

Timely progress toward degree completion is the shared goal of students, faculty, and staff. The Department of Cinema and Media Studies recognizes that graduate students need support and structure in order to finish their degree programs in a timely manner and begin their non-student careers. For PhD students, in particular, the rigors of graduate school and work load necessary for degree completion is a reasonable facsimile of the responsibilities and obligations of academia.

Guaranteed funding, [teaching assistantships](#), and research assistantships are dependent on satisfactory progress. Students whose progress is not satisfactory forfeit their promise of continuing support, though they may still be offered term TA assignments. Nearly all fellowship and grant awards at the University of Washington ask that the Department Chair (or someone deputized for the purpose) attest that the student is making satisfactory progress in their degree program. MA and PhD students are therefore advised that not adhering to the satisfactory progress described below will have detrimental material effects.

Generally, failure to make satisfactory progress will result in a warning letter from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Warning letters will suggest potential remedies for the student to restore satisfactory progress and outline the consequences of failure to do so.

TA assignments made during Spring Quarter for the following academic year are subject to reassessment following the end of Spring Quarter.

### **Coursework (all students):**

Students are not allowed to have more than one outstanding "I" (incomplete) or "X" grade on their transcript at the time of TA assignments in order to be considered for a TA appointment or renewal. If a student chooses not to finish the incomplete, retaking that course or another course (including a Directed Study) may count towards coursework requirements with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS).

Students must be enrolled in ten credits of coursework at the 500-level or higher per quarter. (Note this does not apply to PhD candidates). Failure to do so will be taken as the equivalent to an "I" or "X" and the procedures outlined above will apply.

**Satisfactory Progress for MA Students:**

The following will result in a warning letter from the DGS:

- Failure to complete at least 10 credits in any one of the first five quarters.
- Failure to secure a project supervisor by the end of Winter Quarter of the Second Year.
- Failure to complete the [MA Project](#) by the end of Spring Quarter of the Second Year.

**Satisfactory Progress for PhD Students:**

The following will result in a warning letter from the DGS:

- Failure to complete at least 10 credits in any one of the first six quarters.
- Failure to complete the [language proficiency requirement](#) by the end of the Spring Quarter of the Second Year.
- Failure to form an [Exam Committee](#) by the end of the Winter Quarter of the Second Year.
- Failure to take [General Exams](#) by the end of the seventh quarter.
  - If exams are not passed by the end of the eighth quarter, the DGS will commence [probationary proceedings](#).
- Failure to file a [dissertation prospectus](#) by the end of the ninth quarter.
  - If a dissertation prospectus is not approved by the end of the tenth quarter, the DGS will commence [probationary proceedings](#).
- Failure to convene an initial chapter meeting by the end of the tenth quarter.

PhD candidates should aim to complete the dissertation in two years. Additional time may be necessary for field research, archival visits, and so on. Candidates are responsible for finding their own funding for that extra time (see [fellowships](#), below).

The expected schedule of PhD progress post coursework, including deadlines for exams, prospectus, and dissertation appears on the following page. Students and candidates should not enroll in any seminars for credit after completing coursework requirements.

**Expected Post-Coursework PhD Timeline**

Year Three	Autumn	Week 7: Submit <a href="#">Written Exams</a> Week 10: <a href="#">Oral Examinations</a>
	Winter	Formation of <a href="#">Dissertation Committee</a> Week 1 or 2: Meet with Dissertation Supervisor to discuss prospectus Week 10: Rough Draft of <a href="#">Dissertation Prospectus</a> due to Supervisor
	Spring	Week 1, 2, 3, or 4: <a href="#">Prospectus meeting</a> with Dissertation Committee
Year Four	Autumn	Week 8, 9, or 10: <a href="#">Initial Chapter Meeting</a>
	Winter	Apply to <a href="#">Dissertation Fellowships</a> Week 8, 9, or 10: Submit draft of Second Chapter to Supervisor
	Spring	Week 8, 9, or 10: Submit draft of Third Chapter to Supervisor
	Summer	Submit draft of Fourth Chapter to Supervisor
Year Five	Autumn	<a href="#">Job Search</a> /Applications <a href="#">Submit article</a> to academic journal Revise Chapters as needed
	Winter	Job Interviews <a href="#">Conference</a> Presentation Week 8, 9, or 10: Submit drafts of Introduction and Conclusion to Supervisor
	Spring	Revise Dissertation as needed Week 8, 9, or 10: Dissertation Defense

### Study abroad

Time abroad will count as time spent towards fulfilling degree requirements to the extent that transfer credits are earned to be used towards satisfying those requirements.

