

*Northwestern University*  
*Department of African American Studies*

*2018-2019 Guide to Doctoral Study*

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**NOTE:** The Department of African American Studies Guide to Doctoral Study supplements The Graduate School website and other University documents, which contain general regulations and deadlines on a wide range of academic and financial matters pertaining to graduate study. The African American Studies Department reserves the right to change, without notice, any statement in this publication concerning, but not limited to, rules, policies, timelines, curricula, and courses. When departmental regulations concerning a particular aspect of the program change during your tenure of study at Northwestern, you will ordinarily follow the rule in effect in the Fall when you matriculated in the program, except by permission of the Director of Graduate Studies. The Guide must always be used in conjunction with the most recent version of The Graduate School rules and regulations.

## CONTENTS

### 1. RESIDENCY, REGISTRATION, AND GRADES

- Courses and Registration Credits
- Grades
- Expectations Regarding Paper Submissions
- Incomplete Work
- Leaves of Absence
- Course Credit from Previous MA Degrees

### 2. DEPARTMENTAL AND TGS EVALUATIONS

- Satisfactory Academic Progress
- Probation
- Exclusion

### 3. THE PH.D. PROGRAM

- The First Year of the Doctoral Program
- Course Requirements
- Adviser/Advisee Expectations
- The First Year Review
- Planning the Second Year
  
- The Second Year of the Doctoral Program
- The Second-Year Paper
- Master's Degree
- Teaching, Research, and Graduate Assistantships
  
- The Third Year of the Doctoral Program
- The Qualifying Exam
- Admission to Candidacy
- The Dissertation Proposal
- The Dissertation Committee
- The Format of the Dissertation Proposal
- Approval of Dissertation Proposal and Defense
  
- The Fourth Year of the Doctoral Program
- Communicating with your Dissertation Committee
- Changes in your Dissertation Committee
  
- The Fifth Year of the Doctoral Program
- Preparation of the Dissertation
- Dissertation Defense and Filing
  
- Time Limits
  
- Professional Development

### 4. FUNDING

- Funding in the First Five Years
- Support beyond the Fifth Year
- University Research and Dissertation Year Fellowships
- Other Grants
- Jobs in Undergraduate Housing

## 5. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS

- Expected Standards of Collegiality
- Departmental Organization
- Prizes

## 1. RESIDENCY, REGISTRATION, AND GRADES

### Courses and Registration Credits

If you are a full-time student in The Graduate School, three course registrations are required for full-time standing in a given quarter. You may take a fourth course without adding to your tuition bill. Consult the current website of The Graduate School for regulations concerning residency and post-candidacy research.

Within the framework of The Graduate School residency requirements, the Department determines the number and distribution of courses required for your particular program of study (See Section 3: The PH.D. Program). In consultation with your adviser, you will choose your coursework from courses offered in the Department of African American Studies as well as in other departments and programs. The Director of Graduate Studies is also available for consultation on coursework.

Only courses listed in CAESAR with a career of "The Graduate School" are authorized for graduate credit. These courses may include the following types of registration toward full-time standing in The Graduate School:

1. 400-level graduate courses. These are standard graduate seminars that form the majority of your coursework.
2. 500-level graduate courses. These are special courses not necessarily more advanced in nature than 400-level courses.
3. 300-level undergraduate courses. These are primarily for advanced undergraduate students, but those listed in CAESAR under TGS are approved for graduate credit.
4. 499 Independent Study Registrations. After their first year, students may participate in up to 2 independent studies with core or affiliated African American Studies faculty members in order to fulfill the 4 track, 4 discipline, and 3 elective course requirements. An independent study in a student's first year may be approved under extraordinary circumstances with approval of the DGS. In order to work on the dissertation proposal, students may participate in a third independent study with their graduate adviser with the registration number of 499.

Before registering for a 499, you should have a discussion with the faculty member. Then you should file with that faculty instructor a 499 Proposal, which describes the topic that you will study, the reading list, the frequency of meetings, and the requirements for written work. At the end of the quarter, the instructor must submit a final grade on Caesar.

5. 491 Reading and Pedagogy Registrations. This registration gives students time to work as a teaching assistant (TA). You should register for one unit of 491 for every quarter in which you are serving as a teaching assistant. Students registered for 491 and 2 other courses are considered full time, but students can also take 3 courses while TAing. Based on one's performance as a TA, a grade of Pass/No Pass will be assigned by the supervising faculty member (or the Director of Graduate Studies in the case of TAships completed outside of the department).

6. The Graduate School 500 (Advanced Doctoral Study) - This registration number serves as a catch-all for Qualifying Exam, Dissertation Proposal, and Dissertation research and writing, for students who are receiving University funding. Third-year students should register for TGS 500 every quarter of the academic year. The fall quarter will be spent reading for the Qualifying Exam, and the winter and spring quarters will be spent preparing the dissertation proposal. Fourth- and fifth-year students should register for TGS 500 in order to remain as full-time students while completing their dissertation research and writing.

7. The Graduate School 512 (Continuous Registration): This is for students who completed the program coursework and are continuing in their degree program (writing a thesis or dissertation and/or performing research required for the degree), *but not receiving University or external funding*. All active students in The Graduate School must be registered at Northwestern University in each of the fall, winter and spring quarters until all degree requirements have been completed.

8. 590: Research is a registration that allows you to take a 2 rather than 3-course load without losing standing as a full-

time student. This is usually for students who come in with an MA and don't have to take a full 3-course load in their first and second years. This can only be taken under special circumstances and with the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. By third year and beyond, students should register for TGS 500.

9. If you enroll in a course that does not carry graduate credit (for example, a beginning or intermediate language course), you must also carry three graduate registrations in order to maintain full-time standing.

10. Summer registrations:

- TGS wants funded first and second year students to enroll in three units of 590 for a P/NP.
- Third year and beyond who are funded should continue to register for TGS 500.
- Third year and beyond students who are not funded don't have to register for summer except in the following instances:
  - An international student for whom summer will be the last quarter of registration at NU (students should consult with the International Office before registering) or
  - Planning to receive student loans during summer and must be registered full time, or
  - Planning to defer loans and require summer registration in order to defer loans for an additional quarter (students should consult with Graduate Financial Aid with questions)

## **Grades**

The Graduate School will record letter grades with plus or minus distinctions on your official transcript. Any grade below an A- (which has a point value of 3.7) should be met with concern, since the department requires students to have a 3.5 GPA (midway between a B+/A-) to maintain satisfactory academic progress.

