

GRADUATE PROGRAM HANDBOOK

2026-27



Stony Brook **University**

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PREFACE

Key Contact Information

Department Chair: Victoria Hesford (victoria.hesford@stonybrook.edu)

Graduate Program Director: Angela Jones (angela.n.jones@stonybrook.edu)

Contact the Graduate Program Director for help with all academic matters, including coursework, selecting advisors, and degree requirements.

Department Administrator: Jackie Donnelly (jacqueline.m.donnelly@stonybrook.edu)

Contact the Department Administrator for assistance with administrative issues, including departmental policies & procedures, office management, human resources/personnel, budget, and scheduling.

Academic Program Coordinator: Charles Edwards (charles.j.edwards@stonybrook.edu)

Contact the Academic Program Coordinator for assistance with academic-related issues including registration, student records, advancement, filing for graduation, TA/GA appointment processing, and communications (graduate forms, website maintenance, etc.).

Important Notes

The Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Graduate Program Handbook is a guide to the policies and procedures in the [Graduate Bulletin](#). Any such policies and procedures in this handbook are subsidiary to the Graduate Bulletin. The bulletin is the official document recognized by Stony Brook University. Students are responsible for reviewing, understanding, and abiding by the university's regulations, requirements, and deadlines as described in official publications and calendars.

The information in this handbook is subject to change. Over the coming year, you may be given a copy of any changes in departmental, college, or university policy and procedure as an addendum. At the beginning of each academic year, a revised copy of the Graduate Program Handbook will be reissued as a PDF and distributed to all WGSS faculty and graduate students.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Fast Facts

Graduate Degree Programs: PhD, MA, & Graduate Certificate

First PhD & MA Students Enrolled: Fall 2014

of Current PhD Students: 25

of Current MA Students: 1

of PhDs Granted: 13

of MAs Granted: 7

WGSS Mission Statement

The Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) prepares students to become future professionals, scholars, activists, and artists who engage critically with gender and sexuality issues in multicultural and transnational contexts. Our departmental mission is 1) to familiarize students with the histories of feminist thought and social movements, 2) to teach them how to apply feminist, queer, and transgender theories in their writing and research, and 3) to train them in developing interdisciplinary problem-based methods applicable within and beyond scholarly settings.

Our department offers a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies as well as an undergraduate minor and a graduate certificate in the field. At the heart of all our programs is a profound commitment to the critical study of gender and sexuality as an intellectual project, indebted to past and present activist movements, and committed to future social change. We believe in the transformative potential of feminist, queer, and trans studies, and we envision our innovative approaches to research, teaching, and mentoring as enacting positive effects in the world around us. Our courses equip students with the conceptual tools necessary to analyze and challenge the intersection of gender and sexual norms with racial and ethnic formations, political and economic structures, and dominant standards of health and ability. The major and minor programs offer undergraduates opportunities to conduct original research, develop community-engaged projects, and complete on- and off-campus internships. In doing so, students prepare to launch careers in law, education, healthcare, social work, public policy, and community organizing. The M.A., Ph.D., and graduate certificate programs provide students with advanced training in theories of sex, gender, and sexuality, the history of feminist pedagogy and the formation of women's, gender, and sexuality studies as a field, and the development of boundary-pushing methodologies effective within academia and other non-academic research settings.

The WGSS Department is uniquely equipped to train students in the art of interdisciplinary research. Many of our core faculty hold graduate degrees or certificates in women's, gender, or feminist studies and, along with our over 50 associated faculty, work in and across the arts, humanities, social sciences, and health sciences. The department's areas of specialization include Black & Women of Color Feminisms, Critical Disability Studies, Feminist Media Studies, Political Thought, Social Justice & Policy, Race & Ethnic Studies, Queer & Trans Studies, and Transnational Feminisms. As a department committed to collaboration and the process of producing knowledge collectively, we actively forge alliances with a wide range of feminist

scholars, programs, and initiatives across campus in the hopes of enhancing gender and sexual diversity at Stony Brook University, in the state of New York, and far beyond.

Graduate Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the PhD, MA, or graduate certificate in WGSS will be able to:

1. Summarize the historical emergence of the field of WGSS, and situate the field in relation to the changing politics and economics of the contemporary US university.
2. Explain canonical, intersectional, and transnational feminist theoretical frameworks, and apply these critical tools to analyze social structures that positively or negatively influence local and global inequalities.
3. Critically survey current feminist, queer, and trans scholarship, and identify gaps in the literature and new research opportunities.
4. Design an interdisciplinary feminist research project based on an original research question, and develop a relevant methodological approach for finding answers and intervening in scholarly debates.
5. Make an original and substantial contribution to interdisciplinary feminist scholarship through their dissertation or thesis, as well as through other scholarly, community, and creative activities.
6. Practice a multitude of feminist pedagogical strategies for diverse learning styles and outcomes in preparation to teach introductory and advanced courses in the field.

University Structure

SUNY System. Stony Brook is a part of the [State University of New York \(SUNY\)](#). The SUNY system spans 64 campuses across New York State, including research universities, academic medical centers, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, colleges of technology, and an online learning network. Key offices and bodies include the [Office of the Chancellor](#), the [Board of Trustees](#), the [University Faculty Senate](#), and the [Student Assembly](#).

Stony Brook University. [Stony Brook](#) is one of the four research university centers in the SUNY System. Interim President Richard McCormick presides over our campus, but is limited by the policies and budget decisions made by SUNY Central Administration. The Executive Vice President for Stony Brook Medicine, William Wertheim, oversees the Health Sciences.

Center on what is often referred to as “East Campus,” and the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Carl Lejuez runs our side, known as “West Campus.” The [University Senate](#), which represents staff, faculty, and students, serves in an advisory capacity to the President and the Provost in most matters.

College of Arts & Sciences. The WGSS Department is located within the [College of Arts and Sciences \(CAS\)](#), which Dean David Wrobel heads. Generally speaking, the CAS Dean's Office determines how resources are allocated across the college, oversees our undergraduate curriculum, and must approve our requests to hire new faculty. The [Arts and Sciences Senate](#) plays an advisory role in the governance of CAS.

Graduate School. Under the direction of the Provost, the administration of the [Graduate School](#) is supervised by Dean Celia Marshik and the administrative staff of the Graduate School, in conjunction with the [Graduate Council](#). The Graduate School oversees the WGSS PhD, MA, and graduate certificate programs, and we are subject to the policies and procedures outlined in the [Graduate Bulletin](#) (which is updated each semester).

Department Structure

WGSS Department Chair. Victoria Hesford is currently the chair of the WGSS Department. The WGSS Core Faculty elected her to serve as chair from Fall 2025 to Spring 2028. At the departmental level, her primary tasks are to manage the WGSS Department's staff, faculty, and students and to ensure excellence in our unit's contributions to research, teaching, and service.

WGSS Executive Committee. Victoria Hesford supervises the WGSS undergraduate and graduate programs in consultation with the Graduate Program Director (Angela Jones) and another core faculty member (Cristina Kahn). This Executive Committee handles, among other things, course scheduling, teaching assignments, and curriculum reviews.

WGSS Graduate Studies Committee. As the Graduate Program Director, Angela Jones leads the WGSS Graduate Studies Committee. The Graduate Studies Committee administers the WGSS PhD, MA, and Advanced Graduate Certificate programs. As outlined below, the WGSS Graduate Studies Committee creates, reviews, and adapts program policies, considers requests for exceptions to degree requirements, and, in some cases (as outlined below), handles internal fellowship nominations.

WGSS Core Faculty. The WGSS Core Faculty consists of Ritch Calvin, Manisha Desai, Lisa Diedrich, Victoria Hesford, Nancy Hiemstra, Angela Jones, Cristina Khan, Jenean McGee, Liz Montegary, and Joanna Wuest. Graduate admissions decisions, PhD and MA student annual reviews, and, in some cases (as outlined below), internal fellowship nominations are decided collectively by the Core Faculty.

WGSS Graduate Student Representative. The Graduate Student Representative for the 2026-2027 academic year is Peter Bruno. Each year, current WGSS graduate students elect someone to serve as the WGSS Graduate Student Representative. This student serves as the primary liaison between faculty and graduate students.

WGSS Associated Faculty. The WGSS Department has approximately 50 Associated Faculty from more than a dozen departments across campus. Although associated faculty do not hold any departmental decision-making power, they are considered WGSS graduate faculty. They can be counted as "internal" to WGSS for the purposes of assembling Exam and Dissertation Committees (as explained in detail below).

PH.D. REQUIREMENTS

At-A-Glance

Graduate Coursework: 48 total credits (16 total classes)

Core Courses: 12 credits (4 classes)

WGSS 600-level Electives: 9 credits (3 classes)

Additional Electives: 27 credits (9 classes)

Teaching Experience

Comprehensive Exam

Prospectus Review

Dissertation Defense

Graduate Coursework

In addition to the minimum requirements of the Graduate School, WGSS PhD students are required to complete 48 credits of graduate coursework. At Stony Brook, this is equivalent to 16 classes. You must take four core classes (12 credits) and twelve elective classes (36 credits).

Core Courses

WST 600: Feminist Interdisciplinary Histories and Methods (Offered in Spring)

WST 601: Feminist Theories (Offered in Fall)

WST 680: Pro-Seminar: Interdisciplinary Research Design (Offered Fall)

WST 698: Practicing WGSS/Teaching Practicum (Offered Spring)

All students seeking a PhD must take the required courses listed above when they are offered.

During your first year, students take WST 601, WST 680, and one elective in the Fall. In the Spring, students take WST 600 and WST 698. In addition to providing you with a strong foundation for the rest of your coursework, this approach also creates in-class opportunities for you to build a sense of community with your cohort.

These courses cannot be replaced by Independent Study or Directed Reading credits, except in the most unusual circumstances, and only upon petition to the Graduate Program Director. This petition would need to be signed by the instructor supervising the Independent Study or Directed Reading and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee.

*Please note: As per The Graduate School Policy, WGSS does not transfer credits from previous programs. If a credit has counted toward any other degree, then it cannot also count toward the WGSS PhD (or MA).

Elective Coursework

You are also required to take twelve elective graduate courses. Three of those courses must be 600-level WGSS courses. You have considerable flexibility in selecting the remaining nine elective courses.

WGSS 600-level Electives

WST 610. During most semesters, the WGSS department offers at least one section of WST 610: Advanced Topics in WGSS. Different instructors teach the course each year, so every iteration covers a new topic. We strongly encourage students to fulfill their WGSS Electives requirement by taking WST 610 several times.

WST 600 or 601. Alternatively, you may wish to fulfill one of your 600-level WGSS Elective requirements by retaking WST 600 or 601. Each year, a different instructor teaches the Feminist Interdisciplinary Histories and Methods and Feminist Theories seminars, resulting in significant variations in content from one year to the next. As such, WST 600 and 601 can serve as valuable electives for students.

WGSS-Approved 600-level Electives. In some cases, students can count a 600-level gender- or sexuality-themed class offered by another department toward their WGSS elective requirement. Students should contact the Graduate Program Director before enrolling in the course to obtain approval. The Graduate Studies Committee will review any requests to substitute non-WST classes for the WGSS 600-level elective requirement.

The faculty encourages students to take seminars that are not directly related to their dissertation topic. They may find that the course will advance their skills and knowledge in other ways, for example, by engaging with different areas of thought, pedagogical practices, methods, and formats.

Additional Electives

To fulfill the remaining Additional Electives requirement, you must take nine other 500- or 600-level graduate courses. You are welcome to take these classes in any department at Stony Brook or through the [Inter-University Doctoral Consortium](#). If you completed graduate coursework before enrolling in the PhD program, you may be able to apply transfer credits to fulfill these elective requirements.

Any courses you take toward a Graduate Certificate will automatically count toward the Additional Electives requirement. This includes Independent Studies or Directed Readings completed in another department for a Graduate Certificate.

Independent Studies & Directed Readings

There are limits on how many WGSS Independent Studies (WST 599), WGSS Directed Readings (WST 690), and WGSS Self-Directed Readings (WST 696) can count toward the Additional Electives requirement.

WST 599. PhD Students are permitted to count one Independent Study (for a total of 3 credits) toward their Additional Electives requirement. Independent Studies should be used to complete a creative independent project that cannot be completed during regular coursework and that does not directly relate to their comprehensive exam preparations.

WST 690 or WST 696. PhD students are permitted to count four Directed Readings (WST 690) or Self-Directed Readings (WST 696) (for a total of 12 credits) toward the Additional Electives requirement. You should enroll in these credits only after you have completed most of your coursework and are preparing for your Comprehensive Exam. It is strongly recommended that you complete a Directed or Self-Directed Reading for each of the two parts of your comprehensive exam list, ideally under the direction of the faculty member supervising that part of your list. See below for more information on the Comprehensive Exams.

Given that directed readings cannot replace seminars, and that faculty are limited in how many they can do each term, we suggest that students also consider approaching faculty about organizing small groups (2-3 students) for supervising Directed Readings to help fill gaps in students' desired courses of study, especially in instances when current or future seminars will not address such topics.

You should discuss your plans for completing Independent Studies, Directed Readings, and Self-Directed Readings with your Primary Advisor. Please keep in mind that you should arrange WST 599, 690, or 696 with a faculty member at least one semester in advance. It is your responsibility to communicate with faculty about their availability for working with you in this capacity.

Helpful Hints

- Take classes with instructors you think you might want to work with more formally. Seminars are an excellent way to meet potential mentors and initiate a mentoring relationship.
- Think about how you will position yourself as a WGSS scholar: which inter/disciplines will you be in conversation with? Take courses in the relevant departments and with faculty with expertise in these areas.
- Enroll in courses that will provide you with training in the methodologies you plan to use in your doctoral research. Look for courses that will give you a foundation in the histories and theories you will need to know to execute your project. The topics don't need to align perfectly with your research interests; it's more about the broader frameworks you'll be exploring.
- Use writing assignments for your seminars as an opportunity to start writing toward your imagined dissertation project or to develop conference papers, journal articles, or grant proposals.
- Embrace seminars as opportunities to practice your reading, writing, analytic thinking, critical debate, public speaking, and peer-review skills.

- Start building a network of supportive colleagues. Connect with your cohort and with other WGSS PhD, MA, and certificate students. Get involved in the Graduate Student Organization. Get to know potential collaborators and writing partners from across the university.

Transfer Credits

Per the Graduate School's rules, a maximum of 12 credits may be transferred from another institution to the WGSS PhD program at Stony Brook, but only if those credits have not been used toward the satisfaction of any degree or certificate requirement here or at the other institution. You are only permitted to transfer credits that are relevant to the learning outcomes of the WGSS PhD program. If you believe you have earned credits elsewhere that should be transferred to our program, contact the Graduate Program Director. They will work with the Graduate Committee to review the course/s in question and deliver a decision on your transfer request.