### Incomplete grades

Students are not allowed to have more than one outstanding "I" (incomplete) or "X" grade on their transcript at the time of TA assignments in order to be considered for a TA appointment or renewal. However, extra course work can substitute for incompletes at the discretion of the Graduate Program Coordinator. According to Graduate School policy, an Incomplete grade must be converted into a numerical grade within 2 years.

### Leaves of absence

One year of leave (or equivalent combined quarters) will be normally approved by the department to graduate students; subsequent quarters or years of leave may be granted by petitioning the DGS.

### **Ph.D. Completion**

The Graduate School allows 6 years for completion of the M.A. degree and 10 years for completion of the Ph.D. degree. The Department will enforce these limits by monitoring the progress of each student. Those who are approaching the time limit may petition the department for an extension for one additional year, prior to the expiration date. This applies to both enrolled and on-leave students. Candidates should consult with their advisors to prepare petitions and must designate their date of expected completion in the petition. As a general rule, an eleventh year will be approved only if a defense date has been scheduled. Candidates who do not meet these terms will not be continued in the program but can normally expect to be readmitted to defend a completed dissertation.

### **Reinstatement**

Students requesting reinstatement outside the time limitations for degree completion must submit a reinstatement petition in writing to the Graduate Program Administrator. The request will be reviewed by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chair.

In addition to meeting the requirements laid out by the UW Graduate School [here](#), the student requesting reinstatement must provide the name of a CMS faculty member willing to serve as their Master's Project advisor or PhD Dissertation supervisor, whichever is applicable. PhD candidates must also provide a proposed dissertation defense date. The petition to the Department should also include details as to their current progress on their MA Project or PhD Dissertation, the reasons for failing to complete the degree on time, and a detailed plan for degree completion.

## Teaching

A significant part of the mission of the graduate programs in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies is to train educators. The department takes teacher training seriously and expects all of its graduate students to act as ethical, inclusive and passionate educators. M.A. and PhD students normally will serve as [reader-grader](#) teaching assistants. PhD students may occasionally be called upon to serve as [quiz section](#) leaders. In preparation for an academic career, PhD candidates should apply to be an [instructor of record](#). By the time of degree conferral, anyone with a PhD from the department will possess teaching experience at several levels, in various classroom contexts and differing class sizes.

### **Pedagogy Seminar**

All students are required to take CMS 525 Pedagogy Seminar in the Autumn of their first year. This seminar provides the foundation for teaching in cinema and media studies and gives students the opportunity to discuss and debate issues in undergraduate instruction.

In addition, this seminar will require the creation of a syllabus for an undergraduate survey course (e.g. “World Cinema” or “Introduction to Media”).

### Teaching Assistantships

All teaching assistantships are governed by the Academic Student Employee (ASE) contract negotiated with UAW Local 4121. No single ASE appointment may exceed 220 hours of labor per quarter (see the UAW Local 4121 website for details). ASEs will be provided a job description that will set forth the specific duties of the appointment for that quarter, including assigned course, supervisor to whom the ASE will report and procedures for evaluation.

### **Reader-Grader positions**

Reader grader positions are currently the most common form of teaching assistant appointment. Students work under the supervision of a faculty member; normally faculty instructors of large lecture courses hold weekly or semi-monthly TA meetings. Normally these appointments involve attending class meetings (lecture), holding weekly office hours, and grading assignments for roughly 60 undergraduates. The specifics vary by course and by instructor.

## **Quiz Sections**

Some CMS lecture courses have two weekly quiz sections. These are shorter (50 minute) class meetings with roughly 30 students in each, both under the supervision of a single TA. TA appointments for courses with quiz sections include additional duties involved in leading these quiz sections. The specific duties of leading quiz sections, including but not limited to lesson plans, lecture, discussion, and assignments, vary from course to course and are created in consultation with the faculty instructor of the course.

Quiz sections can be seen as a step between reader-graded and instructor-of-record since the weekly quiz section offers the TA a level of autonomy and responsibility for classroom management while not yet being in charge of syllabus and course design.

