# Ph.D. Orientation Handbook

## UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

## DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

## Ph.D. ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

**August 2017**

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I. **Penn English Ph.D., Year-by-Year Overview**

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**Year 1**

Take 7 or 8 seminars (4 both semesters, or 4 one semester and 3 the other semester). All students are required to take ENGL600 (Proseminar) in the fall with Professor Melissa Sanchez. The Proseminar counts as one of the 13 required seminars.

During spring and summer, prepare for the 50-Book Exam, to be held the day before the start of the fall semester of the second year. You will choose one advisor for your 50-Book Exam in mid-March. 50-Book Exam lists are due to the GEC for approval on Thursday, 12 April 2018.

Students are strongly advised to pass at least one language exam by the end of their first year.

Students must be registered for at least 3 credits per semester to be considered full-time students by Graduate Division.

No teaching requirements.

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**Year 2**

Take 5 or 6 seminars or grade-bearing independent studies (2 or 3 during the semester in which you are taking ENGL800 [Pedagogy Seminar], 3 during the other semester).

All students are required to enroll in the Pedagogy Seminar during fall or spring, depending on their TA assignment.

Students must be registered for at least 3 credits per semester to be considered full-time students by Graduate Division.

All students are required to TA one semester and grade one semester. (Graders assist with grading an undergraduate course; TAs assist with grading and run their own weekly recitation section.)

Field Exam lists and rationales are due to the Graduate Executive Committee (GEC) by early May.

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**Year 3**

Take up to 1 seminar or grade-bearing independent study. In addition, in the fall all students will be enrolled in ENGL850 (Field List). In the spring, all students will be enrolled in ENGL851 (Dissertation Proposal Workshop taken that semester).

Note: All students must have completed 13 grade-bearing seminars or independent studies by the end of fall semester their third year. Transfer credits can be counted toward this requirement, but ENGL800, ENGL801, ENGL850, ENGL851, and ENGL999 cannot.

Field Exam must be taken between Thanksgiving Break and the end of the fall term.

Students must be registered for at least 3 credits per semester to be considered full-time students by Graduate Division.

Dissertation Proposal as well as Junior Research Seminar workshops begin in January.

Dissertation Proposal due to the GEC by the end of April.
**Year 4**

Two language exams should be passed by the end of this year.

Research and write your dissertation.

All fourth-year students are required to teach one semester of the Junior Research Seminar in either fall or spring.

Present part of a dissertation chapter as a WIP to a Graduate Reading Group.

Dissertation Progress Meeting with full committee.

**Year 5**

Research and write your dissertation.

No teaching requirements.

Present part of a dissertation chapter as a WIP to the Department.

Dissertation Progress Meeting with full committee.

Apply for fellowships and/or jobs.

**Year 6**

Research and write your dissertation.

No teaching requirements.

Dissertation Progress Meeting with full committee.

Apply for fellowships and/or jobs.

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**II. Policies and Guidelines**

While the Graduate Page of the English Department website remains the main source of information about specific requirements, you should be aware of the following guidelines, which apply to all students who entered the program in 2012 or later.

**A. Coursework and Enrollment Requirements**

During the first three years, students must take at least 3 credits per semester in order to be considered...
full-time students in good standing by the Graduate Division (without this status, Graduate Division may stop paying the fellowship stipend). Students registered for Field Exam preparation and dissertation writing (from the third year on) are allowed to register for one additional course each term.

All students are allowed to audit a maximum of 2 courses each semester. This includes language courses in other departments.

The Department requires all students to complete 13 grade-bearing seminars (this may include up to 2 independent studies) by the end of fall semester of the third year. Students coming in with M.A. degrees may transfer one class toward this requirement (thereby reducing the number of required seminars to 12). Graduate-level courses taken in other departments and at other universities that participate in Penn’s exchange program can count toward course requirements. ENGL800, ENGL801, ENGL850, ENGL851, and ENGL999 cannot be counted.