## **Expectations Regarding Paper Submissions**

The same paper cannot be submitted for more than one course. It is the student's responsibility to inform instructors, and gain permission to proceed beforehand, if a course paper engages the same topic as a paper submitted for another course (either a previous course or a course in the same quarter) but from a different angle. We encourage students to use coursework as an opportunity to develop ideas for their dissertations—which might involve the revisiting of themes and topics across courses. At the same time, we do not want students to be overly myopic in their approach to their coursework. Double submissions without the approval of the instructors involved will not be accepted, and the issue will be brought to the Graduate Affairs Committee to resolve in consultation with the affected course instructors.

## **Incomplete Work**

In order to maintain satisfactory academic progress, you must make up any incomplete work from an academic year no later than two weeks prior to the beginning of classes in the following Fall quarter. This rule supersedes any rule set down by The Graduate School. We strongly recommend that you complete all work for your courses before the beginning of the subsequent quarter whenever possible. In cases involving such unavoidable circumstances as illness or a death in the family, you may, on or before the deadline, submit a written petition for an extension to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Be aware also that the Graduate School closely monitors incomplete work (X, Y, or N grades). To qualify for summer funding, a student in years 1-4 and on University funding must be in good academic standing by both the Department of African American Studies and Graduate School definitions. The latter requires that the student "keep records free of incomplete grades." Furthermore, TGS multi-year funding packages are contingent on the following: "Students are expected to be registered as full-time graduate students, maintain a "B" average with no incomplete grades, and adhere to all regulations as stipulated in The Graduate School Handbook." Further, if any incomplete is not made up within a year, the X or Y becomes permanent and you will lose the residency credit for the course and will need to register for an additional course at your own expense. You will receive warning letters or probation letters from The Graduate School each quarter in which you have more than one incomplete grade on your record.

Students who serve in departmental service positions (conference co-chair, Grad Student Rep/Head of Grad Student

Council, Undergrad Affairs Committee Representative, Faculty Recruitment Committee Representative) cannot carry an Incomplete in any course for more than one quarter.

### **Leaves of Absence**

The Graduate School allows three kinds of leaves of absence: personal medical; family medical; and general. Leaves are granted for a minimum of one quarter and a maximum of one year. Students should first meet with the DGS, and then must petition the Graduate School, for any of these kinds of leaves. Leaves of absence are governed by TGS rules and thus students should thoroughly review the TGS website if they are considering a leave. Leaves of absence do not exempt students from meeting the residency requirement or other TGS degree requirements. See <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/leaves-of-absence.html> for more information.

### **Course Credit from Previous MA Degrees**

Under some circumstances, the graduate program in African American Studies will allow up to 6 courses from graduate work from other universities to count towards the 18 course requirement. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Graduate Studies, and the courses must be related to an African American Studies curriculum. A minimum grade of B+ must have been awarded in those courses. In unusual circumstances, the Director of Graduate Studies has the discretion to accept up to 8 courses from previous graduate work toward the 18-course requirement. However, only 6 of those courses can be applied if the student chooses to file for a Masters of Arts degree in African American Studies from Northwestern to ensure that adequate coursework has been completed at Northwestern to justify a Northwestern master's degree. Students can use DGS-accepted courses toward the fulfillment of their disciplinary, track, or elective course requirements, but not for their core or methods course requirements.

In order to receive previous coursework credit, students should submit a transcript from the previous institution along with a memo explaining which courses should be counted as part of the 18 course requirement and a brief justification for whether they should be applied to the disciplinary, track, or elective course requirements.

Students who receive credit for previous graduate coursework, and consequently complete their course requirements before the end of the second year of study, will be expected to register for independent studies or additional relevant courses, with the goal of working on their dissertation proposals or working on a paper for publication in order to maintain their registration and funding.

## **2. DEPARTMENTAL AND TGS EVALUATIONS**

Each year, every student in the program must ensure that the information in the Graduate Student Tracking System (GSTS, see <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/graduate-student-tracking-system.html>) is up to date, and that they have reviewed the information with their adviser. In addition, for every course students take, the instructor will file a written evaluation on a standard form; and for every teaching assistantship from that year, the faculty supervisor will submit an evaluation. The information from the GSTS, CV, and course performance and TA evaluations will be reviewed annually by the Graduate Affairs Committee and the faculty. A crucial part of students' permanent record in the department, these evaluations are given close attention in deliberations about continuation in the program and funding. Students will be given a written summary of the outcome of these evaluations and should use them in measuring their achievement and planning goals. The Graduate faculty may consult all student records. Faculty members are also encouraged to provide feedback directly to students.

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

The Graduate School has minimum criteria for making satisfactory academic progress (or for being "in good academic standing"), and automatic grounds for probation and exclusion. They can be found at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress.html>, and are repeated below.

TGS sets the minimum standard for satisfactory academic progress. Programs may have additional criteria beyond TGS's for determining a student's academic standing. There are three sets of criteria that The Graduate

School takes into account in determining whether or not students are making satisfactory academic progress:

- Program length. Doctoral students must complete all requirements for the PhD within nine years of initial registration in TGS. ...
- Grades and cumulative GPA. A student whose overall grade average is below B (3.0 GPA) or who has more than three incomplete (Y or X) grades is not making satisfactory academic progress and will be placed on probation by TGS. Individual programs may have stricter criteria.
- Internal milestone deadlines. Doctoral students who have not been admitted to candidacy (passed the qualifying exam) by the end of their third year, or who have not completed the dissertation prospectus by the end of the fourth year are not making satisfactory academic progress and will be placed on academic probation by TGS

Programs may have additional criteria beyond TGS's for determining a student's academic standing. Failure to make satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the program, may be a result of (but is not limited to): unsatisfactory performance in classes, unsatisfactory performance on qualifying exams, unsatisfactory research progress, or failure to meet other program requirements (such as language proficiency or publication requirement).

Each student's academic progress must be reported annually by the student's program to the student and to TGS. Failure to make satisfactory academic progress as determined by either The Graduate School or the program will result in probation or exclusion (dismissal).

As stated in the above TGS guidelines, departments are allowed to have additional criteria beyond the TGS guidelines. The following are grounds for automatic failure to make satisfactory progress in the African American Studies Department, and thus trigger an appropriate action (see Probation and Exclusion below).

