**African American Studies Ph.D. Program**

# Requirements for Admission

Students are admitted to pursue the Ph.D. in African Diaspora Studies as a terminal degree. The expectation for this program is that graduates will become research scholars in the academy. Applicants must fulfill the requirements of the Graduate Division (http://www.grad.berkeley.edu). Applicants are not required to do the GRE for admission purposes.

Students will not be admitted for the M.A. degree only. However, the M.A. degree will be awarded when the student enrolled in the program passes the Master’s Oral Exam, which covers the core requirements and basic texts in African Diaspora Studies***.***

Students may enter with either a B.A. or an M.A. degree. Students must identify their areas of interest upon applying to and being admitted to the program. There are lists of areas of specialization that students are encouraged to work within, however, the Department is also open to new and original areas as long as there is faculty interest and mentorship available. **Graduate units completed elsewhere are NOT usually transferred for the Ph.D. unless the Graduate Advisor decides that graduate course work done in other universities meets University and departmental requirements.** Students who have completed graduate level coursework at another campus may request credit for no more than four (4) semester or five

1. quarter units of 200 level courses. This approval will be granted on an individual basis and can only be applied if the courses were not used towards a previous degree.

Requirements for M.A. students are the same as for students entering with a B.A. Students with an M.A. in African American Studies cannot pursue an M.A. in African American Studies at U.C.B. and therefore do not need to take the M.A. exam. Students with an M.A in another discipline must take the M.A. Oral Exam in African American Studies in this department.

# The First Two Years

Entering students are expected to identify and work with a faculty mentor in the department. For the first year, they will be assigned a faculty advisor who, along with the Graduate Advisor (currently: Professor Leigh Raiford) will work with them to identify faculty more appropriate to their needs and interests. They are encouraged to work closely with the department’s Student Affairs Officer, Lindsey Herbert.

During the first two years, students must take a minimum of 24 course credits, including the core requirements in the department. Half of these units must be in the department.

Students should also take courses from faculty in other departments, especially affiliated faculty listed in our brochure and on our website. ***Students must take the oral MA examination at the end of the second year of residency.* Students who have earned an MA degree in African American Studies prior to admission are exempt from the examination.**

# Course Work

The core requirements (4 units each), Students must choose at least two out of the three courses from the 201 series

AAS 201A: Interdisciplinary Research Methods AAS 201B: Qualitative Research Methods

AAS 201D: Theories of the African Diaspora AAS C375: Critical Pedagogy (Required to GSI)

Students may also take courses in the Research Series, do Independent Reading Courses with African American Studies faculty, affiliated faculty and/or with other University faculty. The designated numbers for these courses are:

AAS 296 Directed Dissertation Research AAS 299 Individual Study or Research

Students may not take more than 16 credits of the 48 credits towards the Ph.D. for a Satisfactory/Non-Satisfactory grade.

Each student is required to submit an annual report on their academic progress at the end of each academic year. The report will be reviewed by faculty and advisors and discussed at the annual faculty meeting on graduate student progress. This meeting also serves to ensure that all graduate students are appropriately mentored as well as adequately informed about their matriculation. For all students who have advanced to candidacy, Academic Progress Reports must be completed online through GLOW, the graduate student information system. This is the link to GLOW: [https://gradlink.berkeley.edu/GLOW/](https://gradlink.berkeley.edu/GLOW/" \t "_blank).  A detailed description of the review process and report can be found here: [http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/apr/](http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/apr/" \t "_blank).

# Affiliated Disciplines

Students may elect to take up to half (24 units) of their course work from any department that will enhance their training as a scholar in African Diaspora Studies. Units in Individual Study Courses: AAS 602 (usually taken when studying for the doctoral qualifying examinations) as well as Critical Pedagogy (AAS C375) count toward a full course load but NOT toward the course requirements for the degree.

# The MA Orals Examination

The M.A exam is an oral examination given during the second year in the program, that tests the student’s knowledge of the field of African American Studies and African Diaspora Studies. It is administered by three faculty members determined by the department. Students are eligible to take the M.A. examination only after completing the Core Requirements in the program, and after completing a minimum of 24 course units. Students must also fulfill all of the university-wide requirements for the M.A. These

include at least one year of academic residency. The exam is graded on a pass/not pass basis. Students are informed of the examination results the same day the examination is taken.

