

**A Guide to Normal Progress in the Ph.D Program in  
Political Science at the University of Houston  
Fall 2008**

**A Roadmap for Full Time Students**

The following pages describe normal progress for full time doctoral degree students. Full time students (3 courses per semester) should plan on completing their classes within three years of their initial enrollment. Those pursuing the doctoral degree on a part time basis should aim to complete at least four courses per year (fall, spring, and summer terms). At this rate, course work for the doctoral degree can be completed in 4 years.

**Year One**

**Main Goal: complete the required gateway courses.**

***Courses:***

All students are expected to take the gateway Core courses.

Fall:

- 6480 Research Design I
- 6309 Survey of American Political Behavior
- 6343 Seminar in Democratic Political Thought

Spring:

- 6481 Research Design II
- 6311 Seminar in Comparative Political Analysis
- 6312 Survey of American Institutions and Policy

Summer after Year One:

- 6301 Math for Social Scientists  
(For students taking Advanced Multivariate the following term. Students who have strong math backgrounds may petition out of this.)

***Important Rules & Deadlines:***

1. Students must earn at least two grades of A or A- during their first 18 course hours.
2. Students must maintain a 3.0 average to stay in the program.
3. Incompletes turn into an "F" after a year, and such grades can adversely affect grade point averages of otherwise good students.

***Desirable Activity:***

1. Meet with your assigned advisor at least once a semester. You may change advisors if there is someone you would rather work with. Be sure to let both professors know, as well as the graduate advising assistant.
2. Figure out your likely area(s) of specialization. Identify several professors under whose supervision you might want to work, and introduce yourself to them.
3. Get to know your fellow students by attending some "extra" events, be they student or faculty presentations, happy hours, or whatever. Students teaching students is one of the most important components of a stimulating intellectual environment.
4. Fall: keep an eye out for external fellowships for pre-dissertation study.
5. Keep good notes in your first year courses; you may well want them when it comes time to review for comprehensive exams!

## **Year Two**

**Main Goals: finish tools requirements; take courses to fulfill field requirements.**

### ***Courses:***

Fall:

6482 Advanced Multivariate  
2 electives

Spring:

3 electives

### ***Important Rules & Deadlines:***

1. Students must file a degree plan with the graduate advisor no later than December 1.
2. Select a faculty advisor if you want to change to someone whose research interests are closer to yours.
3. Students may only take two independent study courses (including summer courses). Choose your courses accordingly.

### ***Desirable Activity:***

1. Take courses with professors who you might want to have on your dissertation committee in the long term.
2. Write at least 2-3 research papers for courses. In your second or third year, you should try to write at least one research paper that turns into something promising enough to develop into a conference paper. If you think you may have one of these, talk with the professor for whom you wrote the paper and get his/her advice on whether and/or how to expand it into a full-fledged paper.
3. Whether or not you are presenting, in your second or third year you may want to attend a professional conference, for instance the Southern Political Science Association conference in January, in New Orleans (within driving distance!).

### **Year Three**

**Main Goals: complete coursework; complete working prospectus; take comprehensive exams.**

#### ***Courses:***

Fall:

3 electives

Spring:

8398 Dissertation Prospectus Seminar

2 electives

#### ***Important Rules & Deadlines:***

1. Students must assemble a comprehensive exam committee. Forms listing committees should be filed with the graduate advisor no later than November 1.
2. Students must meet with their comprehensive committee sometime in the fall of their 3<sup>rd</sup> year.
3. Students are required to have successfully completed the prospectus course, offered in the spring each year, or to have a prospectus on file, before they can take comps.
4. Comprehensive exams are offered once a year, in early August.
5. Other information about comprehensive exams can be found in the graduate handbook.

#### ***Desirable Activity:***

1. Students should aim to present their first conference paper in year 3 or year 4 (though a few folks may do it earlier). However, do not try to do this until you have something worthwhile to present. Talk with your professors before you even apply to present a conference paper, and make sure they read a draft of your paper well in advance of the conference.. It is better to wait to present something strong rather than presenting something that won't impress anyone. Limited travels funds are available from the UH Political Science department for students presenting conference papers. To be eligible for these funds, students must present their papers to students and faculty in advance of the conference.

## **Year Four**

**Main Goals: Pass oral exam for comprehensives; make significant progress on dissertation.**

### ***Courses:***

Dissertation hours only.

### ***Important Rules & Deadlines:***

1. Under university rules, ALL students must complete their doctoral degrees within 5 years of passing comps, or within 10 years of originally enrolling for the degree, whichever comes first.
2. Students must have a completed prospectus approved by “internal” committee members within 60 days of passing comprehensive exams. They should meet with all committee members, either separately or as a group, to get this approval. Forms signed by the committee chair approving the prospectus should be filed with the graduate advisor before the end of the Fall semester.
3. Students should be in regular contact with the chair of their committee throughout this year.

### ***Desirable Activity:***

1. Revise conference paper, seminar paper, or draft dissertation chapter for submission to peer-reviewed journal.
2. Fall: apply for grants for dissertation write-up or enhancement.
3. If you need to do field work for your dissertation, the summer after your 4<sup>th</sup> year may be a good time for this (if it is short). If you need to spend a longer time away from UH, you may need to try to get funding to spend some or all of your 5<sup>th</sup> year “in the field”

## **Year Five (and/or Year Six)**

**Main Goals: Complete dissertation; enter job market**

### ***Courses***

Dissertation hours only

### ***Important Rules & Deadlines:***

1. The deadline for filing for graduation occurs early in each semester, generally in the first 3-4 weeks.
2. Schedule your dissertation defense at least 3 weeks in advance of the college deadline for receiving completed manuscripts (this deadline is usually a week before the end of classes). This allows plenty of time to make corrections and to print a clean copy of the dissertation – a process that is amazingly time-consuming.

### ***Desirable Activity:***

1. You may want to try to teach your own course if this will not interfere too much with the completion of your dissertation. A limited number of ABD (“all but dissertation”) students can teach courses in the Political Science department, based on departmental needs. If you are interested in doing this, check with the undergraduate director two semesters in advance.
2. If you plan to defend your dissertation in the spring/summer, you may want to go on the national academic job market in the preceding fall.
3. If you plan to go on the national job market in the fall, here are some things to consider:
  - a. aim to have a substantial amount of your dissertation completed by September
  - b. be ready to submit applications (c.v., letters of recommendation, writing sample, transcripts) starting in late summer.
  - c. have a job talk ready to go no later than September. This will probably be based on one or more chapters of your dissertation. It’s great if it is already in the form of a conference paper that you have presented at the Midwest or at APSA.