B. Incompletes

Students are allowed one incomplete per year, though exceptions may be granted in unusual circumstances.

Incompletes will be granted with permission of the instructor, followed by petition to the GEC. This petition need not be lengthy, but it should include a brief rationale explaining why the student would like to continue working beyond the end of the semester and a timeline for completing the work.

Students should clear all incompletes from their records before taking the 50-Book Exams and Field Exams. Students with incompletes on their records will not be allowed to enroll in the Dissertation Proposal Workshop or to submit Proposals to the GEC for approval. In unusual circumstances, exceptions may be granted with approval of the advisor and petition to the GEC.

C. Independent Studies

Independent studies should not replace regular coursework. Students should take no more than 1 independent study in a given year, and no more than 2 of total required courses may be independent studies. (Courses taken in other departments and at other universities do not count as independent studies and are not subject to these limits.)

Exceptions may be granted with instructor and advisor approval and upon petition to the GEC. Petitions need not be lengthy, but must demonstrate that the additional independent study is critical to the student’s progress in the program, and they must include a plan for fulfilling all Distribution Requirements by the end of the student’s second year.

D. Distribution Requirements

Each student must take courses that fulfill six distribution requirements:

(1) One course pre-1700

(2) One course 1700-1900

(3) One course post-1900
(4) One course on literature of the Americas

(5) One course on literature outside the Americas

(6) One course in Minority literature (racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality)

The general expectation is that students will take at least two seminars from outside their primary period, national or geographic area, and methodological or theoretical area of study. A single course may be counted toward up to two requirements. (Example: A course on “Race and Empire in Eighteenth Century English Literature” would cover up to two of any of the following distribution requirements: 2, 5, or 6.)

In cases where there is uncertainty about the classification of the course (e.g. a course that extends over a long chronological period or a course that is not exclusively devoted to a single minority literature but includes a substantial portion of that literature), the Graduate Chair must be consulted. In general, a course will count toward a distribution requirement if the student’s final paper or project engage substantially with that requirement’s subject matter.

E. First- and Second-Year Student Advising and Progress

In their first year, all students should meet with assigned Faculty Advisor at least once per semester.

In their second year, all students should meet with a Faculty Advisor that they designate at least once per semester (this designated advisor can be the First-Year Faculty Advisor or the planned 50-Book Advisor or someone else; s/he will be designated by the student at the end of the first year.)

Before the end of the second-year fall semester, the Graduate Chair will look at students’ records and write students to remind them of any unfulfilled Distribution Requirements.

F. First-Year Oral Exam (50-Book Exam)

The 50-Book Exam requires students to demonstrate knowledge of a group of texts that is diverse in terms of historical period; generic and formal categories; national and geographic origin; and racial, gendered, and sexual identifications. Students work with a committee of three faculty members to create a list of 50 texts; at least 30 of these texts should be from outside the student’s designated area of specialization. Students will read over the summer to prepare for an oral exam with the committee, to be held the day before classes begin the second year. Committee chairs and one committee member will be appointed by the GEC; the student may choose the third committee member (usually this will be the first-year advisor or the student’s designated second-year advisor).

G. Field Exams

All students begin preparing for Field Exams in spring of their second year. Field Exam lists focus on one primary and two secondary areas of specialization; all three lists together should include 60-70 texts. Students submit the lists to the GEC for approval at the beginning of May of their second year, spend the summer and most of fall reading, and complete the written and oral portions of the Field Exam by the end of fall semester of their third year.
H. Dissertation Proposal Workshop

All students are required to take a Dissertation Proposal Workshop, led by two faculty members in spring semester of their third year. Students must pass the Field Exam and clear all incompletes from their records before beginning the workshop. Workshop Leaders should share with students’ committees one set of comments on the proposal. The goal of such sharing is to be sure that Workshop Leaders and committee members are all aware of the feedback students are receiving.

I. Dissertation WIP Presentations

All students are required to present a WIP of one chapter from the dissertation by the end of their fourth year to a Graduate Reading Group, and a WIP of a second chapter by the end of their fifth year to the Department.

