



Graduate Handbook



Department of Sociology

Mather Memorial Building

Case Western Reserve University

Graduate Regulations Effective

Fall Semester 2023

Requirements for the Doctorate in Sociology

The regulations covered in this document relate specifically to the Doctoral program in the Department of Sociology. Additional forms and expectations are set out by the Office of Graduate Studies. It is the **responsibility of the student** also to be **aware of these regulations, policies, and procedures as well**. These may be found on their webpage: <https://case.edu/gradstudies/>.

The graduate program in Sociology prepares Ph.D. students for careers as researchers and teachers in academic settings as well as public and private organizations. The Department specializes in the areas of *Sociology of Age and the Life Course*, *Medical Sociology*, *Social Inequality*, and *Research Methods*.

Requirements for the Doctoral Degree

Requirements for the Ph.D. degree are as follows: **(1) 48 hours of coursework; (2) pass two comprehensive examinations; and (3) successfully defend an original dissertation project (with a minimum of 18 SOCI 701 hours of dissertation work)**. Ph.D. students will earn an M.A. in Sociology as part of the completion of doctoral requirements.

1. COURSEWORK

The doctoral program in Sociology requires the completion of 66 hours of coursework, including 18 hours of SOCI 701 dissertation hours, as specified below. The Plan of Study worksheet is available at the back of this Handbook. The doctoral program is designed to allow students to earn a Masters degree along the way.

These core requirements set forth the Department's view that the specialization in the *Sociology of Age and the Life Course*, *Medical Sociology*, *Social Inequality* and *Research Methods* must build upon competence in both sociological theory and research methods. In addition, elective courses from other substantive areas of sociology are included in the curriculum. This course list is subject to additions and changes. Check with your advisor before making selections.

REQUIRED COURSES (24 credit hours)

Sociological Theory (6 credits)

SOCI 400: Development of Sociological Theory

SOCI 401: Contemporary Sociological Theory

Research Methods (12 credits)

SOCI 406: Logic of Social Inquiry

SOCI 407: Social Statistics

SOCI 509: Advanced Statistical Analysis

SOCI 514: Qualitative Research Methods

Required Seminars: Must Take 2 of the 3 (6 credits)

SOCI 443: Medical Sociology

SOCI 469: Aging in American Society

SOCI 449: Social Inequality

A student must take the two core seminars and are strongly encouraged to take at least one elective from the third concentration area.

CONCENTRATION AND ELECTIVE COURSES (24 credit hours)

Students must select two areas of concentration for their graduate training and complete a minimum of 6 credit hours in each concentration beyond the required seminars that are part of that concentration. These are the substantive areas of their comprehensive exams. While students are only required to take 6 credits (two courses) of electives in their area of concentration, it is the position of the faculty that students should strive to take 3 electives in their concentration areas to maximize learning and chances of success on the comprehensive exams.

Medical Sociology

SOCI 411: Health and Social Behavior
SOCI 413: Sociology of Stress and Coping
SOCI 419: Sociology of Institutional Care
SOCI 444: Health Disparities
SOCI 445: Sociology of Mental Illness
SOCI 464: Disability in Society
SOCI 465: Health Care Delivery

Sociology of Age and the Life Course

SOCI 413: Sociology of Stress and Coping
SOCI 419: Sociology of Institutional Care
SOCI 461: Sociology of the Life Course
SOCI 464: Disability in Society
SOCI 496: Aging and Public Policy
SOCI 477: Population Dynamics & Change in Societies

Social Inequality

Foundational (Two Required):
SOCI 428: Capitalism, Cities, and Inequality
SOCI 484: Sociology of Sex(es), Gender(s), Sexuality(ies)
SOCI 486: Race and Racism
Electives:
SOCI 444: Health Disparities
SOCI 457: Sociology of Human Rights
SOCI 461: Sociology of the Life Course
SOCI 480: Social Movements and Social Change

Research Methods

SOCI 415: Comparative/Historical Methods
SOCI 427: Narrative Methods
SOCI 485: Ethnography
SOCI 525: Multilevel Models

Electives in other Areas of Sociology

SOCI 410: The Individual in Society
SOCI 447: Sociology of Education
SOCI 455: Special Topics
SOCI 460: Sociology of Law
SOCI 470: Sociology of the Family
SOCI 472: Work and Family
SOCI 474: Using Law to Designate Public Private Boundaries for Social Policy

Dissertation Hours (18 credits)

SOCI 701: Dissertation Ph.D.