At this stage, the exam committee will evaluate both course work and the examination to determine whether to permit the student to continue towards the Ph.D. or be given a terminal M.A.

The Oral Exam focuses on a reading list in African American Studies and African Diaspora Studies compiled by the department comprising texts that the student is expected to have read and mastered for the M.A. examination. Students are also responsible for incorporating material and readings from coursework completed in the Department.

# Foreign Language Requirement

Proficiency in a language other than English is required. ***The Foreign Language Requirement must be fulfilled before the student takes the Qualifying Examination for advancement to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree.*** This requirement may be fulfilled by one of the following means:

* + Successful completion of four (4) semesters or six (6) quarters of college level courses (with a minimum grade of B) in a foreign language acceptable to the program. The student should have completed these courses within the last four (4) years.
  + A 300 word translation examination (with 90 minutes to complete) administered by a faculty member. Students are allowed the use of a dictionary while taking the examination.

Depending upon their specific area of concentration, some graduate students are required to be literate in at least one other language of the African Diaspora (e.g. Spanish, French, Portuguese, Yoruba), to ensure that the student is able to utilize primary materials in their original language if a non-Diaspora language is used to fulfill their Foreign

Language Requirement. Under these circumstances and subject to the approval of the department, the student may substitute a four-semester (or equivalent) sequence of courses in one of the languages to satisfy the requirement. The courses must be University grade and must be passed with an average grade of B or better. Units taken to fulfill the Foreign Language Requirement count towards a full course load but do not count toward the degree.

# Doctoral Qualifying Examination

The Ph.D. qualifying exam is designed to test the student’s breadth and depth of knowledge in the field of African Diaspora Studies. The QE process should enable students to identify the socio-historical and theoretical origins of current debates in African Diaspora Studies and how canonical texts represent key interventions in those conversations. The QE also exposes students to the literature of and issues in their specific field areas. Students should have a broad familiarity with these key conversations/debates that will help them to imagine and develop their own key contributions to the discipline(s). Finally, the QE process prepares students to develop broad teaching fields and establish foundational knowledge for the dissertation.

The department requires the student to prepare and submit written papers in two areas: **Theories and Methodologies of African Diaspora Studies** and an **Area of Specialization**, as well as prepare and be ready to discuss at least three exam field lists (one of the three can be “African diaspora”). The papers must be approved by each member of the student’s examination committee as a condition of taking the examination. The Graduate Division requires an oral component to the Qualifying Examination. **After the entire committee has approved the two papers, a three-hour examination will be scheduled.**

## Doctoral Qualifying Examination Committee

A four-person committee is required. This must include three people who are regular Academic Senate faculty members within the Department, one of whom will act as Chair of the qualifying examination.

***Note:*** The Graduate Division prohibits the Chair of the qualifying examination from serving as the Chair of the student’s dissertation committee, so the student should choose the qualifying examination committee Chair with the dissertation committee in mind.

The fourth member of the committee is responsible for seeing that the overall standards of quality and equity appropriate for the award of the Ph.D. are met. This person must be an Academic Senate faculty member from outside the department. Together with the three inside members, the fourth committee member can also contribute to the reading lists and approval of position papers. In special instances (due to areas of interest and expertise), and with the advance written approval of the Graduate Advisor and the Graduate Division, a lecturer or Visiting Professor may be selected as the third inside person.

# Note: Constitution of the Qualifying Examination Committee is governed by a complex set of rules from the Graduate Division (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/f2-6->

# qual-exam/), which cannot be reproduced in full in this Handbook. You are REQUIRED to consult with the Graduate Advisor WELL IN ADVANCE about permissible members in your committee before setting an exam date with the proposed Committee members or submitting an application form to take the Qualifying Examination. If you try to bypass this procedure or if you are too late in consulting with the Graduate Advisor, approval may not be granted for taking the Qualifying Examination as planned. This can cause considerable delays in your Advancement to Candidacy. You should also read the Graduate Division’s *Guide to Graduate Policy* thoroughly

***(***[***http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/)***](http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/))**to ensure you are following policies and procedures correctly.**

The selection of members of your Qualifying Examination Committee cannot be made at short notice. You need to have established relationships with prospective Committee members before approaching them. In planning your coursework you should be thinking about establishing such relationships.