- A GPA below 3.5 (B+/A-)
- At any given time, more than one incomplete (X or Y grades)

The following are also grounds for failure to make satisfactory academic progress. In these cases, however, the Graduate Affairs Committee makes recommendations and the Faculty makes decisions about satisfactory academic progress and together determine actions:

- Failure to remedy incompletes by specified deadlines ("no later than two weeks prior to the beginning of classes in the following Fall quarter" as per "Incomplete Work" under Section 1, or as stated in a probation letter).
- Failure to adhere to Departmental timelines for degree requirements, including but not limited to the Second-Year Paper, Qualifying Exam, Dissertation Proposal, or other requirements (see relevant sections for timelines).
- Serious breaches of professional conduct (for some examples, see the University's policies for maintaining a safe and healthy campus environment at <http://www.northwestern.edu/sexual-harassment/university-policies/index.html>).

The Graduate Affairs Committee also reserves the right to recommend probation or exclusion even if a student's performance in courses has been adequate and deadlines have been met. The Graduate Affairs Committee might make such a recommendation if weak performance in some areas has not been balanced by strong performance in others; or if a student has been on probation several times over the course of their graduate careers; or if the student is not making satisfactory research progress. The Faculty will discuss the recommendation and make a determination.

## **Probation**

A student who is not making satisfactory academic progress upon the evaluation of the Graduate Affairs Committee and the Faculty will be placed on academic probation. The student will be notified of this decision in writing (e-mail communication is considered to be "in writing"), along with The Graduate School. The student will be given at most two quarters to resume satisfactory academic standing, the terms of which will be clearly stipulated in the decision letter. Students can receive Northwestern funding during a probationary period.

## **Exclusion**

A student who has failed to resume satisfactory academic standing in the allotted time; who has consistently failed to make satisfactory academic progress; or who has had more than one probationary period, upon the evaluation of the Graduate Affairs Committee and the Faculty, may be excluded from the program. At the discretion of the faculty, exclusion may result even without a probationary period. Exclusion includes both the termination of University funding and discontinuation from the curriculum. The student will be notified of this decision in writing (e-mail communication is considered to be "in writing") along with The Graduate School. The student has a right to appeal to The Graduate School the Faculty's decision to exclude (see <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress.html>).

## **3. THE PH.D. PROGRAM**

### **The First Year of the Doctoral Program**

Your first year of doctoral study will consist primarily of coursework, getting acclimated to Northwestern and to the African American Studies Department, attending departmental workshops and lectures, and beginning your professional development. The normal course load is three courses per quarter, for a total of nine courses per year. In your first year you will take three required core courses, as detailed below. This means that you have considerable room in your schedule to explore the departmental and university graduate curriculum, as well as to begin to get deeper training in your track and discipline of specialization.

### **Course Requirements**

The goal of the African American Studies Ph.D. program is to offer a graduate curriculum that provides students with a firm grounding in a variety of essential texts, materials, methodologies, and traditions. At the same time, there is a built-in degree of flexibility that will enable students to achieve a higher degree of proficiency within a specific sub-field. Consequently, we require all students to take eighteen (18) courses during the first two years of study (all things being equal, an average of three courses per quarter). The specific breakdown of the 18 required courses is as follows:

Six of these courses—the core courses—are required for all students. The Core Courses are: 401 Research Seminar in Black Studies; 402 Theorizing Black Genders and Sexualities; 403 Theorizing Blackness and Diaspora; 420 Black Expressive Arts; 440 Black Historiography; 460 Black Social and Political Thought. Three of these courses (420, 440, 460) correspond to our three tracks: Expressive Arts and Culture (EAC); History; Politics, Society, and Culture (PSC). The core track courses are taught every other year in rotation with the other three core courses.

Beyond these core courses, students will take four courses within their chosen *track* of focus. These courses may be taught within or outside of the department, but the course content should relate to an African American Studies curriculum. We also require that all students take four courses in their chosen *discipline* of specialization in order to establish their competence in that field (e.g., English, Sociology, History, Theatre, Political Science, Philosophy, Gender and Sexuality Studies, etc.) and to enhance their subsequent marketability. Any academic department or program offering graduate courses at Northwestern is acceptable as a disciplinary specialization. These courses do not necessarily have to contain African American Studies content. At least one research methods course is also required. In consultation with their advisers, and depending upon the nature of their research interests, students will choose an appropriate course—or courses—in research methods. Three elective courses – which are open in terms of content and department – represent the last component of the course requirements. Taking additional research methods courses is certainly recommended and can count as electives or disciplinary courses.

The specific breakdown of the 18 required courses is:

- \* 6 core courses
- \* 4 track courses
- \* 4 courses within one's chosen discipline of specialization
- \* 3 elective courses
- \* 1 research methods course



## **Adviser/Advisee Expectations**

All first-year students are assigned an adviser. After that, students are responsible for identifying an adviser for the second-year paper. Similarly, students are responsible for identifying a chair of their dissertation committee. If the student wishes, and the faculty member agrees, the same faculty member can serve in all three advising roles (First Year, Second-Year Paper, and Dissertation). By the same token, both advisers and advisees are free to withdraw from the advising relationship in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Advisers and advisees should meet at least once a quarter regarding the student's progress through the program. Advisers should supervise and provide feedback to their advisees at every opportunity including assistance regarding course selection; classroom visits to observe teaching (as a teaching assistant or solo instructor after qualifying exams have been passed); and preparing the second-year paper. The student should maintain current information in the Graduate School Tracking System to facilitate information sharing between themselves and their adviser.

## **The First Year Review**

The satisfactory completion of all courses is a necessary but not sufficient condition for making satisfactory academic progress and continuation into the second year. That decision rests on the judgment of the Graduate Faculty that you have demonstrated the ability and motivation to plan a substantial scholarly project and carry it to completion within the time limits for the degree. First year reviews will take place at the end of the spring quarter. On the basis of your academic record in the first year and an interview (if necessary), the Graduate Affairs Committee evaluates if students are making satisfactory academic progress and makes recommendations to the Faculty about possible courses of action. See Section 2: Departmental and TGS Evaluations for more information.