Inter-University Doctoral Consortium

[The Inter-University Doctoral Consortium \(IUDC\)](#) offers eligible Stony Brook PhD students in the arts and sciences the opportunity to take graduate courses not offered at their home institution at distinguished universities throughout the greater New York area (including Columbia, CUNY, Fordham, New School, NYU, Princeton, Rutgers, and Teacher's College of Columbia).

To be eligible, WGSS PhD students must have completed one academic year of full-time study at Stony Brook and be in good academic standing. WGSS MA students are ineligible. You cannot take more than 3 IUDC courses per academic year and cannot take more than 2 IUDC courses in a single semester.

For WGSS PhD students, IUDC courses would count toward your Additional Electives requirement. Only in the most unusual circumstances would students be permitted to petition the Graduate Studies Committee to count IUDC courses toward the Core Courses requirement or the WGSS 600-level Elective requirement.

You are strongly encouraged to discuss your IUDC plans with the Graduate Program Director and/or your Primary Advisor as soon as possible. We want to make sure that you're staying on track with your coursework requirements, but we may also have suggestions for navigating the bureaucratic procedures. The Graduate Program Coordinator will also be a valuable resource in this regard.

The registration process requires signatures from the WGSS Department (Department Chair, Graduate Program Director, or your Primary Advisor), the Stony Brook IUDC Coordinator, the instructor of the IUDC course you're planning to take, and the Host School's Dean or IUDC Coordinator. As such, planning ahead is crucial.

Teaching Experience

Teaching is a vital component of graduate education. This is especially true within the field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. As such, our graduate program emphasizes the importance of becoming familiar with feminist pedagogical approaches and gaining formal teaching experience in WGSS.

All PhD students are required to take WST 698: Practicing WGSS/Teaching Practicum and to acquire a one-semester minimum of formal teaching experience (even if they are unsupported or on a fellowship not requiring teaching duties). We firmly believe that one of the best ways to learn to teach is by doing – by gaining experience in instructional design, classroom management, and assessment techniques.

Students who are assigned online Teaching Assistantships are required to complete [the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching \(CELT\)'s two-part Online Teaching Certificate course](#). This course is free, completed online, and offered multiple times throughout the calendar year (summers included). Students in WGSS also take a department-specific TA training during orientation.

Teaching Assistantships are the primary way WGSS PhD students access funding at Stony Brook, so we are very aware of the dual role you will occupy within the university as both a student and a worker. The WGSS Department looks for ways to ensure your employment experience complements your educational experience. We aim to provide students with strategic opportunities to develop their Teaching Portfolios and meaningful classroom experiences that will advance their research agendas. See below for more information on Teaching and Funding.

Foreign Language Requirement

The Department does not have a foreign language requirement. However, students who plan to undertake research that requires proficiency in a language other than English are encouraged to pursue any learning resources and support required to carry out such work, and to discuss this matter with their advisor and the Graduate Program Director as necessary.

Please note that the language of instruction for WGSS courses is English; therefore, all graduate students must demonstrate a full command of both written and spoken English.

Comprehensive Exam

One of the most significant milestones in the WGSS PhD program is the Comprehensive Exam. Passing this qualifying exam alongside your prospectus defense marks your transition from a doctoral student to a doctoral candidate—and this is a big deal in academia. Advancing to candidacy and becoming ABD (all but dissertation) opens new doors for teaching and other professional opportunities. Most importantly, it is a marker of your achievements and success in a rigorous PhD program, which is notoriously challenging.

The Comprehensive Exam is the foundation for becoming a doctoral candidate. It is designed to demonstrate that you have the historical, theoretical, and methodological foundations needed to undertake doctoral research. The exam process is intricately connected to your dissertation

project and serves as a launching pad for the dissertation. The exams and their evaluation procedures also mirror the dissertation defense and other academic processes, and thus are intentionally designed to support your professionalization into academia.

On the Comprehensive Exam, you must demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge and your familiarity with feminist, gender, queer, and/or trans theories, and interdisciplinary methods, and are also required to prove the depth of your knowledge when it comes to your specific area of research as it relates to one of the department's seven areas of specialization in WGSS: Black & Women of Color Feminisms; Critical Disability Studies; Political Thought, Social Justice, & Policy; Queer & Trans Studies; Transnational Feminisms; Feminist Media Studies; and Race & Ethnic Studies.

PhD students typically take their comprehensive examination in the early spring of their third year in the program, and no more than one year after completing their coursework. If you have not taken your exams by the end of the third year, this will be discussed during your Annual Review. Although the department will work to help get you back on track and complete your degree, your advisor, along with the Graduate Studies Committee, may suggest leaving the Ph.D. program and [applying to change your Degree Program](#) and acquire a terminal Master's degree, if you do not have one.

Brief Overview

The Comprehensive Exam consists of two written exams based on the Reading Lists developed by the student in consultation with their Exam Committee. The written exams on students' "lists" are completed in the early Spring of the third year (weeks 1-7 of the semester). One written exam will focus on feminist, gender, queer, and/or interdisciplinary theories and methods. The other will typically focus on research related to the student's dissertation, corresponding to at least one of the seven areas of specialization in WGSS. Given that projects are often interdisciplinary and span more than one field, students should discuss with their committee how they will build this exam list.

Each of the two exams will take place in the same week, with a minimum of one day in between them. Each exam will take 8 hours to complete. Each exam answer should be 10-12 double-spaced pages. On each day, the person on your committee you have designated to facilitate your exam will send you the question(s) prepared by the members of your Exam Committee via email. (As discussed in the section "Reading Lists," the person who facilitates your exam cannot be your chair.) You have 8 hours to answer the required questions and submit them to the Exam Committee. For accommodations for this process, students with disabilities should work with [SASC](#) and their advisor.

Preparing For the Exam

It is never too early to start thinking about your Comprehensive Exam. At the very least, you should begin discussing the exam with your Primary Advisor during your second year. Your advisor will provide crucial guidance as you start assembling your Exam Committee and compiling your Reading Lists.

While certain elements of the comprehensive exam are standardized (e.g., page length, scheduling, and timing), how students prepare for exams will vary. Thus, students must discuss with their primary advisor and committee how their individual committee will handle exam preparation. Inevitably, there will be variation in how students and faculty prepare for the comprehensive exams. Having a clear understanding with your adviser of how you will prepare for the exams is paramount. Indeed, conversations about the construction of your lists and the types of questions to expect should be a part of the discussion a student has with their adviser (and committee members) at the very beginning of the exam process—as soon as you declare your adviser and/or schedule your exams. When students seek out mentorship, it is critical not only to discuss a faculty member’s broad mentoring style but also to discuss how they approach guiding students through exams.

The point is that the way advisors guide students through the process will vary, and it is critical that students initiate such conversations with their advisor and committee as early as possible so that they can determine the best way to prepare for exams. Students are also encouraged to talk with their peers and graduate students who have already taken exams about exam-preparation strategies that were beneficial to them.

Exam Committee

In the fall of your second year in the program, if you have not yet done so, you must find a primary advisor, work with them to complete a mentoring agreement, and ensure you’ve submitted an updated PhD Progress form with your mentoring agreement to the GPD and GPC. Once you’ve established this relationship, it is time to begin fine-tuning your ideas for your dissertation project so that you can start to approach additional faculty about joining your exam committee.

In your second year, when you begin to consider forming your exam committee, it is vital to approach this decision with an ethos of feminist care. Since the exam committee, in most cases, will typically continue to become your dissertation committee, think of your committee as a small community of thinkers—not as three isolated people. Your committee will collaborate with you throughout this process, as you develop your project and create reading lists that advance the dissertation.

Your Exam Committee consists of three WGSS core faculty members. In most cases, your Exam Committee will become your Dissertation Committee. You should also keep this in mind as you’re assembling your committee and preparing your prospectus to defend later in the spring term. While there are certainly instances where it makes sense to adjust your committee after passing your Comprehensive Exam, students often find it helpful if there is a continuity in mentorship across the exam process and into the writing of the dissertation. Please ensure that you update your [PhD Degree Progress Form](#) with any changes to your committee membership.

Reading Lists

Once you have formed your exam committee, meet with your primary advisor for an initial orientation meeting to begin to discuss how you want to approach creating your Reading Lists and a timeline for taking directed readings. Students are encouraged to discuss the importance of these lists for the exams and the dissertation. The purpose of the Reading List is to help prepare

you for exams; you are designing the architecture of your own exams! The Reading Lists also help you prepare to demonstrate your breadth and depth of knowledge and to show that you are fully prepared to undertake your proposed dissertation research.

The Reading List must be divided into two parts that correspond, in whatever way you and your committee see fit, with these two themes:

1. **Feminist theories/interdisciplinary methods.** This portion of your list should lay the theoretical and/or methodological foundation for your dissertation research.
2. **Dissertation Topic that typically corresponds to at least one of the PhD program's seven areas of specialization.** This portion of your list should lay the foundation for the academic contribution of your dissertation.

Given that projects are often interdisciplinary and span more than one field, and that there may be cases where the theory/methods and specialization lists may overlap (e.g., trans theories/methods and trans studies; Black feminist theory/methods and Black & Women of Color Feminisms; queer theory/methods and LGBTQ/Queer Studies), it is vital to work with your advisor and committee to discuss the best individual approach for building your lists. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all method for creating the Reading Lists.

Typically, a list comprises 30-50 sources. However, you have a great deal of flexibility here. Since every dissertation project is unique (especially in an interdisciplinary program like WGSS), we recognize that each Reading List will be distinct. Students may find it helpful to discuss their Reading Lists with others in their cohort who are also creating lists. You can also reach out to other WGSS PhD students who have already passed their exams to see if they would be willing to share their lists and experiences.

Once you and your advisor have established an initial plan, at a time determined by you and your advisor, we encourage students to bring their entire exam “community” together for a discussion of the reading lists and to develop a plan for the exams. While not an exhaustive list of topics, here is a checklist you can follow to guide that meeting:

- You have two reading lists and three committee members. Depending on faculty members' areas of specialization, does it make sense to work with a single person on a list? If you have multiple members who share research interests, does it make sense for your project to work collaboratively on building a list?
- While 30-50 sources per list is a guide, clarify how many sources the committee expects on each list. Also, discuss what kind of sources will appear and how the exam committee will “count” them (e.g., books, articles, chapters from anthologies, films, and other media). For example, a question that students often ask is: If you are citing three chapters from an anthology, do you list the entire book or the individual chapters?

- Set goals and make a definitive plan for directed readings to help prepare your final reading lists (see the next section for more information on directed readings).
- As you are working on your Reading Lists, what are everyone's expectations for meetings and check-ins?
- For your exams, will the committee work together to design the questions? In some cases, if a student has worked directly with a single faculty member to develop a list, it might make best sense for that person to build the exam question(s) based on that list. However, in other cases, a student may have collaborated with multiple faculty members on a list, necessitating a collaborative effort among the faculty to design question(s).
- Regarding exam questions, each committee will approach the number of questions differently. Ensure to discuss whether the faculty will create one or two questions for each list. Depending on the list, it may make sense to have two questions. For example, for the theories and methods list, the faculty on your committee may determine it is best to have one question that asks you to connect epistemology with method, or another approach could be to ask two distinct questions—one about theory, and another about method.
- For your exams, who will serve as the facilitator? The facilitator is the member of your committee who will send you the questions on the days of your exams and who will be responsible for all bureaucratic elements of the exam process. This is just an administrative role, and, per the University, the only stipulation is that, to maintain impartiality, the facilitator cannot be your primary advisor.

Directed Readings

Directed readings (WST 690) are an excellent way to prepare for your exams. Because you are required to meet regularly with the person supervising your Directed Reading, WST 690 provides you with the opportunity to discuss the materials on your reading lists with your mentors while also developing working relationships with them. You may not enroll in a Directed Reading without permission from the instructor. Generally speaking, Directed Readings should be set up one semester in advance.

Once you have completed your coursework requirements, you can also enroll in Self-Directed Readings (WST 696) while preparing for the exams. In most cases, you would enroll in WST 696 credits with your Primary Advisor. It is up to you two to decide how to incorporate Self-Directed Readings into your exam preparation process and what constitutes satisfactory completion. You may not enroll in a Self-Directed Reading without permission from your Primary Advisor.

Scheduling Your Exams

Students must schedule their exams at least six weeks in advance. This means that students wishing to take their exams at the very beginning of the spring term should meet with their advisor and/or committee at the end of the fall semester to verify that the committee believes they are ready to proceed with the exams. If the committee agrees that you have demonstrated readiness, you should proceed with scheduling the exam. It is also reasonable to wait until the beginning of the spring term to schedule the exams. Still, you and your committee should keep in mind that you will also need to plan your prospectus defense this term, and students may find significant benefit from having time to rest in between the written exam and the oral prospectus defense. The point is that students should be intentional and strategic about this planning.

Once your exams are scheduled, at least one month before your Comprehensive Exam, you must complete the [PhD Student Comprehensive Exam Approval Form](#). Once you complete the form and collect your committee's signatures, send it to the GPD and GPC.

Exam Outcomes

Based on your written exam answers, your committee will determine whether you satisfactorily demonstrated your breadth of knowledge in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (i.e., familiarity with interdisciplinary methods and feminist, queer, and/or trans theories) and indicated your deepening knowledge of your proposed dissertation project. Students will receive written communication of the exam outcome from the exam chair within 1 week of the second exam submission date.

The Comprehensive Exam outcomes can be:

- **Pass:** Exams are well done and reflect a good command of feminist theories, interdisciplinary methods, and the subfields of the proposed dissertation. Students can proceed with submitting the prospectus to their committee and, once approved, schedule the prospectus defense for the end of the spring term.
- **Conditional pass with minor revisions:** Exams are good and reflect a satisfactory command of feminist theories, interdisciplinary methods, and the subfield of the proposed dissertation. However, there are ideas, texts, and analyses that should be refined on the page to help students best prepare for their prospectus defense and dissertation writing. Students should submit these revisions to the exam chair within one week. In some cases, rather than written revisions, the committee may choose to hold an oral reexamination, in which the student will clarify any omissions or limitations in the written exam orally. Then, after the committee approves, the student can proceed with submitting the prospectus to their committee. Once approved, they can schedule the prospectus defense for the end of the spring term.