Setting an exam date is extremely time-consuming. It has to be done with the schedules and availability of prospective Committee Members in mind. These have to be determined and coordinated. You need to plan for the exam as far in advance as possible to accommodate the schedules of your committee members.

## Content and Scope of Qualifying Examination

The goal of the qualifying examination is to test breadth and depth in the field of African Diaspora Studies.

# THE TWO PRELIMINARY PAPERS

* + Students are required to prepare and submit two written papers for approval by each committee member. Each paper should be at least 25 pages long but no longer than 40 pages and should include a detailed bibliography. In writing the papers, students are expected to build on the coursework that they have taken and on issues covered in preparation for the MA exam.
  + One committee member from inside the Department should be selected as the primary reader for each paper. Students should work closely with the primary readers, submitting preliminary drafts while the task of writing is being undertaken. The final drafts must be submitted to all members of the committee **at least four weeks before the exam is to be scheduled.** It is the student’s responsibility to keep all of her/his developing

work. We urge students to establish a schedule and delineate roles at the outset with your QE Committee Chair and members.

# African Diaspora Studies: Theories, Concepts, Approaches and Methodologies: The First Paper

The first paper is a field statement that defines African Diaspora Studies via the focus of the student’s research.

The requirements of this paper are twofold.

1. a critical engagement with disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to the field of African Diaspora Studies, and
2. a substantive and critical discussion, from the perspective of comparative methodology, of the connections among the trans-territorial locations of the African Diaspora.

Students must critically engage with different approaches to the study of African Diaspora from the perspectives of both single disciplines and interdisciplinary and/or multi-disciplinary approaches, theoretically, analytically, and conceptually. Discussion and analysis must engage with past and contemporary debates defining the field of African Diaspora Studies. While students may want to discuss the ways in which the insights from committee members informed individual disciplines can act as foundations for studying the many concerns of the African Diaspora, they are required to incorporate multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to the field in their paper with the goal of framing an argument that makes a contribution to the field.

# Approved Areas of Specialization: The Second Paper

A number of substantive fields have been established by the Department that serve as areas of specialization. These are comparative and interdisciplinary in scope. The second paper must address issues relating to the student’s field of specialization chosen from the departmental list. **While the paper must NOT be exclusively about the student’s proposed dissertation research, it should relate, theoretically, analytically, conceptually, and methodologically, to the issues that will frame such research. In essence, the specialization paper identifies the broad body of literature as well as the methodological approaches that will ground the student’s dissertation. Examples of approved areas of specialization are as follows:**

* Political Economy
* Social and Cultural Institutions in different sites of the African Diaspora
* Literature and Languages
* Diaspora History and Theory
* Race and Education
* Performance Studies
* Visual Culture
* Women, Gender and Sexuality

Students may choose to prepare the second paper in an alternative area not contained in the listed areas of specialization. The selection of the area must be made in consultation with committee members and must be related to core issues in the field of African Diaspora Studies. Examples of approved position papers from students in the Department are available for reference in the Erskine A. Peters Reading Room.

## The Exam Fields Reading Lists

Of equal importance to the exam papers, are the exam fields. Students are required to prepare reading lists inat least three subject areas, including the general field of African Diaspora Studies and areas of specialization. These can be understood as broad “teaching fields,” organized around a set of general questions and arguments, areas of inquiry, and/or historical period. The papers should reflect texts that appear on these reading lists. However, the lists should far exceed what the position papers directly address.