## **Planning the Second Year**

If you are at all like other first-year graduate students, you will find that your coursework demands most of your energy. Nevertheless, it will be important for you to look ahead and to think about the directions your studies are likely to take from this point on. In the final weeks of the spring quarter of your first year and over the summer you should: think about and/or start work on your Second-Year Paper; consider and/or secure an adviser for the Second-Year Paper; and do considerable reading and research to advance you toward your goals. You should also begin thinking about fields of specialization and consult the Qualifying Exam lists (available from the Director of Graduate Studies) in order to develop a plan of reading for the summer and the second year. You need not be in a rush to come to a decision about fields of specialization, but should move forward steadily by reading, over the summer, some of the basic texts in the fields that you are considering. Also, you will begin your training as a teacher in your second year. To that end, in the spring quarter of your first year, you may want to arrange to observe an undergraduate class in African American Studies in order to prepare yourself for your initiation into the classroom.

Some students, depending on their research projects, will be required to attain competence in a foreign language. The need for foreign language skills will be determined by the candidate and the candidate's research adviser(s). If the student has not already started on this road, the summer before the second year and the second year of the program are crucial times to improve or perfect second language skills.

## **The Second Year of the Doctoral Program**

In the second year of the doctoral program, you should map out a plan for moving toward your field of specialization. Consistent with this goal, you should also begin thinking about the kind of research you wish to undertake and preparing yourself to produce publishable work. In consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and perhaps your first-year adviser, you will choose a primary advisor who will supervise your progress toward the successful completion of your Second-Year Paper, and identify a second reader of the Second-Year paper who will support you as well.

## **Second-Year Paper**

At the end of the second year, each student will submit a paper based on independent research (using primary data that the student has collected and analyzed, secondary data collected elsewhere but analyzed by the student, archival

sources analyzed by the student, or literary, conceptual, or theoretical analysis conducted by the student). In other words, Second-Year Papers should provide evidence of a student's capacity to produce research featuring original data (ethnographic research, archival research, or other relevant forms of data), and/or theoretical and conceptual innovations. The paper should be approximately thirty pages in length (standard margins, 12 pt. font, excluding bibliography, footnotes and appendices). The expectation is that, as part of the process of professionalization, the research produced will be submitted for publication to an appropriate journal, after any necessary revisions.

The student works closely in their second year with their Second-Year Paper adviser to arrive at a polished product. The primary adviser should be a core member of the African American Studies faculty. Early in the process students should also identify a second reader, who may be core or affiliate AFAM faculty, or other Northwestern faculty as approved by the adviser and DGS. The primary adviser is the go-to person and the student's adviser-of-record. The second reader is there to be helpful to the student, providing feedback on ideas, reference materials, and other insights. Both the primary adviser and the second reader must approve the final paper with the understanding that there will be deference to the primary adviser in moving the paper forward to the Grad Affairs Committee in the case of any disagreements. After receiving the adviser's and second reader's approval, the second-year paper should be submitted to the DGS by June 1 for formal approval of this requirement.

In order to support the process of writing the Second-Year Paper, students are encouraged to enroll in a "collective writing" course offered by many graduate departments across campus (e.g. History 570, Sociology 490, Political Science 404). These courses support a group of students as each works on an independent research project prior to working on the dissertation. For students unable to enroll in such a course, an Independent Study with the adviser is recommended to work on the paper.

Second-year students will be expected to present their paper as part of a Departmental Symposium to take place at the end of Spring Quarter. Faculty members of the Graduate Affairs Committee may vote to honor one paper through a Second-Year Paper Award.

Students who have not submitted their approved Second-Year Paper to the DGS by June 1 of their second year are deemed to not be making satisfactory academic progress and may be subject to probation or, possibly, exclusion, depending on their prior history in the program. The probation letter will lay out the process for resuming good standing. (See Section 2 for more information).

### **Master's Degree**

Students are eligible for a Master of Arts degree when they complete the program's 18-course requirement and an approved Second Year Paper. Students must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 in the required 18 courses to be eligible for the Master's Degree. Up to 6 courses can be transferred from other graduate institutions to count towards the 18-course degree requirement.

To obtain a master's degree, students should submit the Application for Degree and a Master's Degree Completion form via TGS Forms in CAESAR by the deadlines published for degree awarding for a given quarter.

### **Teaching, Research, and Graduate Assistantships**

You are likely to hold a teaching, research, or graduate assistantship in your second year (see TGS information about Assistantships at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/assistantships/index.html>). The Graduate Affairs Committee in collaboration with the Faculty make decisions about student placement into either TAs or RAs. In preparation for teaching, you are expected to attend training events offered by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching. For both research and teaching assignments, you should meet with the supervising faculty member to discuss expectations and assignments and to receive tips on classroom teaching and organization. As you learn the basics of pedagogy or research, you should keep in mind that an assistantship is a part-time position (approximately 15 to 20 hours per week), and that your primary responsibility will be to move steadily toward your degree.

It is your responsibility to keep abreast of all Graduate School regulations that relate to the appointment, remuneration, tax status, and academic standing of assistants (see <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid->

policies.html#regulations). Also, The Graduate School provides information on “Assistantship Best Practices” at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/academic-student-services/assistantship-best-practices/index>.

As a teaching assistant you will support instructors in undergraduate courses. Your duties include:

- Reading all assigned texts in the course;
- Attending all lectures;
- Possibly leading up to two discussion sections (depending on course enrollment numbers), with a combined total of no more than fifty students;
- Grading student papers and exams (at the instructor’s discretion);
- Returning graded papers and exams of students in a timely fashion;
- Holding meetings with students in at least two regularly scheduled office hours per week;
- Assisting the instructor in other tasks involved in running a lecture course;
- Responding to emails and other communications from the instructor and students in a timely fashion;
- Giving at least one of the lectures in the course, if the instructor so desires.

Teaching assistants will be assessed on a P/NP—i.e., pass/fail—basis. Your teaching supervisors will also be asked to submit a written evaluation for your annual review. The assignment of teaching assistants to particular courses is the responsibility of the Director of Graduate Studies and depends ultimately on enrollments at the undergraduate level. The Director of Graduate Studies will make every attempt to give you assignments that fit your interests, but the needs of the undergraduate curriculum must take precedence over other considerations (as it does for professors).