- **Failed with major revisions:** Exams do not reflect a satisfactory command of feminist theories, interdisciplinary methods, and the subfield of the proposed dissertation. Students who fail their exams are allowed one retake, and they can revise their exam answers in accordance with the written feedback provided to them by the exam chair. In such cases, the student will have two weeks to resubmit their exam answers. The student will not have to complete the revisions in a one-day sitting, as was the case for the first attempt. If the student passes the retake, they can proceed with submitting the prospectus to their committee and, once approved, schedule the prospectus defense for the end of the spring term. Should the student fail the retake/revision, they will be dismissed from the program.
- **Failed with no revisions allowed and immediate dismissal from the program:** Should exams contain any plagiarized content, including the use of generative AI, or otherwise reflect unethical practices that violate the Graduate School [Academic Honesty and Scholarly Misconduct Policies](#), the student will fail the exam, with no option to retake, and be dismissed from the program.

Defending the Prospectus

In the second half of the semester (weeks 8-14), the dissertation Prospectus should be submitted to the student's committee. Within one week of the committee's approval of the written proposal, the student should schedule the defense. Students are responsible for scheduling their defense. Send your committee a "Doodle Poll" (or similar survey) to determine their availability. The Graduate Program Coordinator can help you secure a room on campus with any necessary A/V equipment (in case a committee member will be participating remotely).

The Prospectus will consist of 15-20 pages, inclusive of a bibliography outlining the proposed dissertation project. A successful proposal is a clear and concise overview of the project, including the research methods, scope, chapter breakdown, and the intended contribution to the field. It will also include an appropriate Works Cited/References section.

Students must work on drafts of the proposal with their advisor before submission and scheduling the defense. Students may begin working on this draft well before they take the comprehensive exams. Still, whenever you and your advisor determine that it is the best time to start drafting the proposal, it is essential that it has gone through sufficient revisions before submitting it to the entire committee for consideration.

The Oral defense of the Prospectus will last approximately 1.5 hours. This component occurs as an in-person meeting between you and your committee. However, in some circumstances, the committee and the student may elect to hold this defense virtually. Typically, the exam chair from the comprehensive exam will also chair the prospectus defense. However, if the exam

committee and the dissertation committee differ, the student will need to work with their advisor to determine which committee member will chair the defense. It just cannot be your advisor. The defense chair will serve as “emcee” of the event—facilitating the discussion, keeping track of the time, and overseeing the committee’s decision-making process about whether you have passed the exam.

Students will typically provide a brief presentation of their proposed dissertation project of 15-20 minutes. Then, your committee members will ask you to clarify and/or elaborate on what you submitted for the Prospectus, and, sometimes, respond to points not made in the Prospectus. A significant portion of the defense is devoted to providing guidance on writing the dissertation. The proposal defense is intended as a generative conversation between you and your committee as you begin your dissertation.

Prospectus Defense Outcomes

The Prospectus Defense outcomes can be:

- **Pass:** The dissertation proposal is well planned and presents a clear and concise overview of the project, including the research methods, scope, and chapter breakdown. The literature presented therein is appropriate, and the student’s contribution to the field is clear.
- **Conditional pass with minor revisions:** Overall, the dissertation proposal is well planned and presents a clear and concise overview of the project, including the research methods, scope, and chapter breakdown. The literature presented therein is appropriate, and the student’s contribution to the field is relatively clear. However, there are ideas, texts, and analyses that should be refined on the page to help students best prepare for their dissertation writing. Students should submit these revisions to the defense chair within one week.
- **Failed with major revisions:** The dissertation proposal does not successfully present a clear and concise overview of the project, including the research methods, scope, and chapter breakdown. The literature presented therein is inappropriate or incomplete, and the student’s contribution to the field is unclear. Students who fail their prospectus defense are allowed one retake, and they can revise their proposal in accordance with the written feedback provided to them by the defense chair. In such cases, the student will have two weeks to resubmit their prospectus. Should the student fail to complete the revisions satisfactorily, they will be dismissed from the program.

*Note: Generally speaking, an advisor and the committee will never agree to schedule a defense for a student when the proposal is underdeveloped and will likely end in failure. However, if a student insists on defending the proposal despite expressed concerns from their committee or significantly alters the proposal from the version submitted, then this outcome is possible.

- **Failed with no revisions allowed and immediate dismissal from the program:** Should the prospectus contain any plagiarized content, including the use of generative AI, or otherwise reflect unethical practices that violate the Graduate School [Academic Honesty and Scholarly Misconduct Policies](#), the student will fail the defense, with no option for revisions, and be dismissed from the program.

Upon successfully defending the prospectus, you will “advance to candidacy.” That is, you will become a PhD candidate. Please ensure that you have updated your [Degree Progress Form](#). You will also want to update your CV to reflect this change, as this status matters. PhD candidates are “ABD” (All but Dissertation) when they have completed all the requirements for a PhD but the dissertation. Many grants and fellowships list “advancement to candidacy” as a requirement for eligibility. Similarly, adjunct teaching positions often require that an applicant be a PhD candidate or hold a Master’s degree.

Critically, the Graduate School requires significant information and documentation to facilitate the transition to candidacy. After the proposal defense, students must immediately [complete the WGSS Advancement to Candidacy Form](#) to ensure the timely submission of their paperwork to the Graduate School.

Clarification: Comprehensive Exam & the WGSS MA Degree

Passing the Comprehensive Exam does not mean that you have earned an MA in WGSS. The Comprehensive Exam is a central requirement for the PhD; it cannot be used to fulfill the requirements for the MA (which is an entirely different degree).

Suppose a PhD candidate (i.e., a student who passed their Comprehensive Exam) withdraws from the program before completing their dissertation. In that case, they will have the option of substituting their Comprehensive Exam for the thesis required for the MA degree. As such, they would be able to leave Stony Brook with an MA in WGSS.

If a PhD student who has not taken their Comprehensive Exam wishes to leave the program, they can petition the Graduate Studies Committee for permission to switch into the MA program [using this form](#). If approved, they will work with the Graduate Program Director and their Primary Advisor to determine whether they will complete the degree requirements by writing an MA thesis or by substituting a PhD Comprehensive Exam.

Dissertation Research Credits

After completing your coursework, taking your comprehensive exam, defending your prospectus, and advancing to candidacy, you will still need to register for nine credits to maintain full-time status at the university. Generally speaking, students meet this requirement by enrolling in WST 699 (Dissertation Research on Campus), WST 700 (Dissertation Research off Campus), or WST 701 (Dissertation Research off Campus – International).

You should consult your Dissertation Advisor and/or the Graduate Program Coordinator to determine which designator makes sense for you. In most cases, you will register for nine credits of dissertation research with your Dissertation Advisor.

The Dissertation

The dissertation represents the culmination of your doctoral study and must be an original contribution to the scholarship in your field(s) of expertise. The form of the dissertation is determined by the candidate in consultation with their committee members. A traditional dissertation is approximately 200 pages, double-spaced, and written in standard academic prose. However, the dissertation could also take the form of a book manuscript, a series of journal articles, or a multimodal project that combines academic prose with images or other forms of artistic expression. Thus, the length will vary based on the style of the dissertation.

Once your prospectus is approved, you should talk to your Dissertation Advisor and your other committee members about their expectations for their involvement in the research and writing process. Students should consider creating new [mentoring agreements](#) with their advisor and committee members that outline expectations for the writing process, meetings, and other forms of support desired. Mentoring agreements are a great way of holding both you and your mentors accountable to a specific process. For example, what role do you want each of your committee members to play in the writing process? Some committee members will want to read each chapter as you finish it; others will prefer to wait and read a complete draft of the entire dissertation. Some committee members will be willing to read partial or in-process drafts of chapters; others will prefer to receive more polished drafts. Thus, it is critical to establish these expectations before you begin writing the dissertation.

As another example, how often would you like to meet with your primary advisor and committee members? While you should be meeting regularly with your Dissertation Adviser, it is up to you two to decide what constitutes “regularly.” While it is common for your other committee members to play different and perhaps less active roles in your dissertation process, you should stay in contact with your entire committee to fully benefit from their specializations and to ensure that they are satisfied with the way your research and writing are developing.

As you are nearing completion of your dissertation, you should strategize with your Dissertation Adviser to figure out your timeline for defending, revising, and submitting your dissertation. You should be in touch with your committee members to find out their availability and to discuss how much time they will need to read your completed dissertation.

When your Dissertation Adviser is satisfied with your dissertation draft and you have formatted it in accordance with [the Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses and Dissertations](#), you should

send legible copies of the complete dissertation to your entire Dissertation Committee. In general, plan to provide committee members with at least six weeks to read your dissertation before the scheduled defense, unless explicitly directed otherwise.

Dissertation Defense

The Graduate School requires doctoral students to complete a formal oral defense of their dissertations. All dissertation defenses must take place on campus and require full attendance of your Dissertation Committee. In extenuating circumstances, committee members may attend virtually via Zoom. Any exceptions to this rule require approval from the Dean of the Graduate School.

A significant amount of paperwork is involved in setting up a dissertation defense, which students must attend to proactively well in advance of the actual defense. First, at least five weeks before the defense, students must complete the [Appointment of Dissertation Committee & Authorization to Schedule a Dissertation Date Form](#). This form is internal to the department and facilitates our submission of the required [Dissertation Examining Committee Appointment and Authorization to Schedule a Dissertation Date](#) form to the Graduate School on your behalf, which the GPC or GPD is required to submit to the Graduate School at least four weeks before the scheduled defense.

Also, Dissertation Defenses must be announced at least three weeks in advance and are open to all interested members of the university community. While you and your committee may decide to hold the examination portion of your defense (where they ask you questions about your research) as a committee-only event, the presentation you give on your dissertation must be a public event. The Graduate School will advertise your defense campus-wide.

At least three weeks before your defense, you must complete the [Doctoral Defense Announcement Form](#). This form must include an abstract of your dissertation and details on the time and location of your defense. You must obtain approval for this form from your Dissertation Advisor and the Graduate Program Director. The Graduate Program Coordinator will then oversee its submission to the Graduate School.

Students are responsible for scheduling their own Dissertation Defenses. Send your Dissertation Committee a “Doodle Poll” (or similar survey) to determine their availability. The Graduate Program Coordinator can help you secure a room on campus with any necessary A/V equipment (in case a committee member will be participating remotely).

One of your Dissertation Committee members (not your Dissertation Adviser, but someone who is WGSS Core or Associated Faculty) must serve as Defense Chair during the meeting. Like the Comprehensive Exam Chair, this is an administrative role. The chair will facilitate your Dissertation Defense and, if necessary, keep time during the event. You and your Dissertation Adviser should discuss who to choose.

You and your Dissertation Advisor can discuss the details of your defense, but defenses are typically structured like this:

- **Opening Statement.** You deliver a 15- to 20-minute opening statement, typically using

a PowerPoint Presentation, to provide an overview of your project, methodology, and overarching argument.

- **Questions from Committee.** Each member of your committee is given approximately 20 minutes to comment on and ask questions about your project. In most cases, the most “outside” committee members go first (i.e., the person who had the least engagement in your project). Your Dissertation Advisor will be the last committee member to ask questions.
- **Public Discussion.** Faculty, students, and other community members in attendance will have an opportunity to comment, ask questions, or provide feedback on your project.
- **Deliberation.** You (and the audience in attendance) will be asked to leave the room while the committee confers.
- **Decision.** You will be invited back into the room, and the Defense Chair will announce the committee’s decision.

As part of the decision, the committee may choose to approve the dissertation as written or

approve the dissertation subject to minor revisions. Rest assured, your committee will not approve the scheduling of a defense that is likely to end in failure. However, suppose the defense conversation leads to the committee requiring revisions before submission to the Graduate School. In that case, the committee will provide the candidate with a written statement of the needed revisions.

It is up to you and your Dissertation Adviser to determine whether a final review of the revisions will take place. The final dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School within three months of a successful defense or by the semester deadline on the Graduate School calendar, whichever comes first. If a student intends to graduate, they must submit by the posted [deadline](#).

Final Steps

As you near the completion of your degree, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the Graduate School’s policies and deadlines related to submitting your dissertation and applying for graduation. These policies are, in most cases, non-negotiable, and these deadlines are often inflexible. You should let the Graduate Program Director know that you are preparing to finish your PhD, and you should be in touch with the Graduate Program Coordinator with any questions or concerns as you proceed.

Students should allocate sufficient time to review [The Graduate School’s requirements for preparing and submitting theses and dissertations](#). The format is very detailed and complex, with stringent requirements. You should consult these guidelines before circulating your dissertation to your committee members before your defense, but you absolutely must make sure your final dissertation meets these standards before submitting it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School uses [ADOBE Sign](#) for the final signature page. Please [follow their instructions](#) for acquiring all the necessary signatures.

Finally, students must apply for graduation. To do so, you will need to complete Stony Brook's [Graduation Application](#).

M.A. REQUIREMENTS

At-A-Glance

Graduate Coursework: 30 total credits (10 total classes)

Core Courses: 9 credits (3 classes)

WGSS Electives: 6 credits (2 classes)

Additional Electives: 15 credits (5 classes)

Thesis Proposal

Final Thesis Project

Graduate Coursework

In addition to the minimum requirements of the Graduate School, WGSS MA students are required to complete 30 credits of graduate coursework. At Stony Brook, this is the equivalent of 10 classes. You must take three core classes (9 credits) and seven elective classes (21 credits).

Core Courses

WST 600: Feminist Interdisciplinary Histories and Methods (Offered Spring)

WST 601: Feminist Theories (Offered Fall)

WST 698: Practicing WGSS/Teaching Practicum (Offered Spring)

All students seeking the MA must take the required courses listed above when they are offered.

During your first year, you are encouraged to take WST 601 in the Fall and WST 600 and WST 698 in the Spring. These courses cannot be replaced by Independent Study or Directed Reading credits, except in the most unusual circumstances, and only upon petition to the Graduate Program Director. This petition would need to be signed by the instructor supervising the Independent Study or Directed Reading and approved by the Graduate Studies Committee. You are also required to take seven elective graduate courses. Two of those courses must be WGSS Elective Courses. You have considerable flexibility in selecting the remaining nine elective courses.

Elective Coursework

WGSS Electives

WST 610. During most semesters, the WGSS department offers at least one section of WST 610: Advanced Topics in WGSS. Different instructors teach the course each year,

so every iteration covers a new topic. You can take this course more than once.

WST 600 or 601. Alternatively, you may wish to fulfill one of your 600-level WGSS Elective requirements by retaking WST 600 or 601. Each year, a different instructor teaches the Feminist Interdisciplinary Histories and Methods and Feminist Theories seminars, resulting in significant variations in content from year to year. As such, WST 600 and 601 can serve as valuable electives for students.