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## The Oral Exam

The exam is designed to ensure that the student is ready and able to undertake primary research for the dissertation. Through questioning about the papers and the exam field reading lists, the student will be expected to demonstrate:

* At least three subject areas, including the general field of African Diaspora Studies and areas of specialization.
* Familiarity with the literature relating to the major debates, issues and themes in the field of African Diaspora Studies.
* Critical engagement with the conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues relating to the field of African Diaspora.
* Mastery of convergent and divergent issues in African Diaspora Studies from the perspectives both of single disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches to the field.

## Scheduling the Qualifying Examination

**The student should schedule the qualifying examination only after she or he has assurances from all members of the committee that her/his preparation is complete**. In general, the examination should be scheduled for four weeks after the student’s two papers have been accepted by the qualifying examination committee.

The student must make a formal application to the Graduate Division in order to schedule the qualifying examination. The forms are available on the Graduate Division’s website

([http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/forms.shtml).](http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/forms.shtml)) This application process usually takes one month, so forms must be completed and submitted ***at least*** 30 days prior to the proposed examination date.

To be eligible to take the qualifying examination, the

student must:

* be registered at the time of the qualifying examination
* complete all coursework; **students must have no more than two Incompletes at the time of the examination.**
* have satisfied the Foreign Language Requirement.
* have completed one semester of GSIship.
* fulfill all residency requirements as specified by the Graduate Division
* have submitted an “Application for the Qualifying Examination” to the Graduate Division and have received the Graduate Division’s approval.

The qualifying examination will last three hours. Students are not required to discuss their proposed research for the dissertation, but they are encouraged to think about it before the exam and to discuss it with the committee after the examination has been concluded.

# Advancement to Candidacy and the Dissertation

# After passing the qualifying examination, the student must seek approval of his or her dissertation prospectus.

Once the prospectus has been approved by the student’s dissertation committee, only then can the student apply to the Graduate Division to advance to candidacy. The form, “Application for Advancement to Candidacy for the Ph.D. Degree (Plan B)” is available from the department and downloadable from the Graduate Division website:

([http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/forms.shtml).](http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/forms.shtml)) The “Plan B” form is used since in African American Studies, the dissertation is written under this plan (see the Graduate Division section of the UC Berkeley General Catalog for details ([http://www.berkeley.edu/catalog/grad/requirements.html).](http://www.berkeley.edu/catalog/grad/requirements.html))

## The Dissertation Prospectus and Prospectus Meeting

After passing the qualifying examination, a student is required to submit a Dissertation Prospectus to members of the Dissertation Committee selected by the student. The prospectus should be submitted no later than the end of the semester following the one in which the qualifying examination was passed. Members of the committee will discuss the prospectus with the student in a one-hour formal meeting. This is not another exam, but an opportunity for the Committee to evaluate the prospectus and to give suggestions on the proposed research project. The student must write a brief response to the points raised in the meeting and submit the response to Committee members. The prospectus is typically 12-15 pages long, and contains an overview of the project and its theoretical framework as well as where it fits in the tradition of African American Studies research, a discussion of methodology, a clear indication of the data/evidence to be collected, an abstract of individual chapters, a preliminary bibliography, and a proposed timeline for completion.

***The Dissertation Committee***

The dissertation committee must comprise at least two Academic Senate faculty members within the department and one regular Academic Senate faculty member from outside the department. A Chair for the committee must be selected and stipulated on the Advancement to Candidacy form.

The chair of the dissertation committee plays a paramount role in the completion of the dissertation. Not only is it her/his responsibility to guide the student through all stages of the dissertation, but also to help the student secure her/his first job in the next stages of her/his career. It is common that dissertation chairs continue to write letters of reference throughout all stages of the student’s subsequent career. The Graduate Division insists that “under no circumstances should a student be permitted to complete a dissertation that the dissertation adviser finds mediocre and that consequently prevents the adviser from writing a strong letter of support.”

A meeting of the student and at least two members of the dissertation committee is **required** at least once per calendar year. It is the responsibility of the dissertation chair to organize this meeting. The prospectus meeting is considered the first of these annual meetings.