As specified by The Graduate School, research assistantships are awarded to students who assist faculty members on research projects, while graduate assistantships are awarded to students for service to further the University’s academic mission, including such things as administrative support for an academic journal, a research institute, or an academic program. As with teaching assistantships, students will be directly supervised by a faculty member, and the expected commitment is 15 to 20 hours per week. The duties of research or graduate assistantships are more tailored to the research or administrative task. For research, the tasks may include going to archives, conducting or transcribing interviews, creating databases, mining websites, doing literature reviews, or maintaining bibliographies. Graduate assistantships may entail assisting in conference planning, making travel arrangements for external speakers, maintaining websites, or developing curricula. The most important key to success for a research or graduate assistantship is communication with the faculty supervisor about specific tasks and expectations.

### **The Third Year of the Doctoral Program**

The third year of the doctoral program is in many ways the most challenging because during the summer you will have started an important transition. You will have moved from completing specified assignments for particular courses and other set tasks to working more independently on goals of much greater scope. While you will still receive guidance from faculty members (and should never hesitate to seek it at any point during the year), your achievements will depend increasingly on your own discipline, organization, ambition, and imagination. The third year formally completes your preparation for the largest task of your graduate study: the research and writing of your dissertation. In doing so, it advances you toward your ultimate goal of becoming a mature, self-motivated scholar, critic, thinker, and writer.

By the end of your third year, you are expected to have completed all of the requirements of the department and the Graduate School for Admission to Candidacy, which includes completion of all course work, the Second-Year Paper, and receiving a “pass” on the written and oral Qualifying Exam.

### **The Qualifying Exam**

The Qualifying Exam is administered toward the end of the fall quarter of your third year. The purpose of the Qualifying Exam as a whole is to test your command of the primary source material and your grasp of the relevant empirical, historical, and theoretical contexts in the field of African American Studies. The Qualifying Exam is thus designed to certify your ability to teach in the field of African American Studies. It asks that you demonstrate in-depth familiarity with a list of core texts across the three tracks (which have also been part of your reading in the six core courses). The exam consists of two parts: a take-home written exam and an oral exam. The Graduate Affairs

Committee evaluates students' performance on both the written and oral exams. If there is a section of the exam that the Graduate Affairs Committee deems to be not acceptable, a student may have the opportunity to re-write that section.

Students who do not receive a Pass on the written or oral part of the Qualifying Exam, after any determined re-write, are deemed to not be making satisfactory academic progress and are automatically placed on probation, and may be subject to exclusion, depending on their prior history in the program. The probation letter will lay out the process for resuming good standing. See Section 2: Departmental and TGS Evaluations.

The Department will, on the advice of the Graduate Affairs Committee and in extraordinary cases, award a "Pass with Distinction."

### **Admission to Candidacy**

Admission to candidacy is a procedure of the Graduate School, which means that you have met all degree requirements except for the writing of the dissertation proposal and the dissertation itself. You will advance to candidacy if you've finished all course work, completed a Second Year Paper, and passed the Qualifying Exam. Having fulfilled these requirements, the Director of Graduate Studies (or DGS designate) submits the PhD Qualifying Exam form online via CAESAR. Per TGS rules, "A student must be admitted to candidacy by the end of the third year of study, which falls on the last date of the 12th quarter. A student failing to meet this milestone will be considered not in good academic standing and therefore will be placed on academic probation."

### **The Dissertation Proposal**

Before the end of your third year, you are required to submit a dissertation proposal (sometimes called a "dissertation prospectus") and present an oral defense of that proposal. Students must defend their dissertation proposal before the end of the third year and should not feel bound to wait until they have passed their qualifying exams to work on their proposals. The language in this section assumes that the dissertation proposal will be defended after the qualifying exams have been passed as that is the standard pattern but, again, students may certainly defend the dissertation proposal at an earlier juncture.

Upon passing the Qualifying Exams, you will register for two additional units of TGS 500 (for P/N credit). The joint product of both units will be your proposal. You should meet with all faculty members who will likely serve on the dissertation committee at the beginning of the quarter to work out a course of action, and you should have at least one meeting toward the end of each quarter to review progress and make sure that there is agreement among you on what remains to be done. You may also meet separately and regularly with each member throughout the quarter to keep them updated on your progress.

While much of the work in the winter quarter will be concerned with background reading and bibliographical groundwork, it will be important for you to turn in several written drafts of your ideas. You should aim to submit a first draft of your proposal by the start of the spring quarter, at the latest, and to meet with your committee members soon after that. This draft will probably be quite rough, and it may take several drafts to be satisfactorily polished; but it is important that you commit yourself to a topic firmly and early.

### **The Dissertation Committee**

Per TGS rules, a minimum of three individuals must serve on the dissertation committee. There is no maximum number of committee members, but anything about five is not recommended. At least two members of the dissertation committee, including the chair, must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. In most circumstances, the Chair of the Committee will be a member of the Core African American Studies faculty (i.e., not an Affiliate), unless the DGS approves an exception. Along with the chair, at least one additional member of the committee must also be Core faculty in the Department, for a total of two committee members that must be Core faculty in African American Studies. Other committee members can come from any other department at Northwestern or at other universities.

## **The Format of the Dissertation Proposal**

The proposal establishes a blueprint for the major accomplishment of your career in the doctoral program: the writing of the dissertation. A concise and precise program for the chapter-by-chapter drafting of the dissertation, the proposal allows both you and your committee to conceive of the dissertation project as a whole. Additionally, the proposal places the dissertation in the context of current scholarship in the chosen field of study; it thereby indicates how the dissertation contributes to and potentially changes this field. Chiefly, the proposal gives you an opportunity to anticipate and articulate the framework for your dissertation: the question(s) it will pursue, the logical articulations of why the question is important to pursue, the topic's linkages to previous research, and the methods by which the line of argument will be elaborated with reference to evidentiary materials. In some cases, understandably, the nature of scholarly fieldwork will preclude the possibility of a detailed chapter outline and an explicit thesis or argument. In such cases, some of the points mentioned here are not applicable and students will, in consultation with their advisers, generate a more suitable template.

In other words, the proposal should do the following: 1) describe the topic under consideration; 2) identify the methodological approach and the scope of the data collection (if appropriate); 3) specify the scope of the inquiry; 4) briefly explain the relation of the dissertation to major scholarly achievements and contemporary trends in the field; 5) outline the chapters (if appropriate), with a brief exposition of what each one seeks to accomplish; 6) provide an extensive bibliography that includes both primary and secondary material. Different fields require different kinds of bibliographies, with different degrees of inclusiveness. But, in general, a bibliography should include every item that would make a difference to the dissertation. Because the proposal is a formal professional document, the bibliography should be presented in formal bibliographical style. In general, a proposal is 20-25 pages in length, not including the bibliography.