WGSS-Approved 500-level & 600-level Electives. MA students can also count 500-level or 600-level gender- or sexuality-themed classes offered by another department toward their WGSS elective requirement. Students should contact the Graduate Program Director before enrolling in the course to seek approval. The Graduate Studies Committee will review any requests to substitute non-WST classes for the WGSS elective requirement.

Additional Electives

To fulfill the remaining Additional Electives requirement, you must take five other 500- or 600-level graduate courses. You are welcome to take these classes in any department at Stony Brook.

MA students can count one WGSS Independent Study (WST 599) toward the Additional Electives requirement. You may find it helpful to use the independent study as an opportunity to start delving into your thesis topic and developing your thesis proposal.

MA students are also permitted to count six credits of WGSS Thesis Research (WST 598) toward the Additional Electives requirement. You should enroll in these credits only after completing most of your coursework and obtaining the approval of your Primary Advisor.

Foreign Language Requirement

The Department does not have a foreign language requirement. However, students who plan to undertake research that requires proficiency in a language other than English are encouraged to pursue any learning resources and support required to carry out such work, and to discuss this matter with their advisor and the Graduate Program Director as necessary.

Master's Thesis

Thesis Committee

MA students must complete a thesis requiring original research on a topic appropriate to Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. During your first year, you will choose a Thesis Advisor. By the end of that year, you will need to have assembled a Thesis Committee. Your Thesis Committee consists of your Thesis Advisor and two other professors (at least one of whom must be WGSS Core or Associated Faculty). This committee will supervise the completion of your Thesis.

Thesis Proposal

Once you've established your Thesis Committee, you will consult with your Thesis Advisor as you prepare your Thesis Proposal. In some cases, the other members of your Thesis Committee will play a role in advising the development of your proposal. You should communicate regularly with each of your committee members to make sure they approve of the direction your project is taking.

There are no set guidelines for formatting your proposal. That said, proposals usually include the following components: 1) title; 2) project overview; 3) research methods; 4) scholarly contributions; and 5) brief bibliography. Your Thesis Advisor will offer guidance as you determine the best approach for your project.

Once your Thesis Advisor has approved your proposal, you can share your proposal with your Thesis Committee for final approval. Once your committee has approved your proposal (this can be done via email), you should update your Degree Progress Form and inform the Graduate Program Director. If you are planning a Proposal Review, make arrangements with your committee in advance to ensure that you submit your proposal well in advance, allowing everyone sufficient time to review it.

Recommended: Proposal Review

As you're working on your proposal, you should talk to your Thesis Advisor about the possibility of holding a Proposal Review. You are not formally required to hold a review, but students often find the process of meeting with their entire committee before beginning their research quite helpful.

Students are responsible for scheduling their Proposal Reviews. Talk to your Thesis Advisor about the best time to send your Thesis Committee a "Doodle Poll" (or a similar survey) to determine their availability. At the very least, you should schedule your review at least one month in advance. The Graduate Program Coordinator can assist you in securing a room with any necessary A/V equipment, in case a committee member is participating remotely or if you plan to use visual aids during the review.

The Proposal Review will last about one hour. The purpose of the review is to give you the opportunity to discuss your proposed project with your Thesis Committee and to demonstrate that you are ready to proceed with your research. This is a really exciting event. Your entire committee will be together and totally focused on your work. Take advantage of the opportunity. Ask questions. Seek advice.

If your Thesis Committee determines that your proposal is satisfactory and that you are prepared to begin the research and writing process, you can get started on your project. In some cases, your committee might request revisions before granting its approval. It is up to you and your committee to determine how long you will have to make revisions and who will need to review your updated proposal before you move forward with research and writing. Once the Proposal Review is complete and your proposal has been approved, you should update your Degree Progress Form and inform the Graduate Program Director.

Thesis Research Credits

After completing your coursework requirements, you will still need to register for 9 credits to maintain full-time status at the university. Generally speaking, students meet this requirement by enrolling in a combination of WST 597 (Directed Reading for Master's Students), WST 598 (Thesis Research), or WST 599 (Independent Study). You should consult your Thesis Advisor and/or the Graduate Program Coordinator to determine which designator makes sense for you.

The Thesis

The Thesis represents the culmination of your master's degree and must be a substantive study of a WGSS topic based on original research. Since every project is different (especially in an interdisciplinary program like WGSS), we know that theses may vary in length and take different forms. You will work with your Thesis Advisor and the rest of your committee to establish clear expectations and guidelines for your project. Generally speaking, MA theses can range from 10,000 to 20,000 words, but should not exceed 50,000 words.

Once your proposal is approved, you should talk to your Thesis Advisor and your other committee members about their expectations for their involvement in the research and writing process. You should maintain regular contact with your Thesis Advisor, but your other committee members may play different and perhaps less active roles. That said, it is wise to keep your entire committee up-to-date on your progress and any significant changes to your project, ensuring that you benefit from their specializations and that they are satisfied with your progress.

Final Steps

As you are nearing completion of your thesis, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the Graduate School's policies and deadlines related to submitting your thesis and applying for graduation. These policies are, in most cases, non-negotiable, and these deadlines are often inflexible. You should let the Graduate Program Director know that you are preparing to finish your MA, and you should be in touch with the Graduate Program Coordinator with any questions or concerns as you proceed.

You should also start strategizing with your Thesis Advisor to figure out your timeline for defending (if desired), revising, and submitting your thesis. If you are not opting for a defense, then you will need to talk with your committee members to discuss how much time they will need to read and provide feedback on the full draft of your thesis. Students should work with their advisors to ensure that they meet the [deadline for final submissions set by the Graduate School](#).

Students should allocate sufficient time to review [The Graduate School's requirements for preparing and submitting theses and dissertations](#). The format is very detailed and complex, with stringent requirements. You should consult these guidelines before circulating your dissertation to your committee members before your defense, but you absolutely must make sure your final dissertation meets these standards before submitting it to the Graduate School. The Graduate School uses ADOBE Sign for the final signature page. Please [follow their instructions](#) for acquiring all the necessary signatures.

Finally, students must apply for graduation. To do so, you will need to complete Stony Brook's [Graduation Application](#).

Optional: Thesis Defense

MA students have the option to schedule a Thesis Defense after completing a full draft of their thesis. A defense provides you with the opportunity to share your research in a public setting with the broader WGSS community.

Students are responsible for scheduling their own Thesis Defenses. At least a month before your defense, send your Thesis Committee a "Doodle Poll" (or similar survey) to determine their availability. Confirm with your committee members how far in advance they need to receive your full thesis before your defense. The Graduate Program Coordinator can help you secure a room on campus with any necessary A/V equipment.

You and your Thesis Adviser can discuss the details of your defense, but they typically involve three parts: 1) Student Presentation (approximately 15-20 minutes, typically using PowerPoint); 2) Questions from Thesis Committee (15 minutes per committee member); 3) Public Discussion (questions from other faculty, students, and community members in attendance).

After the questions and answer period ends, you (and any audience members) will be asked to leave the room while the committee confers. The committee may determine that you have defended your thesis, with or without revisions required. If your Thesis requires revisions based on the committee discussion, it is up to you and your Thesis Adviser to determine whether a final review of the revisions will take place before submission to the Graduate School.

ADVISING & MENTORING

First-Year Advising

Upon admission to the PhD or MA program, your default advisor is the Graduate Program Director. You will meet with the Graduate Program Director shortly before your first semester begins to discuss your coursework plans for the year and to talk about your larger goals for graduate study.

As you begin the program, please consult with the Graduate Program Director to address any questions you may have regarding degree requirements, research projects, teaching activities, or professional development. At a minimum, you should meet with the Graduate Program Director at least once more during the fall and on an ongoing basis during the spring. In sum, the Graduate Program Director will guide you through your first year in the program and will oversee your Annual Review at the end of the spring semester.

Advising Structure for PhD Students

You will need to select and formally designate a WGSS Core Faculty member to serve as your

Primary Advisor by the end of your second year. You are welcome to do this as early as the end of your first year or at any point during your second year. The Graduate Program Director will continue serving in this role until you identify your new advisor and can offer guidance on making this selection. You must have a Primary Advisor in place by the end of your second year.

Once you have identified a potential advisor, completed your advisor declaration form, and submitted this form, alongside your mentoring agreement to the GPC and GPD, your primary Advisor will now supervise your progress through the rest of your coursework and through the Comprehensive Exam. At this time, you will also need to begin to identify your other committee members with whom you will work towards your exams, and who will also serve as mentors in the PhD program. Make sure that you update your Degree Progress Form with the names of your advisor and all committee members.

After passing your exam and before your prospectus defense, you will need to decide if you will continue with the same Advisor and committee. In most cases, there is a smooth transition between the exams and the proposal defense, and no changes to the committee are desired. That said, there may be instances where students choose to switch advisors or committee members as they shift into the dissertation process. As you make this decision, you should seek guidance from the Graduate Program Director or the Department Chair. And if you make any changes to your committee, be sure to update your Degree Progress Form with this information.

Advising Structure for MA Students

By the end of your first year, you need to select and formally designate a WGSS Core Faculty member to serve as your Thesis Advisor. You will need to have a conversation with that professor about your interest in working with them, ask them specifically to take on the role of your Primary Advisor, and let the Graduate Program Director know this information. Your Thesis Advisor will oversee your progress through any remaining coursework, the design of your thesis proposal, and the execution and completion of your thesis project. Students should ensure they update their Degree Progress Form with this information. It is expected that your Thesis Advisor will oversee your project through its completion. However, if you or your advisor wants to change this relationship, either of you can initiate a conversation about this possibility with the Graduate Program Director or the Department Chair.

Selecting an Advisor

During your first year, you should focus on getting to know WGSS Core and Associated Faculty. You can take courses with them, read their work, attend their talks, interact with them at campus events, and/or visit them during their office hours. Your goal is to start identifying professors with research interests and mentoring styles that would make them appropriate advisors or committee members for you.

Keep in mind that you will be working closely with your Primary Advisor as you progress through the major milestones of your program. They will oversee your entire research and writing process, from crafting the proposal to making the final revisions. Your advisor should be your strongest advocate when you're applying for jobs, awards, fellowships, or other competitive

positions. Your advisor should be enthusiastic about the intellectual merits of your project, appreciate and understand the scholarly contributions you are hoping to make, and be supportive of your abilities as a researcher and a teacher. In some cases, that person may not specialize in your particular field, and that is okay. This is why you have an entire committee supervising your dissertation or thesis.

You will need to work with someone who has a depth of knowledge in your research area, who can provide you with informed guidance and constructive criticism of your work. You will want to work with mentors who will schedule regular meetings, give comprehensive feedback on your writing, and provide mentorship related to your broader professional development (i.e., publications, conference activities, teaching portfolio, grants and fellowships, etc.). You might find all of this in a single advisor, but it is more likely that multiple people will fill these roles. Your goal is to assemble a committee that can collectively support your specific dissertation or thesis.

As you build relationships with faculty and later formally ask people to become mentors, it is essential to know what forms of support you need and to have conversations with faculty about their approach to mentoring and their capacity to meet your needs. Exceptions for both you and your mentor must be discussed and mutually agreed upon to foster successful mentoring relationships. To facilitate such conversations between students and faculty, the Graduate School has developed [mentoring agreements](#) that all students must complete with their primary advisor and submit to the GPD and GPC for record-keeping purposes. It is up to you if you use this agreement with all your committee members, but it is highly encouraged.

Advisor-Advisee Responsibilities

Maintaining a professional relationship with a supportive advisor is a crucial aspect of development for graduate students. To form a helpful and productive relationship, it is essential to remember that both you and your advisor have specific responsibilities.

Advisee Responsibilities

- Conduct scholarly pursuits in an ethical, academically honest manner.
- Read, understand, and adhere to university guidelines concerning discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct.
- Maintain open and regular lines of communication with your advisor. [Establish explicit, well-documented](#), and mutually agreed upon expectations for your advising relationship at the outset, and with the understanding that you will review them periodically.
- Initiate communication with your advisor. You must take an active role in scheduling meetings and maintaining open communication.
- Start conversations about your academic progress, professional development, pedagogical practices, and overall career goals. Revisit these topics with your advisor on a regular basis.
- Discuss with your advisor the process by which you will receive feedback on your work as you proceed through the program and reach different milestones.
- Share concerns regarding your academic progress. You are not required to divulge private information about your personal life, but you should inform your advisor if

you foresee any disruptions to your degree completion.

- Take ownership of your academic progress. Familiarize yourself with the Graduate Bulletin and relevant university policies and procedures. Stay informed about the department's degree requirements by reading the program handbook, meeting with your advisor, and consulting with the Graduate Program Director and other department representatives.
- Develop a timeline for completing your degree and achieving other professional goals in consultation with your advisor. Together, regularly revisit your timeline, discuss your progress, and make adjustments as necessary.
- Dedicate significant and productive time to your graduate study – not just your coursework and other formal degree requirements, but also your broader intellectual development. Pay attention to the latest developments in your field(s). Read widely.
- Seek, welcome, and respond to feedback from your advisor. Ask clarifying questions to resolve ambiguities. Respond to feedback professionally, even when you disagree with your advisor's comments. Learning to respond productively to criticism is a key element in graduate training.
- Make writing a habit. Cultivate a writing practice that suits your goals, work habits, and personal lifestyle.
- Start informal study clusters and/or official reading groups. Find a writing partner, and/or form a writing group.
- Take ownership of your professional development. Think seriously about your short- and long-term goals and consider how pursuing a graduate WGSS degree will help you move closer to achieving them. Remember why you are here.
- Take advantage of the professionalization resources available across campus and beyond. Attend publishing workshops. Sign up for pedagogy seminars. Make appointments with fellowship advisors. Join writing bootcamps. Seek help from career counselors.
- Attend lectures, conferences, and public intellectual events. Introduce yourself to senior scholars in your field(s). Network with emerging scholars and other graduate students.
- Build a supportive peer network. Share information with other students, and support one another as you navigate the various stages of graduate school.
- Respect the responsibilities of your advisor. Allow sufficient time for your advisor to provide feedback on drafts in advance of submission deadlines. Talk to them about their expectations.
- Give your advisor ample notice when requesting letters of recommendation. Ask them how much time they need and what materials they will require to meet the specified deadlines.
- Be considerate of your advisor's other time commitments (i.e., other mentoring obligations, teaching duties, research and writing, department and campus service, and professional obligations beyond the university).
- Respect your advisor's privacy. Remember that your advisor is here (and only qualified) to provide intellectual and professional support, not legal, emotional, or psychological counseling.