J. Dissertation Progress Meetings

Beginning the spring of their fourth year, students should meet with their full dissertation committee each spring. The purpose of these meetings is to get the full committee together with the student to go over progress to date, address questions and difficulties the student is having, and to plan a timeline for completion.

Students who do not defend and deposit their dissertations by the end of their sixth year should continue to hold yearly meetings each spring with their full dissertation committee.

The Graduate Chair will email all faculty and ABD students each spring to remind them to schedule this meeting. No progress reports are required, but dissertation chairs should confirm that the meeting has taken place.

III. Time Management and Etiquette

Time Management

Mantra for all academics: There will never be “more time.” In the absence of a genuine, unexpected crisis, stick to deadlines. Be realistic about the amount of time you need to do quality work. Plan into writing schedule time for revisions.

Prioritize curricular requirements (coursework, exams, dissertation writing) over extracurricular activities (reading groups, conference organization, etc.). Keep in mind that every step of our program is directed toward helping you meet the goal of completing a strong dissertation by the end of their sixth year, and that steps cannot be rushed or skipped without negatively impairing this central goal.

More isn’t better: better is better. Observe word limit/text limit guidelines for exam lists, seminar
papers, and dissertation proposals.

Everyone loves to read clear, correct, elegant prose. Focus on quality and communication rather than quantity.

Ask for help/advice if you need it! This includes not only advice on reading or revising, but also advice on setting timelines to complete exam preparation, dissertation writing, articles, conference papers, etc.

**Etiquette**

Be kind, patient, and courteous to faculty, administrators, and peers.

Respond to emails within a day, even if just to acknowledge receipt.

Arrive on time for seminars, meeting, talks, and courses for which you grade/TA.

Thank faculty and peers for comments on seminar papers, exams, chapters, and any work-in-progress. Thank administrators when they help you.

Turn in administrative forms and applications on time. Give faculty as much lead time as possible for letters, signatures, etc. (generally at least a month for letters, a week for signatures and basic forms). Please do not assume that lack of preparation on your part will translate into an emergency on anyone else’s.

Err on the side of formality rather than familiarity. When you ask a professor to be a member of your exam or dissertation committee, begin by sending an email with a brief summary of interests along with meeting request. When writing faculty at other institutions for the first time (with a conference invitation or a request to meet), address them as “Professor ___.”

### IV. Penn English PH.D. Course of Study

**(Effective for Cohorts Entering 2012 or Later)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YEAR 1</td>
<td>Proseminar</td>
<td>4 seminars</td>
<td>Read for 50-Book Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 seminars</td>
<td>12 April 2018: 50-Book List due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>No teaching</em></td>
<td><em>No teaching</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAR 2</td>
<td>Aug: <strong>50-Book Exam</strong></td>
<td>Early May: Field Exam List due</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 seminars</td>
<td>3 seminars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Pedagogy + TA for 1 class</em></td>
<td><em>Grade for 1 class</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| YEAR 3 | Read for Field Exam  
Start Junior Research Seminar (JRS) proposal  
Nov/Dec: **Field Exam**  
*No teaching* | Jan-April: Dissertation Proposal Workshop  
Jan-Feb: JRS proposal due  
Late April: Dissertation Proposal due  
*No teaching* | Dissertation |
|---|---|---|---|
| YEAR 4 | Dissertation  
Present WIP (if not in spring)  
*Teach JRS* (if not in spring) | Dissertation  
Present WIP (if not in fall)  
Dissertation Progress Meeting  
*Teach JRS* (if not in fall) | Dissertation |
| YEAR 5 | Dissertation  
Present WIP (if not in spring)  
*No teaching* | Dissertation  
Present WIP (if not in fall)  
Dissertation Progress Meeting  
*No teaching* | Dissertation |
| YEAR 6+ | Dissertation  
*No teaching* | Dissertation  
Dissertation Progress Meeting  
*No teaching* | Dissertation |