## **Instructor of Record**

After successfully passing general exams, PhD candidates may request to become an instructor-of-record and teach their own version of either CMS 297 Special Topics or CMS 240 Writing in Cinema and Media Studies. Students requesting this option who have not yet taught an independent 200-level CMS course are required to submit both a syllabus and teaching statement to the GPA with their teaching assistant request form, which is normally submitted by the end of Winter Quarter. These materials will be reviewed by the Chair, DGS, and DUS.

Being an instructor-of-record is valuable teaching experience that distinguishes PhD candidates when they go on the job market. The department expects all PhD candidates to be instructors-of-record for at least one quarter during the regular academic year (not just Summer Term). Therefore, priority placement will be given to PhD candidates who have previously not been instructors-of-record.

## Teaching Development

PhD candidates who are instructors of record will have their teaching observed by a member of that student's dissertation committee who is also a member of the CMS faculty. If no member of that student's committee is willing or able to observe teaching, that task will fall to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Ideally, the teaching observation will occur during the student's first quarter initial appointment as an instructor-of-record. Instructors-of-record will thus be able to implement any suggestions and changes that arise from the teaching observation. Subsequent observations are optional and conducted only at the request of the student with the agreement of a faculty member.

Teaching observations are modeled on the peer evaluations practiced by tenure-track faculty. An in-depth report based on the course syllabus, at least one in-class visit, and a follow-up conversation with the instructor-of-record will be placed in the PhD candidate's file and can be used as the basis for letters of support for fellowship and job applications. The in-class visit is a pre-arranged invitation initiated by the instructor-of-record for the faculty member to observe a particular class meeting.

Instructors-of-record may request additional class visits, conversations, and other forms of mentorship as part of teaching development.

### **Teaching Evaluation**

If an ASE does not meet the requirements as stated in the job description, then the ASE supervisor will meet with them during the quarter and outline a set of strategies to help them fulfill these requirements before the end of the quarter. If these strategies are not followed before the end of the quarter, then the ASE will receive a letter from the department chair detailing requirements that must be met during the next teaching assignment, whenever that takes place. If these requirements are not met, then the ASE may be ineligible to renew their ASE appointment for lack of satisfactory performance.

### **Teaching Resources**

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers [training and resources](#) for support of TAs (and faculty). In addition, CTL offers micro-seminars and [workshops](#) in pedagogy for credit.



## Language Proficiency Requirement

### **PhD Students**

PhD students must demonstrate advanced reading knowledge in one language other than English by the end of the Second Year of the PhD Program. Advanced reading knowledge can be demonstrated by completion of a 500 level course using the language, with a grade of 3.5 or higher. Independent study or 400 level coursework may be substituted with permission of the GPC where suitable 500 level coursework is not available.

## The M.A. Project

After completion of course work students prepare a master's project under the supervision of a Cinema and Media Studies faculty member. MA students should secure a project supervisor by the end of the Winter Quarter of their Second Year.

Written projects normally run 25-30 pages on the model of scholarly articles in the student's field of interest. The M.A. project may take other forms. The exact nature of the project is negotiated between the student and faculty supervisor and should take into account the students professional goals and interests as well as the standards of the discipline.

Enrollment in CMS 590 is required for completion of the M.A. project.

MA students interested in continuing in higher education are encouraged to think about applying to PhD programs during the Autumn and Winter of their second year, prior to the completion of their M.A. project. Such students should consider how their M.A. project can serve as a writing sample for PhD applications and consider starting the writing process in the summer after the First Year and into the Autumn Quarter of the Second Year.

## PhD Exam Committee Formation

Committee formation should take place during PhD students' second year. Since exams normally commence at the start of the Autumn Quarter of the Third Year, the exam committee should be formed **no later** than the end of Winter Quarter of the Second Year. During this process of committee formation and construction of fields lists, students should enroll in 10 credits of CMS 600.

Per Graduate School regulations, the initial committee is the Exam Committee, formed for the purpose of the PhD student's general exams. Apart from the Graduate School Representative (GSR, see below), only one member of the committees may be from outside the department. If a student asks faculty from outside the department to join their committee, they should consult with and gain approval from their supervisor. The dissertation committee very often retains the same membership, although this is not required.