Advisor Responsibilities

- Conduct advising in an ethical, academically honest way.
- Read, understand, and adhere to university guidelines concerning discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct.
- Maintain open and regular lines of communication with advisees. Explain mentoring philosophy and advising style to potential advisees. Establish explicit and mutually agreed upon expectations for advising relationships from the outset. [Document the established guidelines](#). Revisit these expectations regularly.
- Communicate with advisees regularly, respectfully, and professionally.
- Discuss the advisee's academic progress, professional development, pedagogical practices, and overall career goals on an ongoing basis.
- Address problems or miscommunication immediately so that issues can be remedied as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Aid the academic progress of advisees by providing consistent, encouraging, and intellectually rigorous support.
- Supervise the advisee's progress toward the degree. Advisors should stay informed about general degree requirements and Graduate School procedures; however, it is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the details of department and university policies.
- Offer guidance in choosing courses, preparing for degree milestones, choosing a dissertation or thesis topic, assembling a committee, and developing a prospectus or proposal.
- Guide advisees in developing a timeline for completing their degree and achieving other professional goals. Encourage them to regularly review the timeline, discuss their progress, and make adjustments as necessary.
- Give prompt, thorough, and intellectually challenging feedback on the advisee's work throughout their graduate study. Feedback should be honest and, when necessary, critical; however, it should always be respectful and constructive.
- Provide timely written feedback on the advisee's formal academic writing (i.e., article drafts, conference abstracts, dissertation chapters, etc.).
- Offer advice on publishing beyond the dissertation, including journal articles, non-academic publications, and turning the dissertation into a book manuscript.
- Recognize the diverse goals, needs, and backgrounds of advisees. Be willing to employ various mentoring strategies to support students as they encounter different challenges on their path to degree completion.
- Aid the professional development of advisees by providing regular, tailored, and informed support.
- Initiate conversations about the advisee's professional goals. Be open to a wide range of career choices. Support advisees in pursuing academic and non-academic careers (while being upfront about the limits of one's mentoring expertise).
- Refer advisees to relevant resources and support services on campus and beyond. Help students develop a range of professional skills that will make them competitive for positions in their given field(s).
- Introduce advisees to other faculty and graduate students on campus and beyond who have complementary research interests. Encourage students to build supportive peer networks and to assemble a constellation of mentors that includes professors outside

WGSS and beyond Stony Brook.

- Share information about relevant conferences, archival sources, teaching resources, recent publications, and funding opportunities.
- Offer guidance on applying to, presenting at, and attending conferences.
- Provide timely feedback on the advisee's grant applications and fellowship proposals.
- Write letters of recommendation for awards, fellowships, teaching positions, and other job opportunities. When students provide the necessary materials promptly, advisors are responsible for meeting recommendation deadlines.
- Help advisees prepare for the academic job market by demystifying the process, providing feedback on their materials, and coordinating mock interviews and job talks.
- Be considerate of advisees' other responsibilities within and beyond the academy. Hold advisees to high yet attainable standards. Allow a reasonable amount of time for students to prepare the requested materials and reach significant milestones.
- Help advisees set specific, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals. Encourage them to devise timelines that take into account their unique situation.
- Respect advisees' privacy. Show reasonable discretion when communicating about students with the department. Let advisees know if or when potentially sensitive information may need to be shared.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS: DEPARTMENT & UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Classifications

At Stony Brook, full-time graduate students are classified according to their degree program and their previous graduate training. This classification system is internal to the university, so your academic level won't really matter beyond our campus. Still, it is crucial to know how you are classified, as this may affect your eligibility for internal awards.

G1. First-year master's or advanced graduate certificate student who has completed less than twenty-four graduate credits. G1 students are required to register for nine credits per semester; however, they may choose to register for 12 credits for one or two semesters during their first year.

G2. An advanced master's or advanced graduate certificate student who has completed twenty-four or more graduate credits. G2 students are required to register for nine credits per semester.

G3. First-year PhD graduate student who has completed fewer than twenty-four graduate credits. G3 students must register for nine credits per semester, but may wish to register for 12 credits for one or two semesters during their first year.

G4. An advanced PhD graduate student who has completed twenty-four or more graduate credits. G4 students are required to register for nine credits per semester.

G5. An advanced graduate student enrolled in a doctoral degree program who has been advanced to candidacy for the doctoral degree by Day 10 of a semester or term. G5 students are required to register for nine credits, unless instructed otherwise.

A G1 will be automatically converted to a G2 when the student has completed and received grades for 24 or more graduate credits at Stony Brook; a G3 will be automatically converted to a G4 when the student has completed and received grades for 24 or more graduate credits at Stony Brook. Incompletes are not completed credits. The conversion of G4 to G5 is an administrative change made by WGSS and the Graduate School upon advancement to candidacy. For more information on academic levels and maintaining full-time status, please refer to the latest version of the [Graduate Bulletin](#).

Time Limits

[The Graduate Bulletin](#) outlines the university's time limits for graduate degree programs. Students can request an extension of time limits using [this form](#).

The time limit for a doctoral degree is seven years for a student who holds a previous graduate degree or has completed 24 credits of graduate study in a related degree program. For all other students, the time limit for completing a doctoral degree is seven years after completing 24 graduate-level credits at Stony Brook University. For full-time MA Students, they must complete all degree requirements within three years. This applies to all first-time matriculated students enrolled in the Graduate School.

In exceptional cases where the program cannot be completed within these periods, students may petition for an extension of the time limit. These petitions require the approval of your advisor and the Graduate Program Director. The WGSS program and/or the Graduate School may require evidence that the student remains properly prepared for degree completion. For instance, PhD students may be required to pass the Comprehensive Exam again to be permitted to continue their work. Please refer to the latest version of the [Graduate Bulletin](#) for more information on extension requests.

In light of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, all Stony Brook University Graduate School students who were active during Spring 2020 were granted a one-year time limit extension to complete their degree requirements. These changes do not apply to subsequent terms.

Satisfactory Progress

Graduate Student Annual Evaluation

At the end of every academic year, in May, the faculty meet to conduct a collaborative departmental review of each student's progress in the program.

To facilitate this review, faculty rely on:

- Feedback from each student's primary advisor.

- Input from core WGSS faculty with whom students took courses (if applicable).
- Information provided on the student's faculty-submitted TA evaluation form, or student evaluations (depending on teaching assignment).
- The student's yearly Self-Evaluation Form, completed in consultation with their advisor.
- The student's Degree Progress Form or MA Checklist Form.
- Any incident reports added to the student's file during the year.

Before the departmental annual review, ideally in April, students should schedule a meeting with their advisor to discuss their yearly evaluation. First-year students will meet with the Graduate Program Director. MA students will meet with their Thesis Advisors. PhD students who have not advanced to candidacy will meet with their Primary Advisors, and PhD candidates will meet with their Dissertation Advisors. Your advisor may ask you to bring additional materials to the meeting (e.g., CV, writing samples, syllabi from the courses you've taught). After your meeting, you should make any final changes to your Self-Evaluation Form and Degree Progress Form (if applicable).

Students must ensure that they have submitted their yearly [Self-Evaluation Form](#) and [Degree Progress Form](#) or [MA Check List Form](#) to the GPC and GPD by May 1st. Students should reattach last year's Degree Progress Form even if there are no changes. Failure to submit these forms will put students at risk of not being in Good Standing in the program.

Students' self-evaluation forms are critical to this review. The self-evaluation form is vital because it provides faculty with additional information about students' progress and accomplishments, as well as areas where they need support. Additionally, when identifying milestones and achievements, students compile information that should be used to update their CVs.

When the WGSS Core Faculty meets to discuss graduate student progress at the final department meeting, a significant amount of time is dedicated to discussing each of the first-year PhD and MA students, with a focus on their grades, written work, seminar contributions, and, if relevant, their performance as teaching assistants. The department collectively evaluates each student's progress and discusses how to support them best to ensure their continued success in the program. For students in their second year and beyond, the departmental review begins with a short report from the student's advisor. If the advisor affirms a student's satisfactory progress, the discussion period is often brief. However, if the advisor identifies issues or concerns (which would have already been discussed during the advisor-advisee meeting), a more extended discussion may take place about next steps, and the Graduate Studies Committee may convene at a later date to discuss the best path forward.

By the end of May, the Graduate Program Director will send each student an Annual Review Letter. Students who have made satisfactory progress toward their degree and have satisfactorily completed their Teaching Assistantship duties will receive a letter confirming that they are in "good standing." In cases where students have struggled to make satisfactory progress toward their degree or have fallen short in completing their Teaching Assistantship duties, the letter will outline the department's concerns and will suggest a plan of action for getting back on track and re-entering "good standing." Depending on the reasons for falling into "Not in Good Standing," and in accordance with [the Graduate School policies](#), students may be placed on Academic Probation (see Academic Probation below).

Good Standing

“Good standing” reflects the minimum requirements that WGSS students must meet to remain in the program. PhD students who fail to meet these minimum standards risk losing their Teaching Assistantship, will be placed on probation, and will be subject to dismissal if they have not returned to Good Standing after one year. MA students who do not show satisfactory progress in their first year will be placed on probation.

PhD Students

The following defines the minimum requirements for satisfactory progress for PhD students:

- Maintain at least a 3.5 average, with no course below B-, in each semester of graduate study.
- Accumulate no more than two incomplete grades in any one semester and not exceed the one-year maximum time limit for each incomplete.
- Receive a satisfactory Annual Evaluation in the spring semester of the first year of study and each subsequent year.
- Students must ensure that they have submitted their yearly Self-Evaluation Form and Degree Progress Form to the GPC and GPD by May 1st as part of their Annual Review.
- Finish all 48 credits of Graduate Coursework in the first three years of study.
- Take the Comprehensive Exam no later than one year after completion of coursework.
- Complete the Prospectus Defense within 3 months of satisfactory completion of the Comprehensive Exam.
- Have no violations of the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or violations of [Academic Honesty and Scholarly Misconduct policies](#).

MA Students

The following defines the minimum limits for satisfactory progress for full-time MA students:

- Maintain a 3.5 GPA, with no course below B-, in each semester of graduate study.
- Accumulate no more than two incomplete grades in any one semester, and complete all incompletes by the scheduled deadline.
- Receive a satisfactory end-of-year evaluation in the spring semester of their first year.
- Students must ensure that they have submitted their yearly Self-Evaluation Form and MA Check List Form to the GPC and GPD by May 1st as part of their Annual Review.
- Have no violations of the [Student Code of Conduct](#) or violations of [Academic Honesty and Scholarly Misconduct policies](#).

“Not in Good Standing” and Academic Probation

In accordance with [the Graduate School policies](#), students will be placed on Academic Probation when a student’s cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.0 (B) for grades earned in courses numbered 500 and above taken at Stony Brook. Temporary grades (I and NR),

missing grades, and those grades for which no numerical equivalents are defined (P, S, U, and R) are not calculated in determining the eligibility for academic probation.

Students may be on probation for a maximum of two semesters. If the student's overall GPA has been raised to 3.0 (B) by the end of the next semester of enrollment after being first notified of probation, the student will be returned to regular status. However, if a student on academic probation fails to achieve a 3.0 cumulative GPA by the end of the second semester on probation, they will not be permitted to re-enroll and will be dismissed from the program. A student enrolled part-time who has accumulated six semester credits with a cumulative average below 3.0 will have two semesters, or six additional credits (whichever comes first), to bring their cumulative GPA to 3.0.

A student who has changed a registered area of graduate studies may, upon the request of the new program, have their record treated as two separate records. The GPA for the new area of graduate studies may be calculated from the beginning of the semester in which the change became effective.

Academic Dismissal

In accordance with [the Graduate School policies](#), students will be dismissed from the university if they have been on academic probation or have received two consecutive semesters of unsatisfactory performance evaluations from the program immediately preceding the dismissal. The WGSS GPD notifies students in writing when they are placed on program probation, with a copy of the letter sent to the Graduate School. Students are required to have received this letter before the first day of classes of the semester in which the probation takes effect, and it must state the reason(s) for the probation, the possible consequences of the probation, and the possible remedies for it.

Students may be dismissed without having been placed on probation as described above, only in cases where they fail to pass required examinations or milestones as stated in published departmental policy, or in cases of proven academic dishonesty.

The Dean of the Graduate School will issue notifications of dismissal from the University and will communicate them to the student in writing, explaining the reasons for the dismissal. The student will have seven days to respond to this letter before the dismissal is processed and the student is blocked from further registration.

Suggested Timeline for the PhD Program

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
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Fall WST 601 WST 680 Elective Spring WST 600 WST 698 Elective	Fall Elective Elective Elective Spring Elective Elective Elective -or WST 690/696	Fall WST 610 WST 690/696 WST 690/696 Spring WST 690/696 WST 696 WST 696 *You should aim to do a WST 690/696 for each of the two parts on your Exam Reading List	Fall WST 699/700/701 (9 credits) Spring WST 699/700/701 (9 credits)	Fall WST 699/700/701 (9 credits) Spring WST 699/700/701 (9 credits)
Milestones Settle in to Grad School Identify Potential Advisor & Mentors	Milestones Complete Seminars/ Coursework Select Primary Advisor Comprehensive Exam Preparation: - Assemble Committee - Compile Reading List	Milestones Fall: Study for Exam Draft Prospectus Spring: Take Exam “Defend” Prospectus	Milestones Dissertation Research & Writing	Milestones Defend Dissertation

Suggested Timeline for the MA Program

Year 1		Year 2	
Fall WST 601 Elective Elective	Spring WST 600 WST 698 Elective	Fall Elective Elective WST 598* *WST 598 must be arranged with the advisor at least one semester in advance	Spring WST 598* (9 credits)

Milestones By the End of the Year: Identify Thesis Advisor Choose Thesis Topic Start Assembling Thesis Committee	Milestones Fall: Complete Proposal Review Thesis Research (consider taking an Independent Study on your thesis topic for elective credit with one of your committee members) Spring: Finish Thesis Project
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Advanced Graduate Certificates

WGSS PhD and MA students have the option of completing an advanced graduate certificate while pursuing their degree in WGSS. Certificates are designed to focus on a specific area within a field. They can be an excellent way for you to develop advanced skills and a solid background in a specialized field. You can pursue certificates in Art and Philosophy, Creative Writing, Media, Art, Culture, & Technology (MACT), Writing & Rhetoric, among others.

PhD students may find it easier to incorporate certificates into their course of study, but MA students are also welcome to pursue certificates. You should discuss your certificate plans with your advisor, and you will need the permission of the Graduate Program Director to enroll officially. That said, the WGSS Department cannot advise students on certificate requirements. You should seek advising from those departments directly.