Note: A limited number of elective courses may be taken outside of the Sociology Department with **prior approval**. Syllabi should be submitted to the Directors of Graduate Studies, who may consult with the concentration committees about the appropriateness of the course, particularly if the student is petitioning to count the course toward the comprehensive exam. Petitions must be submitted in writing to the Co-Directors of Graduate Studies for these courses and must include the description of the course from the General Bulletin, the name of the instructor, recent syllabus, and justification for taking the course.

Independent Studies

Independent “Readings and Research” courses (601) are allowed as elective courses on a limited basis. Students must petition for these arrangements, and have the prior approval of both the faculty member and Director(s) of Graduate Studies. **Please Note:** A one-page description of the projects must also be submitted to the Director(s) of Graduate Studies by the beginning of the semester. That description will be included in the student’s file. To receive a pass at the end of the term, the student must satisfactorily meet all requirements set forth in that plan.

Waivers for Previous Graduate Coursework

Those students who enter the program with previous graduate coursework in Sociology may petition to use up to 9 credits (3 courses) to satisfy Ph.D. degree requirements. A student may be able to receive a waiver for a required course and then have additional elective credits in the doctoral program. **All petitions must be submitted in writing to the Director(s) of Graduate Studies, with a copy of the syllabus. Determinations are made on an individual basis.**

Course Incompletes

Taking a grade as an Incomplete is a serious matter. It should only be done for reasons of serious health or personal problems – and only in extraordinary cases will these be considered outside of typical Graduate School sanctioned reasons. To earn an Incomplete, students must provide the faculty member of record for that course with a written request. This is to be submitted along with the Office of Graduate Studies Arrangement to Resolve an Incomplete Form. Copies of this paperwork should be submitted to the Department Administrator of Sociology. This form requires that an explicit date of completion be noted and all requirements necessary for its resolution be met at that time. Incompletes that are not resolved by that date result in the grade of “F” on the student’s permanent record.

2. TWO COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

Students will complete comprehensive exams in two areas of department specialization, *Sociology of Age and the Life Course*, *Medical Sociology*, *Social Inequality*, or *Research Methods*.

The Sociology of Age and the Life Course; Medical Sociology; and Social Inequality comprehensive exams are “reading list” based, meaning that in addition to the required and relevant course work, the student is expected to have mastered the materials provided in the respective reading lists, which include, but are not limited to the syllabi for the required and recommended elective courses in that concentration. The Research Methods comprehensive exams are a mixture of readings-based and course-based materials. Students are also expected to have reviewed the recent literature in the field (past 2-3 years) as represented by the major journals in the respective areas. Previous exams and reading lists are available on Canvas.

While preparing for the exam, you may consult with members of the concentration committee. However, if you have questions about the process of the exam, please direct those questions to the concentration committee chair or Co-Directors of Graduate Studies. A current list of concentration committees and chairs of those committees are available in the Main Office.

Comprehensive exams are offered once per semester, in August and February. The format of the comprehensive exam is a 75 hour “take-home” exam. Students receive the exam electronically on Friday at 9am and return the exam electronically at noon on Monday. During the exam period, students have access to their materials and resources, but are restricted from seeking help from other persons. Students submit their exam with a code number to enable the blind review by the examiners mentioned above. Students requesting testing accommodations should contact Disability Resources (<https://students.case.edu/academic/disability/>).

The concentration committee selects three examiners for a given exam. Each examiner reads and evaluates your answers independently. The examination committee then meets to discuss your answers and their assessments. Exams are blinded to the examiners. The committee, together, determines the final evaluation of each answer and the cumulative grade for the exam. There are three possible grades. Students demonstrating excellence in the area will receive a grade of **Distinction**; students demonstrating general competency will receive a **Pass**; and students failing to demonstrate general competency will receive a **No-Pass**. Students demonstrating low-to-moderate competency may be offered, at the discretion of the comprehensive exam committee, an opportunity to revise all or part of the exam to be re-evaluated for a Pass.