The exam committee usually consists of three CMS faculty, one of whom is the Chair of the committee, and the GSR. PhD students work with the committee in forming the three exam fields and preparing the [field statements](#). Normally, each faculty member of the committee takes primary responsibility for a single field and therefore both leads and structures the field questions during oral examination. Chair of both exam and the reading committees must be CMS faculty.

Per Graduate School regulations, a GSR must also be selected by the student. The GSR's primary role is to ensure that the committees adhere to Graduate School policies and best practices. Selection of the GSR must adhere to the University of Washington's Graduate School policy, found [here](#). For the purposes of this document, the most important aspect of this policy is that the GSR must be a faculty member from outside the Department of Cinema and Media Studies with Graduate Faculty status.

There is no set procedure for asking faculty to serve on a PhD committee and faculty are under no obligation to agree to serve. Students are advised to approach faculty with whom they have established a professional scholarly relationship, either through coursework, TA-ship, or other type of academic work and/or research.

Students must notify the GPA of the composition of the General Exam Committee using the form found on the [Canvas website](#) by the end of the Winter Quarter of their Second Year.

## Exam Preparation

PhD students must enroll in 10 credits of CMS 600 prior to passing the general examinations. CMS 600 is designed to provide structure for students to consult with faculty on their exam committee regarding the shape and scope of their field lists as well as the organization of the exams themselves while getting academic credit for their time and effort.

### General Examinations (PhD students only)

General exams are designed to establish the PhD student's expertise in the discipline. Beyond simply testing student knowledge of the major debates in their chosen fields, they give the student the opportunity to demonstrate their intellectual process, their mental agility, their facility with analysis, and ability to delineate and interrogate the major problematics in the discipline. Therefore, general exams will not touch on the student's dissertation project, since they are intended to examine the student's knowledge of fields in the discipline more generally.

General exams require three fields (a fourth may be added only if approved by the entire exam committee and the DGS), at least two of which must conform to the course categories of Aesthetics, Historiography, Media Lab, and National Frameworks. If the third field does not conform with one of the core seminars (for instance, in order to fulfill a PhD Certificate requirement), the rationale and scope of that field must be agreed upon by the student, Exam Committee Chair, and, if applicable, the committee member in charge of that field.

Fields must be broad in nature, they are not to be specialized research fields. Students and faculty may want to think of fields as akin to an upper-division course in Cinema and Media Studies: not as broad as a survey, but not as narrow as a research agenda, and the oral examinations should take on characteristics of an engaging and smart upper-division classroom discussion.

**The general exams are weighted towards the oral component.** While the oral exams are not designed to trick or surprise students, they create a situation in which the student must be able to think on their feet and have enough confidence in their knowledge and facility of the fields in questions to answer questions on the spot.

PhD students should think of the exams as skill-building, allowing them to develop the ability to write succinct summaries of the state of the field, think quickly and clearly, and communicate their ideas and analysis clearly and cogently.

### **Reading lists**

During the Spring Quarter of the Second Year, PhD students must submit reading lists corresponding to their chosen fields to members of the [exam committee](#) for approval. Normally each member of the exam committee takes charge of a single field, according to their own expertise. In case of conflict between faculty members, the Chair of the exam committee has final say over the fields and field lists. To reiterate, these fields are not specialized research fields for the dissertation and at least two of them must conform to the course categories of Aesthetics, Historiography, Media Lab, and National Frameworks. Each of the three areas should be fields of study, not special topics for research, and ground the PhD student's familiarity with a subject they might teach. During this period, students should seek advice and assistance from the exam committee in composing their field lists and writing their statements. Each reading list shall be approved by the exam committee member in charge of the field. Approvals of each list should be communicated to the department by the related faculty member. Approved reading lists must be submitted by the end of Spring Quarter.

### **Field statements**

Approved written statements of approximately 15 double-space pages (minimum 10; maximum 20) for each field list should be submitted to the entire exam committee by the end of the seventh week of Autumn Quarter of the Third Year. Students should be working on these statements during the summer after the Second Year and first half of the Autumn Quarter of the Third Year. In addition to a rationale for the list, this statement would provide an overview of the field in question, its significance, the major debates within it, its strengths, as well as its shortcomings. Students should think about these statements as synthetic and disinterested rather than partial and positional. Students should consult with the committee member in charge of the field to ensure they are adhering to expectations. Field statement approval may or may not involve drafts with each committee member.