## **Approval of the Dissertation Proposal and Defense**

When your dissertation chair judges your proposal to be acceptable for defense, you and your dissertation committee will schedule an oral examination. The examination will be based on your proposal. The committee members will determine if the candidate has written an acceptable proposal and passed the oral exam and will inform the Director of Graduate Studies in writing.

Successfully defended proposals should be approved by the committee by June 1st of students' third year. *Note that this departmental deadline is earlier than the one stipulated by TGS, which is the end of the fourth year.* Once approved, the student must submit the PhD Prospectus form through TGS Forms in CAESAR. The department must approve this form online before TGS enters the final approval. Students are notified via email by TGS of approval of their Prospectus form.

Students who do not successfully defend an approved dissertation proposal by June 1<sup>st</sup> of their third year are deemed to not be making satisfactory academic progress and may be subject to probation or, possibly, exclusion, depending on their prior history in the program. The probation letter will lay out the process for resuming good standing. See Section 2: Departmental and TGS Evaluations.

Graduate students will be eligible to teach their own stand-alone courses within the department after they have been admitted to candidacy and have successfully defended an approved dissertation proposal. Students should speak to the Director of Undergraduate Studies about their interest in teaching their own classes.

## **The Fourth Year of the Doctoral Program**

Once you are admitted to candidacy and have successfully defended your dissertation proposal, your progress toward the degree will depend very much on your own pace and initiative. We would like you to make significant progress on your research and writing to stay on track to complete the dissertation in your fifth year. However, some students take a sixth year to finish, although funding for a sixth year is not guaranteed.

It is increasingly expected that one publish during one's graduate career in order to get a job. A well-placed publication, ideally in a peer-reviewed journal, always strengthens your credentials. The second-year paper should

provide the foundation for the successful publication of an article in an appropriate scholarly venue. We also strongly urge you to consider submitting some version of a dissertation chapter for publication, ideally, in time for the piece to be accepted (not necessarily published) before your Fall job search gets in full swing. You should plan to consult closely with your dissertation chair and committee in this effort.

Registration for each of the three quarters in the fourth year is TGS 500.

### **Communicating with your Dissertation Committee**

It is useful to think of your proposal as a memorandum of understanding between you and your committee about your dissertation. The proposal is not a contract specifying provisions to be fulfilled (especially in those cases where fieldwork precludes the possibility of any such certainty). You will undoubtedly change your mind on many aspects of your dissertation as you proceed, and your committee members will expect such changes. But you must seek their advice and approval if you envisage substantial departures from the scope or method of your original proposal, and you may be asked by your committee to incorporate such changes in an amended proposal. Such formal revision of the proposal is especially important if you intend to reduce the scope of your dissertation, delete topics, or make significant changes in your coverage and treatment of secondary literature.

Formally, your communication with your committee will be through the chair of your dissertation committee. This faculty member has the major responsibility for supervising your progress. It is the chair's responsibility to make sure that the parts of your dissertation are presented to the committee in a sufficiently coherent and substantial form to permit evaluation and advice.

While your dissertation chair has the leading role as your adviser, all members of your committee are equal judges of the final product, and each member must certify by signature that they accept your work as meeting the standards for a doctoral dissertation in the Department of African American Studies at Northwestern University.

Within this framework, it will be up to you to develop a relationship with your committee that will work best for your dissertation. Some candidates will work mainly with their chair, with other members of the committee serving primarily in a review function. There may be other cases in which a co-chair arrangement works best. And others still in which interests and expertise on the committee are balanced in such a way that all members are actively involved at all stages of the dissertation. Whatever particular relationship you develop, it will be important for you to get your committee's criticism and advice on the bulk of your dissertation sufficiently early to take full advantage of it.

### **Changes in your Dissertation Committee**

If a member of your committee leaves the University or resigns from your committee, the Director of Graduate Studies will appoint a replacement after consultation with you, your committee, and the Graduate Affairs Committee, if necessary. If you would like a faculty member who has left the University to continue on your committee and the faculty member has agreed to do so, the Graduate Committee will normally comply with your request if your dissertation is well underway, within the restrictions defined by the Graduate School. If a member of your committee is presenting difficulties such that a change in committee membership is in order, you are advised to seek the assistance of the committee chair or the DGS. If you are experiencing problems with your committee chair, you should discuss these matters with the DGS. Every effort will be made to ensure that students are supported by an engaged and constructive dissertation committee. The Graduate School also offers mediation services to help facilitate relations between students and dissertation committee members.

### **The Fifth Year of the Doctoral Program**

Your fifth year is usually your last year of guaranteed university funding unless you have received external fellowships or a competitive internal award. This means that you should aim to submit and defend your dissertation by the end of the fifth year. The start dates for academic jobs line up with the completion of your dissertation in Spring/Summer of your fifth year, but be aware that the job market season begins quite early. Many applications will be due as early as the Fall of your fifth year, and there will be job postings throughout the year. Hence, your major tasks during your fifth year should be writing the dissertation and going on the job market or applying for postdoctoral fellowships. If you expect to need an additional year, you may instead be writing your dissertation and applying for external and

internal predoctoral or dissertation fellowships, lining up remunerative teaching for the following year, or requesting Northwestern funding (See Section 4: Funding).

Registration for each of the three quarters in the fifth year is TGS 500.

### **Preparation of the Dissertation**

The Graduate School regulations concerning the preparation of dissertations are stated in the document *Dissertation Formatting Guidelines* (see <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/policies/dissertation-format-guidelines.pdf>). You must also consult the latest version of the TGS website concerning relevant requirements and deadlines for the submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School.

Your dissertation is required by the Department and the Graduate School to follow with care and accuracy the latest edition of an approved model of scholarly citation. You may choose *The Chicago Manual of Style*, *the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, *The Thesis Writer's Handbook*, *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, or *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Your chair is required to review your dissertation for scholarly accuracy and careful editing and to sign a certificate approving it before you receive your degree. It is very much to your advantage to choose one of the approved formats for footnotes and bibliography for your dissertation early on and to follow it meticulously throughout the stages of preparing your dissertation.