Timing of Comprehensive Exams in the Program

Students may begin taking exams before all course work is completed, if the student has completed the required and elective course work in that specialization area. In general, students are expected to begin taking comprehensive exams by the end of their coursework, no later than the August at the beginning of the fourth year in the program. Students with extenuating circumstances can request to delay one exam cycle in writing to the Co-Directors of Graduate Studies, who will determine approval. Such a request should justify the delay.

To sign up for an upcoming comprehensive exam, students submit a Graduate Concentration Form to the Co-Directors of Graduate Studies, listing the courses taken in a particular specialization area and noting his/her intent to take the comprehensive exam. The (Co-)DGS, in consultation with the student’s faculty advisor, will approve taking the exam. Students who are currently enrolled in courses in the Spring semester will not be eligible to sit for the February comprehensive exam.

If a student earns a No-Pass on a comprehensive exam, she/he is expected to prepare and retake the exam in the same area of concentration at the next comprehensive exam cycle. Exceptions to this timing are possible if the concentration committee recommends extended time for preparation (e.g., auditing a course before retaking the exam). A formal request for extension would still need to be submitted to the Co-DGSs.

Per Graduate School policy, students who twice earn a No-Pass on a comprehensive examination in a single concentration will be recommended to the School of Graduate Studies for academic separation.

3. ORIGINAL DISSERTATION

Students must complete a minimum of 18 credit hours of SOCI 701, Dissertation Hours, enrolled with her/his Dissertation Advisor.

The Dissertation Committee consists of at least four Case Western Reserve University faculty members, three regular Sociology faculty and one whose primary appointment is outside the Department of Sociology. Composition of the committee, including the outside member, is contingent on approval by the Dissertation Committee Chair. Inside committee members can include faculty with secondary appointments in Sociology.

At the beginning of the fourth year, each student must submit a Dissertation Progress form to the Director(s) of Graduate Studies. This form requires **original signatures of committee members, indicating their willingness to serve on your committee.** No change can occur to dissertation committee composition without the original signature of the new member and **professional communication** to the member who is leaving the committee.

The Dissertation Process has four distinct steps: Closed Prospectus Defense; Works in Progress; Closed Dissertation Hearing; Final Public Dissertation Defense. Each must be successfully completed before the next step can be scheduled or occur.

Prospectus

The dissertation process begins with the development and completion of a **prospectus**. Students will develop a dissertation prospectus in conjunction with their committee and, when deemed ready, will present and defend their prospectus in a closed hearing. The hearing will include the inside and outside committee members. The committee must have the complete prospectus at least **two weeks** in advance of the final private defense of the prospectus. At that time, the dissertation committee will determine whether the student has passed or needs more work in order to achieve a passing of the closed defense. A closed prospectus defense typically includes a presentation of the project by the student and then a question period by committee members.

Once a student passes the closed prospectus hearing, students will be required to present their ongoing dissertation research in the Works in Progress series. This presentation will be scheduled at a point in time of the student's own choosing, prior to completion of the dissertation and scheduling of the closed final dissertation defense. For some students, this may be early in their research process and for others after they have started analyzing or writing results. Students should consult with their Chair and committee members regarding ideal timing. Students cannot sign up for a Works in Progress slot until they have successfully passed the closed prospectus hearing.

Defenses are normally not scheduled during the first or last weeks of classes in the semester, or during the final exam period. They are also **not typically scheduled during either the fall or the spring break periods, nor after the end of the academic year**. Exceptions will be made at faculty discretion.

Works in Progress

All students are required to present a portion of their ongoing dissertation research at some point between their prospectus defense and their closed dissertation defense. Works in Progress (WIP) is intended for those who have made demonstrable progress since their prospectus defense. **This is not a repeat of the prospectus defense presentation.** Students are eligible to sign up for a slot after they have defended their prospectus (students who have not yet successfully defended a prospectus are ineligible to sign up for a WIP). However, students should consult with their Chair to determine when it is best to present. Students cannot schedule a WIP without their Chair's approval. When scheduling a WIP, students should make sure their Chair is available to attend and should invite all committee members.