### **Course syllabus**

Students will be required to submit a syllabus for a 200-level CMS course, which reflects a more specialized area of the student's interest, when they submit their written statements. The syllabus may be a revised version of one created in CMS 525 Pedagogy, it does not necessarily have to be created especially for the exams. This syllabus may serve as an object for questioning during oral exams, but would not be a significant part of the evaluation. In addition, this syllabus could serve as the basis for when the student becomes an instructor-of-record.

## Oral exams

**The general exams are weighted towards the oral portion.** The oral exams are the time-space in which PhD students prove to the committee their ability to think quickly and clearly. Oral exams give PhD students a chance to demonstrate how they think, approach questions, and how they analyze objects/texts. The oral exams concentrate on debates within fields and ask students to outline the fields as well as explain the major positions within those fields.

Students will be evaluated on their responses to questions drawing upon knowledge from their fields list. Questions will pertain to materials on the fields lists; in some cases, media objects (including, but not limited to technological devices, sounds, images, moving image clips, internet memes, platforms, formats, and software) and the sample syllabus. Approximately 30-40 minutes will be spent on each field. Each of those portions of the exam will be led by the faculty member(s) in charge of that field (see [PhD Exam Committee Formation](#)). Students and the committee member in charge of that field should agree to the general expectations of knowledge and performance for said field (this may include generating a sample exam question).

Oral exams are about knowledge and grounding in their fields, not original thinking. They are about showing expertise and building confidence and skills. Sample field questions could be along the lines of “use the arguments laid out in X to analyze this media object” or “compare the approaches of A and B to the problem of Z” or “explain the implications of using term X versus term Y in the study of cinema.”

Students will not make a formal or introductory presentation. Students may be surprised by questions, but questions should not be trick questions or concentrate on small/minor matters within the field materials (such as footnotes). Rather the oral exam should be a situation in which the student does not control the discussion, but responds to the discussion. Students may want to think of the oral exams as analogous to teaching an undergraduate class about the material covered by their field lists. The oral exams can also be seen as preparation for academic job interviews, in which candidates are often asked to present analysis of a particular media object or film, and/or to give their views on a particular approach to cinema and media studies.

Oral exams must take place by the last day of the Autumn Quarter.

Students should consult the Graduate School [regulations](#) regarding video- and tele- conferencing for the Oral Examinations.

**Notification of pass/fail**

For the written portion of the exams, committee members have seven days to submit either “Pass” or “Fail” to the GPA and the student and fourteen days to return written feedback to the student. In the event of a “Fail” submitted by two of the members, the student has two weeks to respond to the written feedback on that field and resubmit their written statement to the committee. Should this occur, the oral examination may have to be scheduled during exam week of the Autumn Quarter or in the early weeks of Winter Quarter.

Should a student receive a “fail” for the second time on the written portion, that student will be dropped from the program.

Should the student pass the writtens, but receive a “fail” from two or more committee members on the oral exams, that student will be dropped from the program.

The general examination warrant should be signed by all members of the committee and submitted to the Graduate Program Advisor within 24 hours of passing the oral exams.

Passing the general exams means that PhD students have earned the designation “PhD candidate” and should no longer think of themselves as students and should start imagining themselves as junior peers to the faculty.

## Dissertation Committee Formation

The dissertation reading committee should be formed in the quarter following successful completion of general exams. The priority should be selecting a dissertation supervisor, who will have primary responsibility for helping the candidate craft a dissertation prospectus, since that is due by the end of the second quarter after exam completion. The primary consideration for selecting a dissertation advisor should be the alignment of faculty expertise with the candidate's research interests. The dissertation advisor guides the candidate through the general exams and dissertation and advises the candidate on professional development. Chair of both exam and the reading committees must be CMS faculty. The reading committee must also contain two other members, who can also work to support and guide the PhD candidate's dissertation.

During this period, PhD candidates should be enrolled in CMS 800. The Graduate School requires a minimum of 27 credits of CMS 800 prior to dissertation defense and degree conferral. Therefore, it is recommended that PhD candidates enroll in the maximum allowable number of credits to prepare for the possibility that their funding guarantee might expire prior to the dissertation defense.