Residence Requirements

The university requires students to take at least two consecutive semesters of full-time graduate study at Stony Brook in the program granting the degree. The purpose of the residence requirement is to ensure that graduate students participate in the professional life of the program beyond class attendance.

Leaves of Absence

At times, for various reasons, a student may need to take a leave of absence from their graduate studies. A leave of absence may be taken for a single semester or for up to one year. The Graduate Program Director and the Dean of the Graduate School must approve leaves. Please refer to the latest version of the Graduate Bulletin for up-to-date information on the university's [Leave of Absence policies](#). After reading the Graduate School policies, if you decide to take a leave of absence, you will need to complete this [Request for Leave of Absence Form](#).

Stony Brook Parental Leave Policy

The Stony Brook Parental Leave Policy enables graduate students to maintain full-time, registered-student status and facilitates their return to full participation in class work, research, teaching, and clinical training.

The Parental Leave Policy includes provisions for academic extensions and relief from regular teaching, research, clinical, or training duties. For students receiving stipend support as Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants, or Research Assistants, the Graduate School also provides interim financial support. The Parental Leave Policy guidelines encourage open communication among students, their advisors, Graduate Program Directors (GPD), and supervisors; the goal is to accommodate students' needs while minimizing the disruption to their graduate training activities and responsibilities. International students should also consult with the [Visa and Immigration Services Office](#).

For more information on eligibility and conditions, please see [the Stony Brook Parental Leave Policy](#).

TEACHING (PH.D. STUDENTS)

Teaching & Graduate Education

Teaching is a vital part of graduate education. Teaching Assistantships are the primary means through which WGSS PhD students access funding at Stony Brook. Beyond that, however, the department firmly believes that formal teaching experiences and a background in feminist pedagogy are key components of doctoral degree programs in our field. One of the best ways to learn how to teach and how to communicate our research expertise is to gain on-the-ground experience in developing syllabi, designing lesson plans, facilitating classroom discussions, and crafting assignments and assessment techniques. Our focus on pedagogy is one of our greatest strengths as a department, serving our students well in preparing them for the academic job market.

PhD students play a crucial role in the WGSS Department's undergraduate program – as mentors, graduate instructors, teaching assistants, and “ambassadors” recruiting new majors and minors. As such, we are aware of the dual role you occupy at the university, as both a student and a worker. We aim to provide you with meaningful and manageable teaching assignments that will allow you to build your Teaching Portfolio and advance your research agenda. WGSS class sizes are among the smallest at Stony Brook, which means Teaching Assistants and Graduate Instructors have the flexibility to experiment with new pedagogical approaches and focus on creating innovative, student-centered learning experiences.

Teaching Assistants & Graduate Instructors

If you have been awarded a Teaching Assistantship along with your offer of admission, you will be given WGSS teaching positions for the first four years of your doctoral study (assuming you remain in “good standing” with your academic progress and satisfactorily complete your teaching duties each semester). After your fourth year, you will no longer be funded through a

Teaching Assistantship and will no longer be guaranteed WGSS teaching assignments.

During your four years of Teaching Assistantship funding, you will be assigned one of two positions each semester:

Teaching Assistant (TA). TAs provide instructional support to WGSS Core Faculty for one of the classes they are teaching. This support typically takes the form of grading and providing feedback on student assignments, but can also include (and is not limited to) record-keeping, holding office hours, and facilitating online or in-person discussions. TAs often assist professors in delivering our introductory lecture classes, but can also be assigned to support courses at all levels of our undergraduate curriculum.

Graduate Instructor. Graduate Instructors serve as the instructor of record for the course they have been assigned. As such, they have total ownership over their courses and are responsible for their design and execution across the semester. This includes (but is not limited to) building the syllabus, crafting assignments, producing course content, holding office hours, grading and other forms of assessment, and the submission of final grades. Graduate Instructors can be assigned courses at any level of the undergraduate curriculum, including introductory classes, core feminist theory or history classes, and 200- or 300-level special topics classes.

The WGSS Executive Committee is responsible for course scheduling and teaching assignments. Typically, the committee assigns first-year PhD students to TA positions. These support roles serve as solid introductions to teaching, as you'll have the chance to develop your teaching skills while working closely with an experienced instructor. First-year students often assist with large WGSS introductory lectures (where they work alongside other new TAs), but may also be assigned as the sole TA for smaller courses.

After your first year, you may be assigned to work as a TA or a Graduate Instructor. These assignments will vary according to the particular interests and expertise of students and will be primarily determined by our undergraduate curricular needs as well as the curricular needs determined by the College of Arts and Sciences. When possible, the WGSS Executive Committee will ask for your preferences or provide you with options regarding your assignment. This kind of flexibility is not always feasible, but we always keep each student's research interests and past teaching positions in mind as we devise the semester's schedule. At times, the university has asked WGSS to support other academic units (like the Writing Program) with our Teaching Assistantships, in which case, there may be opportunities to teach outside the WGSS department. Our goal is to provide you with a range of teaching experiences during the four years of your Teaching Assistantship – assignments that will advance your dissertation research and ensure you graduate with a robust and diversified Teaching Portfolio.

If you have questions or concerns about your teaching assignment, you can always contact members of the Executive Committee (the Graduate Program Director, the Undergraduate Program Director, or the Department Chair). You may also find it helpful to consult your advisor or other mentors. See also the section below for Campus Resources related to Concerns or Grievances.

Other Teaching Positions

The WGSS Department occasionally hires PhD students for additional teaching positions. Our ability to offer these positions is contingent on a host of factors, such as undergraduate enrollments, the semesterly allocation of adjunct money from the College of Arts and Sciences, and the temporary availability of unused Teaching Assistantships (which can occur when a funded PhD student leaves our program early or secures funding from an external fellowship). As such, there is no guarantee that these positions will be available from year to year.

Winter and Summer Sessions. The WGSS Department often offers online undergraduate courses during the university's Winter Session and its two Summer Sessions. WGSS PhD students usually teach these courses. All WGSS PhD students are eligible for these positions. Still, priority is generally given to advanced students (especially students in their fifth year or beyond who are no longer funded by Teaching Assistantships). Compensation for each Summer or Winter class is usually \$4,000, but may be adjusted if enrollments do not meet certain thresholds.

Fall and Spring Adjunct Positions. During some semesters, the WGSS Department offers online or in-person undergraduate classes taught by adjunct instructors. Compensation for WGSS adjunct instructors is usually \$5,500 per course. To fill these positions, we aim to hire WGSS PhD students whose Teaching Assistantships are no longer funded, and we often prioritize students who have most recently gone "off stipend" (i.e., students in their fifth or sixth years). Students who are still funded by Teaching Assistantships (i.e., students in their first four years) are not eligible for these positions.

Note: We are only able to hire adjunct instructors when the College of Arts and Sciences allocates us money for this express purpose or when we have an unused Teaching Assistantship (which we then convert into the equivalent of two adjunct positions, to give more students access to employment and, in many cases, health insurance).

The WGSS Executive Committee is responsible for hiring Winter and Summer instructors, as well as Fall and Spring adjuncts. Appointments are made based on several considerations, including a student's area of expertise, their teaching experience and performance, their individual financial needs, and the employment restrictions applicable to international students. The WGSS department strives to distribute these additional teaching positions as equitably as possible.

Evaluations & Observations

The continuation of your four-year Teaching Assistantship depends on you remaining in "good standing" with your academic progress and satisfactorily completing your teaching duties each semester.

As such, your performance as a TA and/or Graduate Instructor will figure into the Annual Review process. You will assess your teaching experience on the Self-Evaluation Form and during your annual advisor-advisee meeting, and the WGSS Core Faculty will consider recent TA Evaluations and Teaching Observations during their final department meeting. In your Annual Review Letter, the Graduate Program Director will document your satisfactory

fulfillment of your Teaching Assistantship obligations. In cases where students have struggled to complete their teaching duties, the letter will outline the department's concerns and will suggest a plan of action for addressing those issues.

In addition to receiving your Annual Review Letter, you will also receive TA Evaluations and Teaching Observations from WGSS Core Faculty over the course of your four-year assistantship. These documents will be made available to you. While your advisor or other mentors might draw from their evaluations or observations when writing letters of recommendation for you, these documents will not circulate beyond the department. As such, it is common to receive constructive criticism in these documents.

TA Evaluations. At the end of each semester, TAs will receive brief, written evaluations of their performance from the instructor they assisted. For first-year students, these evaluations will figure centrally during the Annual Review process and will be discussed in detail during the final department meeting.

Teaching Observations. Graduate Instructors should be observed twice during their four-year teaching assistantship. The first observation should take place during the first semester you serve as a Graduate Instructor. The purpose of this observation is to receive feedback on your first attempts at developing a syllabus, managing a classroom, designing assignments, etc. The second observation should take place closer to the end of your assistantship. The purpose of this observation is to show off your skills as a more experienced teacher.

Note: It is up to you to arrange these observations, but you should strategize with your advisor or the Graduate Program Director. Ideally, you will want to secure observations from two different mentors who have or will be writing letters of recommendation for you.

Teaching Portfolio

You are strongly encouraged to create a Teaching Portfolio as you move through the WGSS doctoral program. This will serve you well on the academic job market and will come in handy when applying for teaching awards. Teaching Portfolios often include some combination of course syllabi; sample assignments; assessment tools you've designed; other classroom materials you've developed; student teaching evaluations; letters from students or alumni; examples of exemplary work produced by your students; a statement of your teaching philosophy; a list of pedagogy-related seminars, workshops, or other trainings you've completed; and a bibliographic list of materials you find helpful for your own teaching. The Teaching Portfolio will be discussed in further detail during WST 698 and at relevant professional development workshops. You should also consult your advisor as you begin assembling these materials.

Campus Teaching Awards

Vivien Hartog Graduate Student Teaching Award

The WGSS Department administers the [Vivien Hartog Graduate Student Teaching Award](#). Named in honor of a WGSS certificate student who died before she could complete her PhD in Sociology at Stony Brook, this award recognizes students who best exemplify Vivien Hartog's

commitments to social justice, activism, teaching, and learning. The award is \$3,000. Each spring (often in March), the WGSS Department puts out a call for applications for this award. The WGSS Core Faculty reviews the applications and selects the winner(s), who are announced at the WGSS graduation. If warranted, the faculty can opt to split the award between more than one winner.

President's Award for Excellence in Teaching by a Graduate Student

The Graduate School administers this award. It is open to all full-time graduate students who have completed at least one academic year of teaching. Each spring, six awards of \$1,000 Each is presented to outstanding graduate student teachers. Departments are permitted to nominate two candidates for the award. We will ask students interested in being nominated to identify themselves, and the WGSS Core Faculty will review the candidates and collectively decide on the nominees. For more information on eligibility requirements, nomination materials, and past winners, visit the [President's Award for Excellence in Teaching](#).

FUNDING: ASSISTANTSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS (FOR PH.D. STUDENTS)

WGSS Teaching Assistantships

Students accepted into the PhD program are often offered a four-year Teaching Assistantship. You must be enrolled as a full-time student to remain eligible for this assistantship, and the continuation of this funding hinges on your remaining in “good standing” in your academic progress and satisfactorily completing your teaching duties.

The Teaching Assistantship funding package consists of:

Base Stipend. For the 2024-25 academic year, WGSS Teaching Assistantships provide students with an initial stipend of \$26,000. This sum is subject to state and federal income taxes. Teaching Assistantships are governed by the Graduate Student Employee Union (GSEU)'s contract with the State of New York. You are only guaranteed teaching positions and eligible for this stipendiary funding for the first four years of the program.

Graduate Tuition Scholarship. Your Teaching Assistantship entitles you to a tuition scholarship. During your first year, this scholarship will cover out-of-state tuition costs for any students who are not New York State (NYS) residents. All eligible graduate students are required to obtain NYS residency to reduce their tuition costs in future years. See below for more information on NYS Residency Requirements. As long as you maintain full-time status, you will continue to receive the Graduate Tuition Scholarship after your four years of stipendiary funding expires until you reach the university's time limit for doctoral degree completion.

Important! Your tuition scholarship also comes with a fee scholarship to cover your broad-based fees. This fee scholarship covers the following fees: Counseling and Health, Technology, Transportation, Lifetime Career Development, Academic Excellence, and College Fee. For information about health insurance costs and other enrollment fees, please see [this informational](#)

[page](#).

Residency and Registration Requirements

Full-Time Status

You must be enrolled as a full-time student to remain eligible for your four-year Teaching Assistantship and to continue receiving the Graduate Tuition Scholarship after your fourth year. For international students, full-time enrollment is required to maintain F-1 and J-1 visa status. To be considered full-time, you must register for 9 or 12 credits each semester, depending on your academic classification. International students should maintain regular contact with their International Student Advisors to discuss any additional requirements they must meet based on their particular circumstances.

To avoid late registration charges, you must always be registered for at least one credit before the first day of classes. The FINAL DEADLINE to complete any registration changes is 4:00 PM on Day 10 of classes (weekends and holidays are not counted). If you are not registered as a full-time student by the end of this Late Registration period, you will lose your tuition scholarship and, in the case of international students, jeopardize your visa status. Between Day 10 and Day 15 of classes, you may “swap” courses of equal credit, but a petition to the Graduate School will be required. [Calendars and deadlines are posted on the Registrar’s website](#).

Late registration and tuition liability fees are your responsibility, so please be sure to register early and for the appropriate number of credits each semester. Contact the Graduate Program Coordinator if you encounter any registration difficulties, and speak to your advisor and/or the Graduate Program Director if you are unsure what to register for.

New York State Residency

All PhD students who are US citizens or permanent residents but not residents of New York State (NYS) must establish in-state residency before the start of the Fall semester of your second year. If you are not a NYS resident but are eligible to establish residency and have not completed this process by then, then you will be charged the difference between the in-state and out-of-state tuition rate (\$2,000 or more, per semester). This additional charge will be your responsibility, as, beginning with your third semester in the program, your Graduate Tuition Scholarship will be calculated at the in-state tuition rate.

Detailed information on [Establishing NYS Residency](#), along with the Residency Application Form, is available on the Bursar’s website. To establish residency, you should register to vote (at a local post office) and obtain a NYS driver’s license. If you own a car registered in your name and you wish to use free Faculty/Staff parking, you will need to register your vehicle in New York. Other documents that can be used to support your residency application include a local bank account (with statements mailed to your local address) or a utility bill in your name (showing a local address). Students who wish to remain on their parents’ health insurance policy may still establish residency, provided all other documents have a valid NYS address.