# Dissertation

## Scope and Contents of the Dissertation

Each dissertation is unique. The student and the Dissertation Committee determine the specific contents of the dissertation, and most dissertations go through several drafts. The dissertation should be the result of original and/or creative work, based on substantial primary data collection, and be of publishable quality. One might think of the dissertation as the first draft of a book. Research involving human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the Committee for Protection of Human Subjects before the student begins research. If the final dissertation includes “more than incidental use of previously published or co-authored material” then the student must have prior permission from the Dean of the Graduate Division to have the material included.

## Filing the Dissertation

Students must be registered, or on filing fee status ([http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/d2-filing-fee/),](http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/d2-filing-fee/)) to file their dissertation. To file for the Ph.D., the student must submit an unbound copy of the dissertation to the Graduate Division. The Graduate Division has strict rules concerning the format of the dissertation, the paper to be used, the contents of the cover page, the abstract, and the signatures. Students are urged to consult the Graduate Division at the earliest opportunity to familiarize themselves with these requirements (see “Guidelines for Submitting a Doctoral Dissertation or a Master’s Thesis” on the Graduate Division website: <http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/dissertation-> filing/). The student must also submit a bound copy of the dissertation to the department.

All requirements for the Ph.D. should be completed within the normative time of six years of the student’s entry into the graduate program.

# Summary of Financial Support

## Teaching-related Support

As part of their training, all students will be expected to serve as a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) for a minimum of one semester and a maximum of 8 semesters. GSIships awarded for the Summer Session are excluded from this maximum. **Students on Filing Fee status are not eligible for an appointment.**

The Department of African American Studies offers a number of Graduate Student Instructorships. The GSI application process requires the submission of a current Curriculum Vitae (CV) and a letter of application, which should state your request to GSI, and the courses which you would like to teach. The vitae and letter should be submitted to the Graduate Student Affairs Officer (Lindsey Herbert) in **late March for the Fall Semester and in late October for the Spring Semester.** The Department attempts to place students in courses related to their research interests and keeping in mind their work load for the academic year. However, such placement is contingent upon available teaching opportunities. Moreover, students who submit their requests in a timely fashion are more likely to receive their top choices.

Students must be registered during the term in which they serve as GSIs, be enrolled in a minimum of 12 units, have a GPA of at least a 3.1, and have no more than two Incompletes at the time of their appointment. The Graduate Appointments Unit of the Graduate Division must approve exceptions. GSIs are eligible for partial fee remission and remission of the Graduate Student Health Insurance Plan (GSHIP) premium fee if their payroll appointment is at 25% time or greater for an entire semester.

# Note: Before you commit to serve as a GSI for a course YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE for checking your own records to ensure that you have no more than two outstanding Incompletes. You should check directly with Student Records, as printed transcripts are sometimes out-of-date. You should also check with faculty to ensure that necessary “Removal of Incomplete” forms have been filed. If it is discovered that you have more than two outstanding Incompletes, the Graduate Division will prohibit you from teaching. This will affect your financial support package and you will have missed opportunities to find other sources of funding. It will also place the Department in the position of having to find a replacement instructor at the last minute. The Department will not be responsible for finding replacement sources of financial support if you are prohibited from teaching.

## Research-related Support

**GSRs:** Graduate Student Research Assistantships (GSRs) are not available on a regular basis. Such assistantships are available through individual faculty holding research grants. Occasionally GSR positions can be found with faculty and research institutions elsewhere on campus. The Department also has two GSR positions that are usually available on an annual basis: these positions are in the Reading Room, and as Editor of the *Diaspora* Newsletter. While they are not traditional research positions with an individual faculty member, they are classified as a GSR and can also serve as a means of financial support for students.

These appointments are typically for the entire academic year and students can apply for them during the Spring semester for the upcoming academic year.

## Departmental Support

**Block Grants:** The University awards “blocks” of money to the department to assist in financing students. The block grant money is used by the department to offset GSI fee remissions granted by the University. Any excess funds that are not used for paying GSI fees will be distributed to students. The faculty Graduate Advisor is in charge of determining how and when the monies will be distributed. These awards vary from small amounts to several thousand dollars per year. Students will be informed, during graduate meetings, on the procedure for applying for **hardship funding** via block grant money, if necessary. Hardship funding is only available during the Spring Semester after all GSI fees are paid. To ensure eligibility for Block Grant funding, the FAFSA application must be filled out and submitted annually.