V. Local Acronym Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GEA</strong></td>
<td>Graduate English Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GEC</strong></td>
<td>Graduate Executive Committee, Department of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAS</strong></td>
<td>School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAS</strong></td>
<td>Graduate Division, School of Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GAPSA</strong></td>
<td>Graduate and Professional Student Assembly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SAS-gov  Student Government of the Graduate Students at the School of Arts & Sciences

SHS  Student Health Services

CAPS  Counseling and Psychological Services

SIS  Student Intervention Services

OSC  Office of Student Conduct

ISS  International Student Services

OGC  Office of General Council

ABD  All But Dissertation

WIP  Work-in-Progress

VI. Department Officers, GEC, and GEA Officers, 2017-18

Officers

Chair: Jed Esty

Associate Chair: Emily Steiner

Graduate Chair: David L. Eng

Undergraduate Chair: Zachary Lesser

GEC

David L. Eng (Chair)

Amy Kaplan

Suvir Kaul

Emily Steinlight

GEA Officers

President: Davy Knittle

Vice President: Jess Shollenberger

Secretary: Alicia Meyer

Treasurer: Kiana Murphy
Prospectives Visit Coordinators: Stephanie Scherer and Melanie Abeygunawardana

Funding Librarian: Vikrant Dadawala

OddsUp Coordinator: Knar Gavin

Grad Lab Liaison: Devin Daniels

GEA Reps to SAS-gov: Alvin Kim and Kerry McAuliffe

ABD Representatives: Alex Eisenthal and Mariah Min

Grad Lounge Coordinator: Meghan Hall

50-Book Party Coordinator: Davy Knittle

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VII. Administrative Contact Information

Ann Marie Pitts, Graduate Coordinator
api tts@english.upenn.edu
(215) 898-3669
Office: FBH 133

Stephanie Palmer, Administrative Assistant to the Chair
sypalmer@english.upenn.edu
(215) 898-7340

Loretta Williams, Department Administrator
loretta@english.upenn.edu
(215) 898-7343
Office: FBH 130

Elizabeth Anderson Lunger, Business Coordinator
edanders@english.upenn.edu
(215) 898-6363
Office: FBH 117

Tim Weal, Senior Business Administrator
VIII. Discrimination Policies and Violence Prevention

The University of Pennsylvania has strict rules on discrimination and violence prevention. The University values diversity and seeks talented students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, national or ethnic origin, citizenship status, age, disability, veteran status or any other legally protected class status in the administration of its admissions, financial aid, educational or athletic programs, or other University-administered programs or in its employment practices.

Below is a list of useful University websites outlining policies as well as available resources:

Sexual Harassment Policy
http://provost.upenn.edu/policies/pennbook/2013/02/15-sexual-harassment-policy

Racial Harassment Policy
http://www.upenn.edu/affirm-action/policies-handbooks.html

Office of Student Disabilities Services
http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/

Gender Neutral Restrooms
http://www.facilities.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/pdfs/gender_map_5_3_lr.pdf

Penn Violence Prevention
https://secure.www.upenn.edu/vpul/pvp/definitionsandpolicies

Reporting Responsibilities for Sexual Violence
Confidential Resources

Special Services, Division of Public Safety (DPS)
4040 Chestnut Street
(215) 898-6600

Penn Women’s Center (PWC)
3643 Locust Walk
(215) 898-8611

Student Health Service (SHS)
3535 Market Street, Suite 100
(215) 746-3535

Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)
3624 Market Street
(215) 898-7021

The Office of the Chaplain
240 Houston Hall
(215) 898-8456

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Center
3901 Spruce Street
(215) 898-5044

African American Resource Center
3643 Locust Walk
(215) 898-0104

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
(888) 321-4433

Office of Sexual Violence Prevention & Education
VPUL, 3611 Locust Walk
(215) 898-6081

Office of the Ombudsman
113 Duhring Wing
236 S. 34th Street
(215) 898-8261