Benefits and Health Insurance

WGSS PhD students are provided with insurance coverage for the four years of their Teaching Assistantship through the SUNY Graduate Student Employee Health Plan. This insurance plan includes medical benefits as well as dental and vision coverage. Be sure to attend the orientation sessions to learn more about enrolling in your plan, accessing your benefits, and enrolling your spouse, domestic partner, and/or other dependents. Detailed information about your plan can be found on the [Human Resources Services' State Graduate Student](#) website. To view your Benefits Handbook, log on as a 'Graduate Student' on the [New York State Health Insurance Program \(NYSHIP\) website](#).

Note for All Students. Stony Brook requires every student to have basic health insurance. All students are thus automatically enrolled in the Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) or International Student Health Insurance Plan (ISHIP) and will be charged the corresponding premium. These plans are primarily intended for undergraduates and offer limited coverage. Since your Teaching Assistantship provides you with insurance, you will want to waive this coverage to avoid the unnecessary expense. This must be done on SOLAR every semester. If you decide to remain on a family health insurance policy, you may do so and will qualify to waive the mandatory coverage, provided you complete the request on SOLAR. If you discover that an insurance charge is still on your SOLAR account in late September, please notify the Graduate Program Coordinator.

Note for International Students. Be sure to enroll in your Graduate Student Employee Health Plan within 30 days of your appointment date. Once you enroll and payroll deductions begin, the mandatory ISHIP health insurance fee will be removed from your student bill, usually in October. You must present your Social Security card to complete your health insurance enrollment; therefore, it is crucial to apply for a Social Security number as soon as possible. (See below for more information on Social Security Cards.) You should also be aware that the university requires international students to have emergency medical evacuation coverage. This mandatory insurance enables you to return home if you become seriously ill. You will see this charge on your SOLAR account each semester.

Payroll Information

Payroll Appointment

Appointment paperwork is time-critical to ensure you receive your first paycheck on time. To appoint you to the payroll system, you must provide your local address plus the following forms of identification:

- US Citizens: valid passport -or- valid driver's license plus Social Security card
- Permanent Residents: proof of permanent residency plus Social Security card
- International Students: valid passport, visa (I-94), and SEVIS I-20

To enroll in the Graduate Student Employee Health Plan, a photocopy of your birth certificate or a copy of your passport is required.

If you change your address, it is essential to notify the Graduate Program Coordinator and

update your SOLAR account promptly. Updating your account information in SOLAR is crucial, as payroll, academic records, and Visa and Immigration Services are all tied to your account.

Pay Days and Time Reporting

PhD Students with Teaching Assistantships will receive their checks on [Wednesdays, every two weeks](#). Remember to check your pay stub regularly. Errors can occur, so the sooner you notice a discrepancy, the sooner we can resolve any issues or errors. Withholdings (especially for insurance) can sometimes be confusing, so please check with the Graduate Program Coordinator before becoming too concerned. Please remember that it is your responsibility to report your attendance every month on SOLAR. You will receive email reminders.

Direct Deposit

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to set up direct deposits for their payroll checks. You must provide your account number and bank electronic routing number, both of which are printed on your checks. You will also need to submit a voided check or a direct-deposit letter from your bank to ensure these numbers are recorded properly. Direct deposit can be set up with any domestic financial institution. Some students find it convenient to establish accounts at the Island Federal Credit Union, which has branch offices on our campus (in the Student Activity Center and over at the Health Science Center). It often takes two pay periods or more for the direct deposit to become active. Any changes to your Direct Deposit instructions must be filed with Human Resources (Administration Building, Room 390).

Social Security Cards for International Students

International students must apply for an SSN as quickly as possible after completing registration, as this number is required for both payroll and insurance enrollment purposes. The purpose of a Social Security Number (SSN) is to help the government track an individual's earnings in the US for tax purposes. Detailed instructions, a link to the application form, and a list of required documents are available on the [Office of Global Affairs' Visa and Immigration Services page](#). Please note that you also need an SSN Authorization Letter from VIS, which can be requested through the VIS Online Portal. As soon as you receive your Social Security Card, please bring it to the Graduate Program Coordinator so they can make a photocopy for your permanent record and for the Payroll and Insurance Offices.

Going “Off Stipend”

It is crucial to remember and plan for the fact that your Teaching Assistantship only lasts for four years. At the end of that time, you will no longer be guaranteed WGSS teaching positions, you will not be eligible for the \$26,000 annual stipend, and you will not receive insurance through the Graduate Student Employee Health Plan. While the WGSS Department will continue to provide mentoring support, an intellectual community, and professional development to off-stipend students, we cannot guarantee students any form of material or financial support beyond their fourth year in the doctoral program. Off-stipend students remain eligible for and will be considered for, and/or nominated for, campus travel awards and internal fellowship opportunities; however, this is a minimal and highly competitive pool of resources. With this reality in mind,

we strongly urge PhD students to begin researching external funding opportunities early in their careers, to take full advantage of the campus's fellowship advising resources, and to apply widely and aggressively for research grants and dissertation fellowships.

Internal Fellowships: Incoming Students

Graduate Council Fellowship

[Graduate Council Fellowships](#) (GCF) are available to exceptionally qualified incoming doctoral students. GCF candidates are nominated by their respective graduate programs in January. The WGSS Core Faculty collective selects our nominee(s) during the admissions process. The Graduate Council Fellowships and Awards Committee reviews the nominees and typically awards 45 fellowships, renewable for up to five years, annually. The GCF award supplements the program's offer of support with an additional \$50,000 in funding over the five-year support period.

Note: Only US citizens and permanent residents are eligible for these fellowships.

Turner Fellowship

The Center for Inclusive Education administers [Turner Fellowships](#), which are available to incoming graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds. Turner candidates are nominated by their respective graduate programs in January. When filling out the application for admission to Stony Brook University, students should identify their racial or ethnic background and indicate their interest in being considered for the Turner Fellowship award. The WGSS Core Faculty collectively selects our nominee(s) during the admissions process. Nominees will be asked to write a one-page personal statement demonstrating how they will contribute to the diversity of the student body in their graduate program and/or how they have overcome disadvantage or other impediment to success in higher education. The Turner Fellowship supplements the program's offer of support with an additional \$50,000 in funding over the five-year support period.

Note: Only US citizens and permanent residents are eligible for these fellowships.

Internal Awards & Fellowships: Continuing Students

The Graduate School and the Center for Inclusive Education administer competitive fellowship programs for continuing graduate students. In most cases, students are not permitted to apply directly to these programs. Instead, departments are asked to nominate students for these awards, and limits are often placed on the number of nominees that can be put forth. Below, you'll find brief descriptions of the major fellowship competitions on campus.

Once we receive the official call for nominations, the WGSS Department asks students interested in being nominated to identify themselves. The WGSS Core Faculty reviews the candidates for the Annual Graduate Student Awards and collectively decides on our nominees. The Graduate Studies Committee reviews candidates for the Turner Dissertation Year Fellowship, the Graduate Fellowship, and the Faculty Research Program, and collectively decides on the nominees. Our nomination decisions are based on a number of factors, including (but not limited to) how well

the student and their project meet the award's criteria; the student's academic performance, publication record, and other scholarly activities; the student's record of applying for and receiving grants and fellowships; the student's financial need and other individual circumstances (i.e. research expenses, visa requirements); and how to most equitably distribute these fellowship nomination opportunities.

Nominees will be required to assemble necessary materials, including Letters of Recommendation, a cover letter, and statements. The nominee must identify the letter writers and provide that information to the GPD.

Annual Graduate School Awards

[The Graduate School coordinates an annual awards program to honor outstanding students, faculty, and staff.](#) Nominations for these awards are usually due early in the Spring semester. Here, you'll find brief descriptions of the awards WGSS PhD students are typically eligible for. For detailed information on eligibility requirements, application materials, and past winners, please follow the links below.

[Alumni Association Doctoral Summer Fellowship.](#) The award is intended to support the student in the final stages of their research and dissertation by enabling them to continue their work over the summer, when other funding for doctoral candidates is exceptionally scarce. One fellowship of \$4,500 is awarded annually.

[Alumni Association's Dean's Choice Award for Leadership.](#) The award recognizes a graduate student who has demonstrated strong leadership abilities in engaging the graduate student community. One award of \$1,000 is presented annually.

[Faculty-Staff Dissertation Fellowship.](#) The award is intended to assist a graduate student who has advanced to candidacy and whose research project requires fieldwork, archival work, or other research efforts that necessitate the student's absence from campus for an extended period. One award of \$10,000 is granted annually.

[Joyce Turner Dissertation Fellowship.](#) The award recognizes graduate students in the humanities or social sciences who have advanced to candidacy but who need financial assistance to complete their research investigating issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, or ethnicity. One award of \$10,000 is granted annually.

[The Madeline Fusco Fellowship.](#) The fellowship is intended to assist women or minority graduate students who have advanced to candidacy but who need financial assistance to complete their dissertations. One award of \$5,000 is presented annually.

[Mildred and Herbert Weisinger Dissertation Fellowship.](#) This award is given to a graduate student who has advanced to candidacy and is working on a dissertation that bears high scholarly promise but may be delayed without financial assistance. One fellowship of \$10,000 will be awarded annually.

[President's Award to Distinguished Doctoral Students.](#) This award recognizes an outstanding student who is expected to graduate in May. The awards committee considers the following: the

merit of the candidate's dissertation project, their service and other contributions to the university, and how they overcame personal struggles or hardships during their doctoral studies. Five awards of \$1,000 are presented annually.

[Stony Brook Foundation Board of Trustees Dissertation Completion Endowed Fellowship](#). This award is given to a graduate student who has advanced to candidacy and is working on a dissertation that bears high scholarly promise but may be delayed without financial assistance. Fellowships of \$10,000 are awarded annually.

Turner Dissertation Year Fellowship

[The Turner Dissertation Fellowship](#) provides support to PhD candidates from underrepresented or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds who have not previously received support from the Turner Fellowship Program. The number of awards granted annually varies according to available funding, which means the deadlines for these awards also vary.

Note: Only US citizens and permanent residents are eligible for these fellowships.

Presidential Dissertation Completion Awards

As part of President McInnis's efforts to support graduate students, the Graduate School launched the [Presidential Dissertation Completion Award Program](#). This fellowship provides one or two semesters of stipend support—\$13,000 or \$26,000—for an advanced doctoral student who has experienced a delay in their degree progress due to circumstances beyond their control. To be eligible, students must establish that they do not have another source of stipend support for the requested semester(s). The fellowship allows the student to complete their degree requirements without adding any additional service or teaching duties. Successful applications will demonstrate solid achievement and steady pre-pandemic progress to degree, compelling need for additional support, and a viable plan and potential for degree completion by the end of the funded period.

Guiliano Global Fellowship Program

[The Guiliano Global Fellowship Program](#) provides PhD students in the humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences with funding to complete travel and research for a journal article, dissertation, work of artistic expression, or outside-of-the-academy career development. Awards are generally offered in the amount of \$2,000, depending on the strength of the application, cost of the activity, and availability of funds.

Note: Unlike the other internal fellowships listed above (which require departmental nominations), students can apply directly to this program.

Vivien Hartog Travel Award

[The WGSS Department administers this award](#) and consists of three one-time annual travel grants of up to \$750. Named in honor of a WGSS graduate certificate student who died before she could complete her PhD in Sociology at Stony Brook, this award provides current PhD and MA students with travel expenses for academic conferences or for dissertation or thesis research. You can apply for the award more than once, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria; however, priority will be given to students who have not previously received a Vivien Hartog Travel Award. Applications are due on November 15. Students can apply [here](#).

The Graduate Student Organization Travel Awards and Funding

[There is funding available through the Graduate Student Organization](#) for travel, professional development, and organizing on-campus events. Please read the fine print: They state that awards are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis until the funds are exhausted.

- The Professional Development Fund provides financial aid for professional development courses, subscriptions, memberships, etc. Students can also apply for travel reimbursements and related costs if they are attending a conference.
- The Resources Access Project (RAP), formally called the Travel For A Project Fund (TRAP), will be solely for the reimbursement of travel and other expenses related to the presentation at a conference. Each graduate student may be reimbursed up to \$700 each fiscal year.
- Graduate students enrolled in courses at IUDC universities can qualify for a reimbursement of some expenses incurred in traveling to class. The maximum amount for reimbursement is \$400.
- Graduate students traveling for research rotations and dissertation research at distinguished universities or research institutions (Cold Spring Harbor, Brookhaven National Labs, etc.). The maximum amount for reimbursement is \$400.
- Graduate students attending an academic workshop or seminar in New York City can qualify for a reimbursement of travel costs (course schedule/registration confirmation must be provided). The maximum amount for reimbursement is \$400.
- The Internship Travel Reimbursement Fund is used to subsidize travel for students attending internships or clinical rotations related to their program of study. Proof of internship/clinical rotation schedule must be provided. The maximum amount for reimbursement is \$400.
- Students can also receive \$100 reimbursements for qualifying gym/fitness memberships and for cultural events (reimbursable expenses include tickets for plays, musicals, dance performances, and art museums).

Other Campus Professional Development Awards

Awards for Career Exploration (ACE)

[The Awards for Career Exploration \(ACE\)](#) is a program that supports the career exploration and professional development of Stony Brook University's graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, preparing them for careers beyond traditional expectations for academic research.

Humanities Institute: Funding Opportunities

Cornell University's School of Criticism and Theory

Each year, [HISB offers one fellowship](#) to support a graduate student's attendance at Cornell University's School of Criticism and Theory (SCT). The SCT is a six-week summer institute that has been in existence for over 30 years, providing graduate students and faculty members with the opportunity to take seminars led by some of the world's leading critical theorists. The SCT offers an unparalleled opportunity for advanced training in critical theory and for forming connections with an international cohort of peers and world-class scholars. Applications are usually due in the late Fall.

External Fellowship Opportunities

Throughout your doctoral studies, you will likely want to apply for external funding to support your travel, research, and writing endeavors. Don't wait until your fourth year as your Teaching Assistantship is about to expire to start learning about grants, fellowships, and other awards. Start exploring external funding opportunities early in your graduate career. Apply for travel awards and smaller research grants on campus, through outside funding agencies, and with academic professional organizations. Attend grant-writing workshops on campus, read up on the art of writing funding proposals, and take advantage of fellowship advising resources at Stony Brook and beyond. Securing external funding will make it easier for you to focus on your research and finish your dissertation during your fifth and sixth years. Furthermore, the prestige of obtaining external grants and fellowships can serve as a distinct advantage when you're on the academic job market.