## Dissertation Prospectus

The prospectus itself should be 5,000-6,000 words with a 30-60 item bibliography. The prospectus includes the rationale for the topic and describes the method of study. Normally it states the problem(s) to be discussed and one or more working hypotheses or thesis statements. There should be enough preliminary detail to communicate a careful understanding of the work you have undertaken and to outline the project chapter by chapter. There is no prescribed structure to the prospectus. Some prospectuses approximate abstracts and consist chiefly of chapter plans; others approximate proposals and emphasize the contexts out of which the work grows. All prospectuses, however, will contain some mix of the following elements.

1. Title. The title is a crucial part of any academic work. A good title encourages readers to open it and publishers to consider it favorably. The ideal is a short, memorable title that forecasts the work to be done. If it signals the problem or tension to be explored, then readers will sense how the work will proceed and what it will contribute--and so will you. Conversely, a puzzling or boring title is less inviting to others and much less help to the author. Good titles indicate



the domain to be studied and the approach. Often, one will be identified in the main title and the other in the subtitle.

2. Rationale. What is the general nature of your project and why is it of interest? What is your preparation for undertaking it?
3. Materials and plans. What are your primary sources? Why have you selected them? What kind of coverage do they provide? What explorations will you be undertaking? Are there any pertinent material problems either with the availability or the nature of the materials? Sometimes it's helpful to give yourself a realistic schedule in the prospectus or to mention particular resources or requirements, including contacts made or to be made with libraries and archives or with authors or critics, languages to be learned or improved, technology to be employed, etc.
4. State of the discussion. A literature survey of some sort is almost inevitable in a prospectus, even if it is less prominent in the finished dissertation. If a theoretical approach is important to your work, then you may survey the theoretical issues as well as the secondary literature on your materials, but don't bog down in extended summaries. Rather, emphasize the pertinence and value of the approach for the materials you intend to study and the questions you will investigate. Shape the presentation of secondary literature so that it both supports your work and leaves you space to advance.
5. Methods. What is your approach? The answer may be pragmatic, overlapping with the discussion of materials, or it may be more theoretical, growing out of the state of the discussion. Why is your approach suitable? If you will be drawing heavily on a defined theoretical approach, what may be learned about it from your study?
6. Organization. Even at this early stage, and even though some or many things will inevitably change, it is vitally important to outline the projected stages of the argument. At a minimum, provide a list of chapters (with titles, if you can) with their contents, topics, and distinctive angles. Make it clear how the arguments differ from one another and how they fit together. Where you can, describe the consecutive parts or the hierarchical elements of the chapters. It can be helpful to enter into illustrative detail, potentially drawing on work you have done for a course; show your approach in action.
7. Result. Finally, articulate a preliminary sense of the contribution you hope to make. What do you think you will add to knowledge or understanding?

While the above list can serve as a template for some prospectuses, it need not be slavishly followed. The result can be combined with the rationale, for instance, or the state of the discussion can be

diffused throughout as part of a relatively extensive summary of the chapters. The only indispensable elements are the title, a longer or shorter view of the parts of the project, and a bibliography.

At the start of the quarter immediately following completion of the general exams (normally Winter Quarter of the Third Year), the PhD candidate will meet with their dissertation advisor to discuss the dissertation prospectus.

By week ten of that quarter, the PhD candidate will have submitted a rough draft of the prospectus to their dissertation advisor.

A prospectus meeting between the PhD candidate and their reading committee must occur prior to week seven of the second quarter after completion of general exams (normally Spring Quarter of the Third Year). Reading committee members on leave or away from Seattle can participate remotely or can comment and approve the prospectus by email. The GSR is not required to be present for this meeting, but may be invited by the PhD candidate. A prospectus approval meeting form is available on the [Canvas website](#).

### Initial Chapter Meeting

By the end of the quarter following the prospectus meeting, the reading committee will meet with the candidate to discuss the draft of the first written chapter (i.e. the draft of the first chapter completed by the candidate, which may not necessarily be the first chapter of the dissertation). The exact contours of the initial chapter meeting should be negotiated between the candidate, supervisor, and reading committee. Generally, the initial chapter meeting is not meant as a chapter approval meeting, students should not make a formal presentation, nor should the meeting be conducted as an examination. Rather, the initial chapter meeting is to allow the supervisor and reading committee to weigh in on writing style, chapter scope, and general expectations for the dissertation, which is its own unique genre, separate from journal articles, academic monographs, etc. Candidates should take advantage of this initial chapter meeting as a concrete deadline for writing, a chance to receive feedback and commentary on their dissertation in its early stages, and as a way to assess the divergences and convergences between the candidate's goals and the reading committee's expectations, rather as a checking-in and assessment of progress as well as what tasks still need to be completed.