Since this is an opportunity to present a portion of your ongoing dissertation research to the Department community in order to receive feedback, the timing and content of the presentation will differ among students. Some students may want to solicit feedback on survey instruments or interview scripts prior

to commencing data collection. Other students may want to discuss their qualitative data during the coding process. Still others may want to bring a conceptual or empirical dilemma that has arisen during the research period. Students should work closely with their Chair to determine when a WIP presentation would most ideal, what will be presented, and what will be asked of the audience.

Three to four slots (about once per month) will be announced at the beginning of the semester and these will be filled on a first-come, first served basis. Priority is given to students working on their dissertation research, but unfilled slots can be used for other purposes, such as faculty research, practicing a job talk, etc.

Format

WIP is one hour long. Presentations are to be approximately 30 minutes and audience questions/feedback is 30 minutes. Audience feedback is an essential part of the process; thus presenters should be mindful to keep their presentations to no more than 30 minutes. The presentation should be of the caliber of a scientific conference.

Dissertation

Once a student has completed his/her dissertation, then he/she is ready to begin the defense process. The steps are outlined below. Please note that this process, including the Graduate School requirements for the defense, requires planning and is the responsibility of the student to plan accordingly and communicate effectively with committee members.

1. Submit a draft of the dissertation to all committee members. This didactic process is the time when students get feedback on their projects and direction for making it stronger. Typically, this could span several weeks to several months. Therefore, students should allow ample time for feedback from the committee and should be prepared to make revisions to the dissertation.
2. After sufficient revisions to the dissertation that incorporate the suggestions of the committee members, a *closed hearing* can be scheduled. This is with the approval of all committee members and in coordination with the Dissertation Chair. The scheduled closed hearing should give the committee at least 3 weeks to review the revised dissertation.
3. At the closed hearing, the student will make a brief presentation of the dissertation and then field questions from the committee. After privately conferring, the committee will let the student know if he/she is approved for the public defense. The committee may provide a list of required changes, revisions, or conditions for the dissertation to make it a defensible draft. Students are advised to take these changes seriously.
4. Students then submit the *revised* dissertation to the committee. Once the committee deems it ready for defense, students may schedule their public dissertation defense. It may take multiple revisions to satisfy committee requirements and students should be prepared for this. Once signed, the Form is submitted to the DGSs. Students should then follow Graduate School policies and timelines for scheduling a defense. [PLEASE NOTE: The Graduate School requires 3 weeks advanced scheduling and this is not negotiable.]
5. The **dissertation defense** is a public event, followed by a closed discussion of the dissertation committee members. Students will give a 45-minute presentation of their dissertation research and then field questions from the committee and audience.

As is apparent above, the final stages of the dissertation process take a significant amount of time and planning. Students are *strongly advised* to be aware of the timing required, Graduate School deadlines, and to plan ahead accordingly. In most cases, the dissertation needs to be completed – or nearly completed – at the end of the *prior* semester before one seeks to graduate. [For instance, circulating the dissertation draft in November/December if one seeks to graduate in the following May.]

Other Information

An **announcement** of the dissertation defense must be **posted and circulated** to all faculty and students at **least one week** in advance of the hearing. Please ask the Department Administrator to post these announcements. Students do not announce their own defense date.

On the day of the final defense, **the student is responsible** for providing the committee members with the official signature forms from the School of Graduate Studies. It is also the student's responsibility that these forms are submitted to the School of Graduate Studies by the designated deadline.

Prior to graduation, the student is **required to submit a professionally bound and labeled copy of the dissertation to the Department and an electronic copy** to be housed in the Sociology Main Office.

Formal committee meetings, prospectus hearings, and final dissertation defenses will be scheduled during the summer months only at the discretion of the committee.

Other Issues Related to Doctoral Study

Attendance at ProSem, Colloquia, Writing Group, and Defenses

Students who receive stipend support from the department are expected to attend Professional Seminar (ProSem), Department Colloquia, Works in Progress presentations, and announced Defenses. All students are welcome. These are generally announced by email and posted on the department event calendar. Further, students receiving funding after their third year are required to attend a writing group of their peers until their prospectus is completed and defended. Attendance at these events is considered to be part of the intellectual culture of the department and essential for professional socialization. If you are unable to attend an event, send a note to the Co-DGSs. Perennial absenteeism from such events may be considered during annual Graduate Review.