Grants, fellowships, and other awards are all very different. Many funding opportunities are limited by specific eligibility criteria (which often include US citizenship requirements and frequently exclude international students). Additionally, the money you are awarded often comes with strings attached: the conditions of the award will likely limit how you can use the funds and may require you to complete certain activities or produce particular outcomes during the award period. Therefore, be sure to research funding opportunities thoroughly. Below, in the Campus Resource section, you will find links to Stony Brook's external funding resources.

Here, we've included a list of major research grants and dissertation fellowships that support interdisciplinary humanities- and social science-based research. This is, by no means, an exhaustive list; it's just meant to jump-start your search.

[American Association of University Women \(AAUW\) Fellowships](#)

[American Institute of Indian Studies Fellowships](#)

[Asian Cultural Council](#)

[Boren Fellowships for Overseas Research](#)

[Carter G. Wood Institute for African-American and African Studies Predoctoral Fellowship](#)

[Center for Engaged Scholarship's Dissertation Fellowship](#)

[Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange Doctoral Fellowships](#)

[CLAGS Awards & Fellowships](#)

[Council of American Overseas Research Centers Fellowships](#)
[Critical Language Scholarship Program](#)
[Getty Foundation Predoctoral Fellowships](#)
[The Harry Frank Guggenheim Emerging Scholar Awards](#)
[Henry Roe Cloud Dissertation Writing Fellowship in American Indian and Indigenous Studies](#)
[Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Grants](#)
[Individual Advanced Research Opportunities in Eastern Europe & Eurasia](#)
[Marilyn Yarbrough Dissertation/Teaching Fellowship](#)
[Marquette University's Mitchem Dissertation Fellowship](#)
[National Women's Studies Association \(NWSA\) Awards & Prizes](#)
[Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship](#)
[New York Historical Society Fellowships](#)
[Social Science Research Council's Fellowships](#)
[Society for the History of Technology's Kranzenberg Fellowship](#)
[Sociologists for Women in Society's Fellowships](#)
[Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellowship](#)
[US Institute of Peace Jennings Randolph Peace Scholar Dissertation Fellowship](#)

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Name Changes

Students needing to make name changes can find Stony Brook's Preferred/Chosen Name Policy and directions for how to change their name in SOLAR [here](#). Students who would like to change their email can follow [these instructions](#) for requesting that change with IT. If students have any issues changing their email through IT, please contact Maxine Moylan, maxine.moylan@stonybrook.edu, at the LGBTQ* Services Center.

Student Services

[Bursar's Office](#). Billing and payments, withdrawals and refunds, tuition and fee information, and NYS residency.

[Center for Prevention and Outreach](#). Support services related to sexual violence, mental health, and alcohol or other substance use.

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#). Clinical services, virtual workshops, and community programs.

[Human Resources](#). Payroll, direct deposit, benefits, and insurance information

[LGBTQ* Center](#). Community building, education, outreach, and social justice organizing for

LGBTQ*-identified students.

[Registrar's Office](#). Enrollment, class offerings, academic calendars, transcripts.

[Student Health Services](#). Primary care, travel health, immunizations, pharmacy, and laboratory services.

[Student Accessibility Support Center](#). Works with students, faculty, and staff to coordinate reasonable accommodations and ensure equal access to education, residential life, and campus communities. We work to eliminate physical, instructional, and attitudinal barriers by fostering awareness and modeling self-advocacy within the University community.

[University Library](#). Library catalog, online databases, research guides, and Interlibrary Loan.

[Visa and Immigration Services](#). Visa applications, immigration intake, I-20 requests, SEVIS fees, and international student advising.

Research, Writing, & Academic Support

[Center for Inclusive Education](#). Advocacy, financial support, community building, and professional development for students from underrepresented or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds.

[Office of Research Compliance](#). Ensures compliance with laws and university policies; secures Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for “human subject research”

[Student Accessibility Support Center](#). Support service center for students with disabilities, assisting with academic accommodations and other accessibility needs.

[The Writing Program's Graduate Support Services](#). Online and in-person writing classes, workshop series, writing groups, and dissertation and thesis boot camps.

Fellowships Advising

[External Scholarships & Fellowship Advising](#). Grant-writing workshops, [fellowship advising services](#), and [external funding databases](#).

Teaching Support

[Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching \(CELT\)](#). In-class support, training in software and online learning technologies, college teaching seminars, and other pedagogy workshops.

Professionalization Services

[Graduate Professional Development](#). Creating [Individual Development Plans](#), academic and non-academic career exploration and preparation, workshops, and seminars throughout each semester.

Research Centers

[Center for Changing Systems of Power](#)

[Center for Dance, Movement, and Somatic Learning](#)

[Center for Digital Humanities](#)

[Consortium for Digital Arts, Culture, and Technology \(cDACT\)](#)

[Humanities Institute](#)

[Institute for Globalization Studies](#)

[Latin American and Caribbean Studies](#)

Graduate Student-Led Organizations

[Graduate Student Organization \(GSO\)](#). The GSO is the graduate student government at Stony Brook University. The GSO website has a host of helpful information for new and continuing students, including the [GSO Survival Guide](#).

[Graduate Student Employees Union \(GSEU\)](#). PhD students employed through Teaching Assistantships are represented by GSEU of CWA Local 1104. GSEU has been a vital force on Stony Brook's campus fighting for graduate student worker rights and advocating for a more just approach to graduate education.

CONCERNS & GRIEVANCES

Program-Related Concerns

What should you do if you have questions or even serious concerns? You may be concerned about an incident that occurred during a seminar or on campus. Maybe you have concerns about department policies or procedures. Perhaps you have a question about your teaching assignment. You might find that you're having difficulties with a faculty or staff member.

Depending on the specifics of your situation, you have several avenues (listed below) for proceeding. But, in many cases, the best place to begin is right here in the WGSS department.

You have several options of people you can talk to who can help you access relevant resources and explore possible solutions. You can ask for reasonable confidentiality when warranted, and you can expect thoughtful discretion from the faculty and staff members you contact about your concerns.

- **Primary Advisor.** You should always consider starting with your Primary Advisor. As the person who probably knows your situation best – and as your number one advocate on campus – they are often the best person to help you sort through concerns and explore your options.
- **Graduate Program Director.** If you're unable to speak with your Primary Advisor (for whatever reason), you can always reach out to the Graduate Program Director.
- **Department Chair.** And, if you're unable to speak with the Graduate Program Director (for whatever reason), you also have the option of reaching out to the Department Chair.
- **Elected Graduate Representatives.** You might also look to your peers for assistance. The elected graduate representatives can help you locate key campus resources; they can offer to anonymize your concerns and bring them to the Graduate Studies Committee on your behalf; and they can also help students coordinate over shared issues or questions, so that collective concerns can be effectively communicated to the WGSS faculty.

Teaching Concerns

Teaching is always a challenging experience. Please do not hesitate to reach out to WGSS faculty for support as you navigate your Teaching Assistantship assignments.

- If you are working as a Teaching Assistant, you are strongly encouraged to maintain regular contact with the instructor you're assisting. We consider TAing a mentoring experience, so you should feel comfortable asking questions about the course material, seeking advice on fulfilling your duties, and requesting support for dealing with challenging student situations.
- If you are working as a Graduate Instructor, you will not have someone directly supervising your teaching. However, you are strongly encouraged to discuss your work as a teacher with your primary advisor and other mentors. WGSS faculty tend to think about teaching and research as deeply intertwined, so your mentoring exchanges need not be limited to your academic progress.
- If you have teaching concerns that you cannot raise with the professor you're assisting or with your primary advisor, you can always reach out to the Graduate Program Director, the Undergraduate Program Director, or the Department Chair.

If you are having trouble with or are worried about a student and the situation is too serious to be handled at the department level:

- You can reach out to [the CARE Team](#), which is a university-based, multidisciplinary team committed to maintaining a safe working and learning environment. This team

addresses student behavior that may pose a health or safety threat to the campus community through an individualized, coordinated, and thoughtful process intended to gather relevant information and intervene when necessary.

- You can also contact the [Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards](#). This office can assist you in addressing and resolving situations in which the behavioral choices of students may negatively impact themselves and/or others. They consider a range of interventions, including informal guidance, reflective conversations, and formal student conduct processes.

Conflict Resolution

If you find yourself in a conflict situation with a faculty or staff member, we recommend reaching out to your Primary Advisor, the Graduate Program Director, or the Department Chair for advice about how to resolve the situation. If the solutions proposed during these discussions do not seem satisfactory, you can request the assistance of an ad hoc conflict resolution committee.

The Graduate Studies Committee can serve as the conflict resolution committee. However, if the Graduate Program Director is involved in the complaint, the Department Chair will take their place. If any other committee members are involved in the complaint, then the most senior WGSS faculty member will take their place. The student is welcome to invite their Primary Advisor or another faculty mentor to accompany them to any meetings with the conflict resolution committee.

If the conflict resolution committee is unable to resolve the complaint, the Department Chair may refer you to another campus office or advocate. Our hope is to find a solution within our department, but we recognize that there will be instances where taking things outside of WGSS will be most beneficial.

Formal Academic Grievances

A variety of appeals and grievance procedures are available to graduate students who wish to challenge accusations of academic or professional misconduct or who want to report improper academic practices by faculty members (i.e., arbitrary or malicious actions related to grading, other evaluations, or additional academic matters). The Graduate School does require that these appeals or grievances first be considered at the program level. Students wishing to file formal academic grievances should contact the Graduate Program Director and/or the Department Chair.

In accordance with Graduate School policy, the WGSS Department's first step will be to establish an ad hoc grievance and appeals committee. This committee should be distinct from the Graduate Studies Committee, but members from that committee can serve in this capacity. Any faculty named in the grievance or party to it in a compromising way cannot serve on the grievance and appeals committee. The committee must consist of no fewer than four members and an equal proportion of faculty and graduate students. The student is welcome to invite their Primary Advisor or another faculty mentor to accompany them to any meetings with the grievance and appeals committee.

If the student or other relevant parties are not satisfied with the committee's ruling, they have the option of appealing to the Vice Provost of Graduate Education. They must submit a written appeal of the program's decision within two weeks. When warranted, the Vice Provost will pass the matter on to the Graduate Council Appeals Committee, which will advise them on the disposition of the case and possible penalties. The Vice Provost is responsible for making and implementing a final decision. For more information on the grievance and appeals procedures, please refer to the Graduate Bulletin.

Labor Grievances

If you have concerns about your Teaching Assistantship that could not be resolved through the avenues suggested in the "Teaching Concerns" section – or if you believe the terms and conditions of your employment contract are being violated – then you can turn to the [Graduate Student Employee Union \(GSEU\)](#). You might start by speaking to the WGSS Department Mobilizer or other GSEU representatives on campus about your Teaching Assistant or Graduate Instructor position. GSEU can provide you with detailed information regarding your contract and can offer guidance regarding grievance procedures.

Discrimination or Sexual Misconduct Complaints

The [Office of Equity and Access \(OEA\)](#) handles complaints concerning discrimination or sexual misconduct. You can report sexual misconduct or age-, race-, gender-, sexuality-, religion-, and disability-based discrimination using the online [Report It](#) system. The university's Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action policy outlines the forms of discrimination prohibited against on our campus.

You do not need to discuss the incident(s) with a supervisor, the department, or anyone else before accessing these reporting options. You are, of course, welcome to discuss these issues with your Primary Advisor, the Graduate Program Director, or the Department Chair. But please remember that all WGSS faculty are mandatory reporters and are required to report information about known or suspected prohibited conduct to the Office of Title IX.

The OEA's [Title IX](#) site includes information about local and campus resources for reporting sexual violence or harassment and for finding confidential advocacy, emotional, and medical support services.

Other Campus Offices & Advocates

[Graduate Student Advocates \(GSAs\)](#). You can contact GSAs if you have a serious problem or concern that you don't know how to handle and that you are unable to resolve by speaking to your advisor, the Graduate Program Director, the Graduate Program Coordinator, or the Department Chair. GSAs have addressed conflicts with faculty advisors, housing problems, health insurance issues, discrimination cases, problems with funding, and questions of academic standing.

International Student Advocate. If you are an international student facing the problems listed above or are in search of recommendations for seeking immigration-related legal advice, you may also contact the GSO's International Student Advocate at <mailto:ISA@sbgso.org>

[Ombud's Office](#). Graduate students can take advantage of the Ombud's Office, and GSAs will sometimes refer students there. All contact with this office is considered confidential in accordance with professional standards of practices. Depending on the nature of the question or problem, the Ombud may offer specific advice or mediation, provide information, or make appropriate referrals. The Ombud is also open to people who need someone to listen impartially and suggest a course of action or a range of options.

Appendix

Departmental Forms

- [WGSS Advancement to Candidacy Form](#)
- [WGSS Appointment of Dissertation Committee & Authorization to Schedule a Dissertation Date Form](#)
- [WGSS Comprehensive Exam Approval Form](#)
- [WGSS Course Permissions Form](#)
- [WGSS Graduate Certificate Checklist](#)
- [WGSS MA Checklist](#)
- [WGSS PhD Progress Form](#)
- [WGSS Self-Evaluation Form](#)

Graduate School Forms

- [Application to the Graduate School for the APP program](#)
- [Change of Graduate Program and/or Academic Level](#)
- [Emergency Loan Application](#)
- [Emergency Loan Promissory Note](#)
- [Full-Time to Part-Time/Part-Time to Full-Time Status Request](#)
- [Graduate Course Retake Approval](#)
- [International Travel Policy & Request Form](#)

- [Leave of Absence](#)
- [Parental Leave Policy](#)
- [Permission for APP students to Enroll in Grad Courses](#)
- [Permission for Undergraduate Students to Enroll in Grad Courses](#)
- [Permission to Enroll in Secondary Cert Program](#)
- [Permission to Enroll in Secondary Degree Program](#)
- [Readmission Form](#)
- [Re-Entry Plan Template](#)
- [Retroactive Drop](#)
- [Retroactive Add](#)
- [Retroactive Credit Change](#)
- [Retroactive Section Change](#)
- [Request for Complete Student Withdrawal](#)
- [Graduate Course/Credit Swap Form](#)
- [Time Conflict Approval Form](#)
- [Transfer Credit](#)
- [Waiver of Graduate Time Limit](#)
 - [Withdrawal from APP](#)

Forms for Graduating Students

- [Adobe Signature Page - PHD](#)
- [Adobe Signature Page - MA](#)
- [Change of Graduation Date](#)
- [Dissertation Template - PHD](#)
- [Doctoral Defense Announcement \(Instructions\)](#)
- [Graduation Application](#)
- [Request for Letter of Completion](#)
- [Thesis Template - MA](#)
- [Thesis Template - MS](#)