

MA Students: Cultural Anthropology and Graduate Specialization Programs

Guidelines for timeline of degree program and scope of thesis or portfolio work

The following guidelines are intended to help both Cultural Anthropology students and students enrolled in one of the Graduate Specialization programs in Anthropology understand the expectations and normal timeframe of graduate work and thesis or portfolio completion. We recognize that there are sometimes circumstances that interfere with the realization of these guidelines, but they are a useful framework for your graduate program. If at any time you feel that you cannot meet these expectations or timetables, be sure to consult with your advisor at the earliest possible date in order to decide how best to proceed.

1. **Timeline.** Normal departmental expectations are that students organize their academic calendar in order to graduate with their degree within 4 semesters (two years) of entering the graduate program. To accomplish this goal, students will need to be vigilant about staying on track with appropriate courses and developing a clear trajectory of thesis or portfolio work. Special family or work situations may create rare exceptions to this calendar (these exceptions need to be established during a student's first semester at CSU). The following schedule suggests a calendar that will assist you in meeting a two-year timeline.

--**Semester 1:** You will enroll in 1 thesis credit (ANTH 699: Thesis for Cultural Anthropology, or ANTH 695: Independent Study for Graduate Specialization program students), ANTH 500: Development of Anthropological Theory, GRAD 544: Ethical Conduct of Research, and typically 6 hours of graduate electives.

International Development students will enroll in ANTH/IE 679: Applications of International Development during Semester 1 or Semester 2, depending on which semester the course is offered. In this first semester of your program, you will work closely with your advisor to sketch out a research topic and prepare a plan for literature needed and the most appropriate coursework. The sooner that you have committed to your research topic, the better, as this will allow you, in many cases, to focus on that topic as you are completing course papers and other assignments.

--**Semester 2:** You will enroll in 2 thesis or independent study credits (699 or 695), and 6-9 hours of graduate/undergraduate courses including a Research Methods course in Cultural Anthropology or in another appropriate discipline, if you did not complete this course during Semester 1. ANTH 441 and ANTH 643 are examples of methods courses, but you will find an approved List of Methods Courses on the Graduate Programs home page of the Department of Anthropology website, which you need to discuss with your advisor before a choice is made. International Development students will enroll in ANTH/IE 679: Applications of International Development, if the course was not offered during Semester 1. During this semester, you will need to have identified the faculty you want to serve on your committee, obtained their signatures on the proper forms, and completed your GS6 forms for the Graduate School. You will also complete a formal research proposal – of approximately 5 pages in length – and meet with your full committee to discuss it. In addition, you will work with your advisor to ensure that you are prepared for summer fieldwork. This could include establishing observational contexts and timelines, preparing interview and survey schedules, and so forth. This is also the time that you will need to gain human subjects approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct fieldwork (Note: In order to submit an IRB application, you must have a written proposal. Thus, it is vital that you stay on task, as IRB approval can take weeks or even months, depending on the sensitivity of your topic.)

--**Summer after first year:** You will conduct your fieldwork during this period. See note below about the scope of original research and analysis expected.

--**Semester 3:** In the first semester following fieldwork, you will transcribe your interviews and complete your analysis of the data you collected. You should also plan to finish necessary coursework in this term. Students typically enroll in 3-6 hours of electives depending on their degree completion requirements.

--**Semester 4:** This semester is understood to be devoted to thesis and portfolio completion, and any remaining credits required. Students enroll in 1 thesis credit (International Development students enroll in Independent Study 695) and may find it useful to organize themselves into thesis or portfolio writing groups with others involved in the process. During this semester, you will complete the writing of your thesis or portfolio, defend it with your committee (a 15-20 minute PowerPoint presentation is typically expected), and graduate. If students decide to pursue course work, they must be very careful that it does not interfere with the writing of their theses or portfolio. Such decisions need to be cleared with your advisors. Students need to work closely with their advisor to establish clear timetables for submission of thesis or portfolio materials. Normally, advisors need at least two full weeks to read a thesis or portfolio, and revision time for the student must be built into the semester calendar. This means that theses or portfolios need to be completed and in advisors' and committee members' hands by early-March at the latest. In many cases, committee members prefer to see only the final draft of the thesis or portfolio and need two weeks to read it. This must also be accommodated into your schedule. At the beginning of Semester 4, you must determine with your advisor and other committee members a tentative date for your thesis or portfolio defense, to enable your committee members to arrange their schedules to read your thesis or portfolio and attend your defense.

2. **Regarding availability of faculty during summer:** Students should not assume that their advisor or committee members are available to meet or review materials during the summer months. Thesis or portfolio defenses are generally not held during summer months. Because faculty members are not on contract during the summer, there is no expectation on the part of the University that they will assume any responsibilities associated with the academic year. Summer is thus the time of year that faculty are able to devote to their own research and writing. If you find you need help during the summer, be sure to ask faculty about their availability rather than assume it is there for you.
3. **Regarding scope of original research and analysis:** We recommend you work with your advisor to create a plan combining data collection dimensions identified below. There is some flexibility regarding what is considered satisfactory fieldwork, but typically students will pursue each of the following:
 1. Participant Observation (typically totaling an equivalent of about 30-45 minutes daily over a 4-week period, with appropriate field notes)
 2. Personal Interviews (10-15, about one-hour each, transcribed)
 3. A systematic—and in some cases, quantifiable—form of research. This could include any one of the following: a small survey (30-45 individuals), a systematic form of social or cultural analysis (like a social network or cultural consensus analysis), or the use of a specialized analytical tool on appropriate data (Atlas ti, a statistical package such as SPSS or STATA or UCINET, GIS, etc).
4. **Regarding components of a thesis:** In most cases, a completed thesis should be at least 60 pages, double spaced, not including the references cited or any appendices. The final thesis should include all the front matter required by the Graduate School, a short section titled Acknowledgements, and the following kinds of information, arranged into chapters as you and your advisor find most useful:
 - Ch. 1: Introduction (8-10 pages)
 - Ch. 2: Methods and Setting (10-12 pages)
 - Ch. 3: Relevant theory (12-15 pages)
 - Ch. 4: Data and Analysis (25-30 pages) (Data and Analysis can also be separated into several chapters)
 - Ch. 5: Conclusion and Significance (8-10 pages)

5. **Regarding components of a portfolio:** In most cases, an International Development Specialization portfolio will comprise a combination of written items, such as:

- 1. A formal academic paper (typically an extension of a seminar paper)
- 2. An applied paper
- 3. A report and/or grant application for a community
- 4. An internship and report on internship activities
- 5. A final PowerPoint presentation integrating the various portfolio components

Speaking to point 5, portfolio work needs to be organized around a coherent theme.

Be sure to review good models of past theses or portfolios for help and guidance as you prepare your thesis, available from the Anthropology office, faculty, or other graduate students.