Advising

The Co-DGSs are the primary advisors during coursework and release the advising holds each semester in SIS. When enrolling in Soci 701 credits, dissertation research, students select a faculty member with whom she/he wants to work. This does not change the Advisor in SIS, which will remain the Director(s) of Graduate Study but the Faculty of Record for Soci 701 assigns your grade of Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory.

Academic Requirements in SIS

The Graduate School has transitioned to Academic Requirements in SIS to monitor student progress in the program. This system replaces Plans of Study, which are no longer required. As you complete your required courses, the system checks these off of your list. Exceptions, course waivers, or special

permission to take courses outside the department can only be authorized by Co-DGSs as it will require requests for modifications in Academic Requirements. Worksheets for planning your coursework are available on the Graduate Canvas site.

Annual Review of Graduate Students

While the Department is committed to the overall success of students to the greatest degree possible, renewal of support will depend upon academic performance and progress, pending available resources, which can vary annually. Any funding in the fourth year and beyond will be contingent on proposed plans submitted by students and other departmental circumstances. The Department, in conjunction with the Graduate School, conducts an annual review of each student. The annual review has two components: (1) Student Self-Assessment, submitted in spring [form available on Canvas]; (2) All-faculty review of each student. The result of this annual review, assessing performance and progress, is provided to each student in a letter delivered during the summer.

Satisfactory Progress in the program is determined by meeting the milestones and timelines set forth in the Handbook. Students who complete coursework and pass comprehensive exams within the set timelines are considered to be making Satisfactory Progress. Beyond these milestones, students are expected to develop and successfully defend a dissertation prospectus within four semesters of passing the second comprehensive exam. Students are expected to complete and successfully defend the dissertation within four years of the prospectus defense. Students who exceed these time frames may not be considered as making Satisfactory Progress in the program, which may affect future tuition or stipend support.

Other reasons for being “Not in Good Standing” in the doctoral program include, but are not limited to, having one or more grades of "Incomplete" that have extended for more than one semester or delay in completing comprehensive exams. Students should review the Graduate School policy on Incomplete coursework, as it may affect student standing.

A student who earns a C in a course will be reviewed by faculty with regard to satisfactory progress in the program. The CWRU Graduate Handbook specifies other conditions for remaining in good standing; students are responsible for being familiar with these conditions.

Research Assistantship Policy on Work Hours

Students are responsible for fulfilling the assigned number of assistantship hours each week. Faculty mentors may require on-site work, fieldwork, attending classes (if a TA), holding office hours, or regular research meetings. Students should make sure they are clear on the expectations for work and fulfill those expectations. Any concerns regarding schedule, workload, or other issues should first be raised with the faculty member. Unresolved issues can be discussed with the Co-DGSs or Chair.

Consistent with the Graduate School policy, students receiving a 9-month assistantship (September 1 – May 30) do not have vacation time, except for university holidays. Any deviations from this schedule must be arranged in advance with the approval with your assigned faculty mentors.

(<https://case.edu/gradstudies/about-the-school/policies-procedures>).

Out of Area Policy

For personal or scientific reasons, students may need to move out of the local university area. These students should submit an Out of Area form to the (Co-) DGS with updated contact information. Students who are still taking coursework or have a funded research assistantship must submit a

request to (Co-)DGS for alternative arrangements. Students should not presume that assistantship responsibilities or academic work will be approved to be performed from outside the local area. Terms for continued department support may include requirements to return to campus on a regular basis.

Travel Support

The department is able to provide limited support to graduate students for travel to conferences or workshops. Students must submit a request in writing to the Chair, stating the purpose of the trip *in advance of the travel*. For conference travel, it is not required that you present a paper or poster to receive funds, but the support level may be lower than for presenters. Travel support is contingent on the department budget and is administered on a first-come, first-served basis. Requests for support can be made at any time in the year, so those with anticipated conference activity in spring should plan accordingly. Presently, the limit is \$200 annually per person, but requests for slightly more funding can be considered on a case-by-case basis. The Graduate School also provides some travel support to students. You should be aware of these resources as well.