### **Dissertation Defense and Filing**

Your last examination as a degree candidate will be the formal oral defense of your dissertation. Your dissertation chapters will likely go through many drafts. Your dissertation chair consults with the committee to decide when you have produced a dissertation that is ready to be defended. The full committee should get a complete version of the dissertation with sufficient time to read the document and alert the committee chairperson of any concerns before the defense. At the defense, the committee will confer in private before beginning the examination so that members can highlight any special areas of inquiry or concern. Then the candidate is invited (back) in. In the oral defense, your committee will comment on your dissertation, assessing in reasonable detail its strengths and weaknesses, and ask you questions of clarification and substance. After a robust period of questions and discussion, the committee will again confer in private. The candidate will be invited back in and informed of the committee's decision. Many defenses will result in a (celebratory) successful pass with no outstanding issues, but it is not uncommon for the committee to request minor revisions or more careful editing before the student files the final version. The defense is open to members of the department, to the university at-large, and to the public. Questions by committee members take precedence during the exam, and non-committee members will be asked to step out during the committee's private deliberation periods.

In very rare cases, the dissertation committee will conclude that the student did not successfully defend their dissertation, in which case they will communicate to the student precisely what needs to be done before scheduling a new defense. This will likely include revisions to the dissertation itself. This matter will be handled by the dissertation chair, committee, and student, in consultation with the DGS, if necessary. The dissertation chair and student should be mindful of the TGS nine-year time to degree rule. Prolonged revisions, delaying rescheduling of the defense, or the student's inability to comply with the committee's stipulations may put the student at risk of being excluded from the Graduate School due to exceeding the time-to-degree requirements. A student who fails a second defense of the dissertation will be excluded from the program.

Students should bring with them the "TGS PhD Final Exam" form, which can be found on CAESAR. At the end of a successful defense, the committee members will sign the TGS Final Exam form, which the DGS (or DGS designate) then submits to TGS. If the committee requires some minor revisions of the dissertation before the student files the final version, the Final Exam form can still be submitted pending those changes.

### **Time Limits**

We hope very much that you will never have a need to worry about the Graduate School regulations concerning time limits for the Ph.D., let alone the provision for an extension. You should be aware, however, that these rules are firmly administered and that extensions are not at all automatic. TGS policy on time to PhD is as follows: "The Graduate School policy states that all requirements for the doctoral degree must be met within nine years of initial registration

in a doctoral program, which falls on the last day of the 36th quarter. For students on an approved leave of absence or approved childbirth accommodation, milestones will be extended accordingly.” Students should also be aware of the Graduate School’s policies on Extensions <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress.html>

## **Professional Development**

Students should participate in professional development opportunities from their first quarter in graduate school. Indeed, the core course 401 Research Seminar in Black Studies is in service of developing students as part of the profession.

As a part of graduate training and as a part of preparing to enter the profession, students are expected to attend conferences, participate in graduate development workshops, and attend guest lectures and performances on campus, especially those sponsored by the department. Failure to participate regularly in professional development workshops and departmental colloquium and lectures may constitute a breach of professional conduct, which is a part of making satisfactory academic progress (see Section 2: Departmental and TGS Evaluations), and may also make you ineligible for departmental travel funds. If you need to miss one of the workshops or lectures, you should write to the DGS in advance to let them know that you will not be in attendance and why.

Ideally, graduate training in African American Studies culminates in the attainment of a tenure-track job at a postsecondary institution. Other common career routes include non-tenure-track teaching, university administration, and jobs outside of academia (e.g., in government, non-profits, consulting and other for-profit firms, think-tanks, etc.). We believe that five vital milestones reached before graduation will put students in the strongest possible position on the job market: 1) provocative and original dissertation research; 2) publication of at least one article in an important journal in the field; 3) excellent writing and communication skills; 4) evidence of high quality teaching (or TAing); 5) presentations of academic papers at national conferences.

The faculty member serving as the Professional Development Coordinator, the Director of Graduate Studies, your dissertation chair and committee members, and the departmental faculty in general aim to provide all possible assistance to Ph.D. candidates seeking academic and non-academic positions. The Professional Development Coordinator will hold meetings to discuss relevant issues for graduate students as they grow as scholars. Such issues include: submitting fellowship applications, presenting at conferences, improving writing skills (see The Writing Place as an important resource, <http://www.writing.northwestern.edu/locations/graduate-writing-place/>), university press publishing, submitting to journals, and doing practice job talks. For students who are on the market, Professional Development will hold workshops for putting together CVs and letters of application for positions. This faculty coordinator can review your dossier, conduct mock interviews, and be available for consultation about specific issues as they arise. It is important that students who plan to go on the Fall job market begin compiling a job application file (CV, cover letter, dissertation synopsis, writing sample, and statement of Teaching Philosophy) during the summer, in consultation with their dissertation chair.

There are costs of being on the job market, the main one being signing up for Interfolio, which is super helpful for managing letters of recommendation. There are funds to support your job search. Students on the job market should first apply for funds from the TGS Career Development Grant to be found at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/fellowships-and-grants/internal-grants/career-development-grant.html>, which allows for up to \$400 over the course of a grad student’s time at NU. If students exhaust those funds, they can apply to the department through the DGS for up to an additional \$200 for job search activities that follow the same guidelines as the TGS Career Development Grant. If a student has a second year of job market searching and has exhausted the TGS funds, they can apply for up to \$200 in their second year. These applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

## **4. FUNDING**

### **Funding in the First Five Years**

All admitted students receive funding from The Graduate School. The package of funding currently offered to entering



graduate students by the Graduate School includes 2 years of university fellowships (year 1 and usually year 5), 3 years of teaching or research assistantships (typically years 2-4) and 4 summers of funding. This funding includes tuition and a living stipend, the amount of which is determined by the Graduate School. Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress to be eligible for funding. The Graduate School has clear rules for eligibility for University funding. They can be found at <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html> and are repeated below.

All recipients of University funding must meet the following conditions. If any of the conditions specified in this document are violated, financial assistance may be withdrawn by The Graduate School.