## Dissertation Writing

The department expects candidates to join dissertation writing groups upon approval of their prospectus (or even before). Writing groups can be informal, virtual, involve candidates from outside the Department or outside the University. The key is to be part of an intellectual community that holds its members accountable to each other and can support each other. Some candidates prefer faculty-lead groups, others prefer a faculty-free space. Although many writing groups are informal partnerships formed by PhD candidates and/or headed by faculty, one place for students to start looking is the Writing Center's "[Open Writing Circle](#)," which primarily consists of dissertation writers.

The bulk of the writing should be undertaken during the fourth year. It is expected that candidates will draft a chapter each quarter before going on the job market in the autumn of the fifth year. The fifth year writing should consist of drafting any remaining chapters, the introduction and conclusion, and revising chapters as necessary in preparation for a Spring defense (in some cases a Summer defense may be necessary).

Dissertation writing is an intensive project that should not be undertaken lightly. Therefore, candidates should protect their time and guard against having their teaching responsibilities dominate their scholarly activity.

Candidates should establish a procedure for submission and review of separate chapters and the full dissertation during Year Four with their supervisor and committee. However, reading committee members may request to read individual chapter drafts and/or individual chapters as they are completed. All members of the dissertation committee and the candidate should make sure they clearly understand the procedure established for that particular dissertation.

The completed dissertation should be submitted to the reading committee six weeks prior to the defense. A different schedule may be agreed upon by the reading committee.

## Dissertation Defense

By the time of defense, PhD candidates must have enrolled in 27 credits of CMS 800. Defenses cannot be scheduled any later than the exam week of a given quarter. Candidates must be registered during the quarter of their defense. Students should consult the Graduate School [regulations](#) regarding video- and tele- conferencing for the Dissertation Defense.

The dissertation defense is primarily a time for the dissertation committee to examine the candidate and determine whether they are ready to proceed onto the next phase of academic life. Defenses are also a time of public acknowledgement and celebration of the candidate's accomplishments and progress.

The department will email an announcement of every candidate's defense to the CMS graduate student and faculty listservs as well as any other persons the candidate desires. The opening introduction and summary statement may be publicly attended. If students wish to opt out of the public announcement, they may do so through the Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form found on the [Canvas website](#).

Normally, defenses begin with a 20-minute introduction and summary statement from the candidate with another ten minutes of public discussion. If the committee and candidate agree, questioning by the committee may take place in public as well. In the cases of closed-door committee questioning, the dissertation supervisor will likely excuse the candidate while the committee discusses their main avenues of questioning, so as to avoid repetition and contradiction. At the conclusion of the committee's discussion, the candidate will be invited back in to begin the roughly 90 minutes of closed-door committee questioning, which constitutes what the Graduate School calls the [Final Examination](#).

## Conferences

Attending and presenting at academic conferences is an integral part of academic and scholarly life. The Department expects PhD students and PhD candidates to attend and present at conferences on a regular basis. MA students are also encouraged to attend and present at academic conferences.

Conferences range from small colloquiums to large conventions of National and International Scholarly Societies. Graduate students will often organize their own conferences and topical or irregular conferences are hosted by many universities. Students are encouraged to subscribe to email listservs such as uwcinema or Screen-L in order to stay aware of these conference offerings.

Conference presentations usually run from 15-20 minutes and are normally a synopsis or short portion of a seminar paper or dissertation chapter.

Graduate students are encouraged to start their own informal colloquiums and/or monthly presentation groups to discuss each other's research and progress.

The Simpson Center for the Humanities sponsors [Graduate Research Clusters](#) that support those interested in bringing graduate students together across disciplines and departments.

The Department strongly encourages PhD students and expects PhD candidates to present at the [Society for Cinema and Media Studies](#) (SCMS) annual conference or another, related national conference such as Modern Language Association ([MLA](#)), American Comparative Literature Association ([ACLA](#)), or the International Communication Association ([ICA](#)). We maintain an [institutional membership](#) for SCMS.

The department can support some conference travel for graduate students. See below for information other sources of conference travel funding.

## Fellowships

The [Graduate Funding Information Service](#) (GFIS) is run by UW Libraries and provides a running list of funding opportunities. They also hold drop-in office hours and can consult via email.