Petition for Extension to the Graduate School

All students entering their 5th year since Advancing to Candidacy (usually 8th year of graduate study) are required to file a Petition for Extension with the Graduate School to continue their doctoral study. The Graduate School will place an Administrative Hold on your SIS account until such paperwork is received and approved. The form requires the signature of the DGS and/or Department Chair.

To submit and receive the extension, the student must work with their dissertation chair AND committee members to develop a timeline and work plan. The plan will include deadlines and benchmarks to be met in order to earn a Satisfactory for Soci 701. Once all committee members have approved (and email chain of approvals is sufficient), the student needs to submit the plan and form to petition for extension to the DGS.

Petition to the Department of Sociology for Reinstatement in the Doctoral Program

If a student who was separated due to academic performance issues wishes to be considered for reinstatement in the doctoral program of the Department of Sociology, he/she must submit a written petition that presents significant new evidence of academic progress or growth in identified areas of weakness. Applicants must demonstrate discernible progress and/or provide significant new information concerning competence or skills (e.g., additional training).

In reviewing such petitions, the department faculty will consider the likelihood of success in the program. The faculty may impose specific conditions for reinstatement and may appoint a specific faculty member as the “point person” for advising/overseeing the student’s work and progress.

As part of the deliberation, the department may request a detailed timeline and plan for completion of the program. This plan may include, as applicable: plan of study, timeline for taking comprehensive exams, timeline for completion of prospectus and/or dissertation. If requested, this plan could also detail measures to be undertaken to maximize success in the program or accomplish the conditions of reinstatement.

Requirements for the M.A. Degree

Students will earn a Masters degree in Sociology on the way to the Ph.D. If students wish to earn the Masters degree, below are the degree requirements. No additional coursework is necessary to achieve both degrees, but students must meet the requirements for the Masters degree in coursework and pass one comprehensive exam. The remaining coursework and comprehensive exam count toward the Ph.D.

It is also possible for an undergraduate to apply to be accepted as a MA student in Sociology. These undergraduates should contact their major advisor and the department director of UGS for more information.

1. COURSEWORK: 30 hours of coursework, as specified below:

A. Sociological Theory and Research Methods (12 credits)

SOCI 400: Development of Sociological Theory (3)

SOCI 401: Contemporary Sociological Theory (3)

SOCI 406: Logic of Social Inquiry (3)

SOCI 407: Social Statistics (3)

B. Required Seminars: Must take 2 out of the 3 (6 credits)

SOCI 469: Aging in American Society (3)

SOCI 443: Medical Sociology (3)

SOCI 449: Social Inequality (3)

C. Electives in Sociology (12 credits)

Six credits must be in one concentration area [*Sociology of Age and the Life Course*, *Medical Sociology*, or *Social Inequality*].

2. One Comprehensive Exam

Students pursuing the Ph.D. may apply for the M.A. degree after completing the course work listed above and after having passed a comprehensive exam in one of the concentrations listed above.

Plans of Study for Students Matriculating August 2018 or Later Masters & Doctoral Degree

Students seeking both the Masters and Doctoral Degrees must submit two separate Plans of Study: one for the Masters and one for the remaining coursework needed to complete the Doctoral Degree. These are submitted through SIS, and approved by the Co-DGSs then the Graduate School.

A. Masters Degree Plan of Study

Course Number	Course Name	Semester Taken or Planned
<i>Required Foundation Courses (12 credits)</i>		
Soci 400	Development of Social Theory	
Soci 401	Contemporary Social Theory	
Soci 406	Logic of Social Inquiry	
Soci 407	Social Statistics	
<i>Required Seminars: 2 out of 3 (6 credits)</i>		
Soci 443	Medical Sociology	
Soci 469	Aging in American Society	
Soci 449	Social Inequality	
<i>Concentration I Electives (6 credits)</i>		
<i>General Electives (6 credits)</i>		

B. Doctoral Degree Plan of Study (In addition to those listed above under the Master's Degree)

Course Number	Course Name	Semester Taken or Planned
Soci 509	Advanced Statistical Analysis	
Soci 514	Qualitative Research Methods	
<i>Concentration 2 (6 credits)</i>		
<i>General Electives (6 credits)</i>		

* Soci 701 Credits are not included on the Proposed Plan of Study for the Doctoral Degree.