## Fellowship Information

***There are a number of Fellowships available to students in the department.***

## Doctoral Completion Fellowship: Once a student has advanced to candidacy (ie passed the Qualifying Exam, held a dissertation prospectus meeting, and submitted appropriate forms to the Graduate Division), s/he is eligible for the Doctoral Completion Fellowship. This fellowship provides a two semester stipend and in-state tuition, and must be used by Normative Time to Degree (six years plus one year grace). Once the fellowship is used, no further university funding is allowed after Normative Time to Degree plus one year. This includes all types of university employment. There is no application process for the DCF but to activate the fellowship, the student must have a satisfactory or better Academic Progress Report on file from the most recent year after advancement.

## When a student chooses to take the DCF is up to them and often depends on the kind of dissertation research to be undertaken. For example, students whose projects require fieldwork might find it useful to take the DCF to support a year of non-resident research immediately following advancement to candidacy. Other students might choose to take the DCF to support a year of dissertation writing. Students should consult with their primary adviser and dissertation committee members to determine what will best serve their needs.

**University Fellowships:** These fellowships are merit-based awards that provide a stipend for living expenses, plus tuition and fees. Applications for fellowships are judged on the basis of the quality of previous academic work, evidence of ability to do research, and promise of becoming a productive scholar. Applications for University Fellowships have various due dates. Please check with the Fellowship Office

([http://grad.berkeley.edu/graddiv/contact.shtml),](http://grad.berkeley.edu/graddiv/contact.shtml)) via the Graduate Division web site and/or the Student Affairs Officer. The Fellowship Section of the Graduate Division is an excellent source of information for fellowships or dissertation research support. Lists of fellowships and research support for graduate students and postdocs are organized in binder form by broad discipline area or category of support. Current resource volumes, such as the *Annual Register of Grant Support,* are located on a reference shelf that is accessible to students and others using the Fellowship Section’s facilities. Reference texts are non- circulating, and their use is restricted to the immediate area. Application packets for certain fellowships and other awards coordinated by the Graduate Division, such as Fulbrights, are available. The Fellowship Section provides handouts on University sources of financial support and a calendar of workshops on proposal preparation, which are conducted by the Graduate Assembly.

**Extramural Fellowships:** The Fellowship Section of the Graduate Division keeps a file of extramural fellowships. The Student Affairs Officer will also circulate notices of extramural support whenever they are received.

## Enhancing your Graduate Experience

Creating a community of scholars is essential to the success of our program and each graduate student’s matriculation.

There are several ways in which you can contribute to this academic and intellectual partnership. For example, advanced graduate students can volunteer to read graduate admissions applications. All graduate students can participate in organizing and presenting at the St. Clair Drake Symposium, serve as a Graduate Student Liaison for the Graduate Assembly, or serve as the Graduate Student Representative for the Department. For more information about these positions, please see the Graduate Student Affairs Officer.

We also encourage you to participate in community building and outreach programs through mentoring undergraduates and high school students in both official and unofficial ways, participate in the Poetry for the People program, Prison Outreach, or other community-based programs that may pique your interest. These experiences are intended to enable you to directly contribute to the formation and evolution of the Department and prepare you for your future as an academic or scholar-activist.

We look forward to supporting your intellectual development.

***Suggested Timeline through the PhD Program***

**Year One:** Six courses (three each semester)

**Year Two:** Fall Semester: three courses

Spring Semester: three courses; MA Exam;

Summer: Assemble a QE committeeand draft

preliminary lists; begin QE studying

**Year Three:** Fall Semester: GSI;

complete foreign language requirement; submit a draft of at least one QE paper to exam committee

Spring Semester: GSI;

revise QE papers according to committee feedback for final approval;

schedule and take oral QE exam;

Dissertation Prospectus Meeting;

Advance to Candidacy

**Years Four through Six:** Dissertation research and writing