1. Submit to The Graduate School official transcripts listing all prior undergraduate and graduate coursework undertaken and degrees awarded;
2. Continuously register as a full-time graduate student;
3. Maintain at least a "B" average each quarter;
4. Keep records free of incomplete grades;
5. Refrain from remunerative work, unless a written request for a waiver is approved by The Graduate School;
6. Notify The Graduate School Financial Aid Office and home department (via email) of other sources of support, such as an external award, traineeship, teaching assistantship, research assistantship, School of Continuing Studies teaching, or other fellowship. In cases where alternative funding is available, The Graduate School's financial award may be adjusted;
7. Be aware that funding beyond five academic years is not guaranteed by TGS, but the program to which you are being admitted may have other policies;
8. Adhere to all regulations as stipulated on The Graduate School web site and in the University Student Handbook.

Students should also, however, be aware of the departmental criteria for satisfactory academic progress (see Section 2: Departmental and TGS Evaluations), which also affect eligibility and priority for university funding.

TGS expects students to apply for external funding, and offers incentives for students who secure external funding. The TGS policy statement on this is as follows: "Graduate funding is a collaborative effort between students and Northwestern University. The Graduate School (TGS) strongly encourages every student to apply for funding from a source external to the University sometime prior to the end of their fourth year. While TGS understands that some disciplines and students may have fewer opportunities for external funding, we still expect PhD students in all programs to pursue external awards. Such awards offer students opportunities to hone grant writing skills, secure funding, enhance their curriculum vitae and make invaluable academic contacts for the future" (see <http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/financial-aid-policies.html>). Students should take advantage of Northwestern's Office of Fellowships for identifying external funding (see <http://www.northwestern.edu/fellowships/>).

### **Support beyond the Fifth Year**

Funding beyond the fifth year is not guaranteed, except for in some cases where students have received external fellowships. Nonetheless, the Department makes every effort to assist students in obtaining funding beyond the fifth year through such things as teaching, graduate, and research assistantships and competitive research and dissertation fellowships offered through the university. This is provided that the student continues to remain in good academic standing and makes significant progress toward the degree. Students should be in communication with the DGS in their fifth year if they are in need of sixth year funding from the department. The DGS will request proposals from all such students with funding needs, including a statement of support from the dissertation chair. The Graduate Affairs Committee will review these proposals and make recommendations to the faculty, who will make the final decisions.

The same process as above should be followed by students requesting funding for their seventh year, although the availability of such funding is extremely limited. Moreover, if granted, seventh year funding will only be granted on a quarter by quarter basis and is contingent on the completion of at least one new dissertation chapter draft per quarter to be submitted to the dissertation chair for approval, and to the DGS to ensure the following quarter's funding.

There are other opportunities outside of the department, including graduate assistantships in Student Affairs and other

university units, and TAs in other academic programs. Some doctoral students beyond their fifth year have also been able to secure part-time appointments in Northwestern's School of Professional Studies. The School of Professional Studies gives some preference in its appointments to qualified Northwestern doctoral students, but it is important to remember that all appointments of this kind are at the discretion of the Dean.

### **University Research and Dissertation Year Fellowships**

The Graduate School conducts a university-wide competition for Research Fellowships and Dissertation Year Fellowships. The deadline for this competition is usually in winter quarter. Since the Department of African American Studies is only allowed to nominate a limited number of students for each competition, students submit their applications, along with supporting letters, to the Graduate Committee in advance of the University deadline. The Director of Graduate Studies will publicize the exact dates for the competition and provide information about the application process to all students.

### **Other Grants**

There are various sources of funds inside and outside the Department and the Graduate School to help you with extraordinary expenses for research fieldwork, travel to professional conferences to deliver papers, and other research-related expenses. Announcements of grants are posted regularly, and the Director of Graduate Studies works with the faculty member in charge of Professional Development to keep both an electronic and a print listing of grant sources. Again, the Office of Fellowships can be extremely helpful with this.

In addition, the Department of African American Studies allocates \$500/year per student to present their work at a research conference. Applications for this funding should be submitted to the department chair (cc Suzette Denose and graduate adviser). The funds are not bankable from year to year. Students should consult with their advisers before applying for these funds to ensure that the selected conference is an advisable option.

### **Jobs in Undergraduate Housing**

Graduate students may apply for positions in the Undergraduate Housing System as counselors, advisers, or assistants to the masters of residential colleges. These positions may carry room and board, and/or a cash stipend.

## **5. DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS**

### **Expected Standards of Collegiality**

The Department of African American Studies expects members of its intellectual community to interact in a mutually respectful, constructive and inclusive manner. Our project of African American Studies brings together a diverse range of individuals from different parts of the United States and the world, working on many contested issues, such as identity, race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion and nationality. It is important that the dynamic discussions that can arise from these issues are conducted with mutual tolerance. We are committed to maintaining an engaging and collegial atmosphere in which sensitive and controversial ideas can be debated while acknowledging the intellectual and personal integrity of the participants. We expect our graduate students to uphold these standards of collegiality. Serious breaches of professional conduct can constitute a failure to make satisfactory academic progress (See Section 2).

### **Department Organization**

The Graduate Program of the Department of African American Studies operates under the authority and rules of the Graduate School. Responsibility for curricular matters, admissions, fellowships, and other academic and financial matters rests with the Graduate Faculty of the Department, but much of the day-to-day business is delegated to the Graduate Affairs Committee. The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is the executive officer of the Graduate Program. (See [www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/resources-for/faculty/DGS%20Position%20Description%202015-16.pdf](http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/resources-for/faculty/DGS%20Position%20Description%202015-16.pdf) for position duties of the DGS).

The Director of Graduate Studies will regularly hold meetings with the graduate students. Students are also encouraged to raise any concerns they might have with the Director of Graduate Studies as the need arises.

The Graduate Affairs Committee will be comprised of the Director of Graduate Studies, the faculty Professional Development Coordinator, the faculty Graduate Admissions Coordinator, at least one representative from among the graduate student body (usually selected in consultation with the department's Graduate Student Association), and a departmental affiliate member, as needed. The Graduate Affairs committee reserves the right to move into faculty-only executive session.

### **Prizes**

The Department of African American Studies will annually award, at its discretion, a prize for the best Second-Year Paper written by a second-year graduate student, following the review and recommendation of the Graduate Affairs Committee. This prize carries an award of \$300. This prize will not be necessarily awarded every year.

The Department will also award, at its discretion, a prize of \$500, for a distinguished dissertation. Nominations must be submitted by the chair of the candidate's dissertation committee and will be judged by the Graduate Affairs Committee. This prize will not be necessarily awarded every year.