Grants, fellowships and other forms of financial support for language training may be available. The most common is the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) [fellowship](#).

Dissertation writing may take longer than the allotted period under guaranteed funding. Field research may be necessary. Archival visits may also be integral to the dissertation project. Dissertation fellowships also relieve candidates of teaching obligations and stand as markers of prestige and recognition on the CV. PhD candidates should consider applying to dissertation fellowships after their initial chapter meeting during Autumn Quarter of the Fourth Year. Internal awards include fellowships from the [Simpson Center for the Humanities](#), the Graduate School, and the Division of Arts and Humanities. External awards include support from the [American Council of Learned Societies](#) and the [Social Science Research Council](#).

Candidates should also consider submitting their dissertation for awards from national and international academic societies, such as [SCMS](#), as well as UW dissertation awards.

## Publishing

### **MA Students and PhD Students**

Short publications and small venues often prove to be valuable experience for later and help build a portfolio. Simply going through the review process at a journal can be instructive.

Therefore we encourage students to publish their research and scholarship even at early stages in their graduate study. Many academic journals publish shorter pieces such as book reviews and film reviews and some journals, such as [JCMS](#), regularly include special sections for shorter pieces. Other public-facing work can be pursued by early career graduate students, such as exhibit curation and videographic criticism.

### **PhD Candidates**

Post-exam, PhD candidates should be thinking about revising a dissertation chapter for publication in a top-notch journal in the field or their subfield. This enterprise is usually undertaken under the mentorship of the candidate's dissertation supervisor. The publication of a dissertation chapter in a prestigious journal is often crucial to getting the first book published and also increases candidates' chances on the job market (see below).

PhD candidates may also want to consider publishing on their pedagogy in teaching related journals such as [Teaching Media Quarterly](#) (*TMQ*).

## The Academic Job Market

The academic job market is always [tough](#). Every year many more PhDs are produced than tenure-track assistant-level positions. Some of this disjuncture is addressed through postdocs, visiting assistant positions, as well as various forms of part-time and contingent labor such as lecturer positions. While much of the burden for success on the job market falls on the PhD candidate, our department is committed to putting our PhDs in the best possible position for the academic job market.

Many PhDs will get a job different from the faculty with whom they interact at the University of Washington. While the [majority of PhDs are employed full time](#) in academe the year after degree conferral, only a small number get jobs at R1 universities. Therefore, graduate students should be thinking about the possibility of working at other sorts of educational institutions and imagining academic life at a wider range of settings.

At the end of the Fourth Year, PhD candidates should notify their dissertation committee that they plan to enter the job market in the coming Fall. At this time, the candidate should ask their committee members what materials they would need to write letters of support for job applications. Since one of those letters of support should address teaching, it is strongly advised that the committee member who observed the candidates teaching write a detailed and supportive account of the candidates pedagogical practice (see [Teaching Development](#), above).

The major components of an academic job application include a cover letter, writing sample, and CV. In addition, potential employers will ask for three to four letters of support, a teaching statement, diversity statement, and, in some cases, a dissertation abstract, sample syllabus, or even teaching evaluations. The GPA has sample documents available upon request and on the [Canvas Website](#).

PhD candidates should start working on their cover letter during the summer between their fourth and fifth year. This letter should be read by the candidate's dissertation supervisor; if the candidate chooses, other members of their committee may comment on the letter. The DGS is also available for advice.

The writing sample should be either a completed dissertation chapter approved by the dissertation supervisor (or portion thereof) or an article under review, accepted, or published in an academic journal.

The department regularly offers workshops for PhD candidates and students in support of job market preparation and other professionalization issues. These may include workshops on writing cover letters, teaching statements, diversity statements, and other components of the job search process. Candidates and students may suggest workshop topics and areas to the DGS, GPA, and/or Department Chair. PhD candidates who have successfully received an invitation to interview may request a mock interview through the DGS.

Students can access [SCMS job listings](#) through our institutional membership. User ID and password for the SCMS website are available through the Graduate Program Advisor, Yuko Mera.

Students may also want to look at job listings in the MLA Bulletin, Chronicle of Higher Education, and [HigherEd Jobs](#). To get a sense of the dynamics of the job market, students may want to look at the [Academic Jobs Wiki](#).