

**SOCIOLOGY**  
**RICE UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE**  
**HANDBOOK**

**Fall 2023**

[sociology@rice.edu](mailto:sociology@rice.edu)



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This handbook will serve to orient new graduate students and provide information to current sociology graduate students (*generally current graduate students are guided by the version of the handbook available the year they enter the PhD program*).

In addition to the regulations stated in this departmental handbook, students must abide by the university's [General Announcements](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#). There are many policies and procedures that we do not address here in detail. University policies are subject to frequent changes. For information on current university policies, students should be familiar with the [Graduate Students](#) section of the university's General Announcements (GA). You should also see the [Sociology Program](#) section of the GA for details on our department policies. *Under most conditions, if there is any discrepancy between this handbook and university policies, the university policies prevail.*

If in doubt about the interpretation of policies, students should seek help first at the department level (Program Administrator, Director of Graduate Studies, PhD advisor, Department Chair) and then at the central administration level ([Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies](#)). If you have additional questions, please contact us at the following numbers:

## HELPFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Administrator  
Department of Sociology  
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713-348-3286  
Email: [co36@rice.edu](mailto:co36@rice.edu)

Director of Graduate Studies  
Department of Sociology  
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Associate Director of Graduate Studies  
Department of Sociology  
Jenifer Bratter  
713-348-4254  
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Department of Sociology  
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## INTRODUCTION

### Onboarding as a Graduate Student

New students must attend the Sociology department's orientation in August. New students should also visit the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website](#) to find information about GPS's online orientation, which usually must be completed in mid-August. [GPS also provides an overview](#) with a new student checklist, information about housing, and a summer to-do list before arriving at Rice University. Matriculating students will need to submit official transcripts and complete several online trainings by October 1 to prevent holds on their accounts.

There are several key people in the department whom graduate students will get to know well during the next year and throughout their career as graduate students at Rice University.

### The Graduate Program Committee

The Graduate Program Committee (GPC), in conjunction with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), is responsible for overseeing the graduate program. The GPC is comprised of faculty in the department. The current committee is Jeremy Fiel (DGS and committee chair), Jenifer Bratter (Associate DGS), Shani Evans, and Elizabeth Roberto.

### The Director of Graduate Studies

The Director and Associate Director of Graduate Studies are responsible for reviewing and approving the program of study for every graduate student (after approved by the student's advisor(s)), acting on all petitions, and making recommendations for the composition of comprehensive examination and thesis committees. Students can also direct questions about policy to the DGS and Associate DGS.

### First-Year Advising

Upon entering the program, each student is assigned a provisional advisor or co-advisors for the first year. After the first semester of study, which is devoted entirely to coursework, the student will work with their advisor(s) on research or teaching tasks for 15-20 hours a week. If the student is assigned multiple advisors, the student should consult with the advisors to determine how research hours should be split. At the conclusion of the first year, the student, advisor(s), and the DGS will decide together whether the first-year advisor(s) should remain the student's primary advisor(s) for the following year. We discuss advising further below.

Peers are also a valuable source of mentorship, and we encourage all students to draw on this resource. For informal advising, each first-year student is paired with a continuing-student mentor from the department. These mentors aim to help students get situated and familiarize students with departmental policies, procedures, and social life to ease the transition into graduate school.

## The Graduate Staff

The Program Administrator provides information, assists in processing applications, and maintains the students' files while they are enrolled. The staff will keep up with which form must be filed with which office to ensure that students remain in good standing. They will also assist with finding the right resources and solutions to any problems that arise. There are many bureaucratic hoops to jump through on the way to a PhD, and our staff are ready to assist. However, students should be proactive and seek them out with questions. Students should take responsibility for being familiar with all paperwork needed to advance their degree progress.

## Sociology Graduate Student Association

The Sociology Graduate Student Association (SOVI-GSA) is an officially recognized student organization. The SOVI-GSA broadly aims to empower and engage all graduate students in departmental decision-making processes to maintain a high level of academic excellence, cohesion, and wellbeing among our graduate students. It has four committee roles elected each year by current Sociology graduate students: two Graduate Representatives to consult with the Graduate Program Committee and attend committee meetings, a Treasurer and Professionalization Coordinator, and a Communications and Social Event Coordinator. The GSA has a faculty sponsor (currently Professor Jeremy Fiel). All current graduate students in the Department of Sociology will be considered voting members of the SOVI-GSA and are eligible to seek and hold office in the elected committee if they are in good standing and are not currently on any forms of disciplinary probation. For more information on the SOVI-GSA's mission, purpose, etc., please refer to the SOVI GSA constitution (available for download at <https://owl.nest.rice.edu/organization/socigsa>).

## Information For International Students

Navigating a graduate program can be especially complex for international students. The Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS, <https://oiss.rice.edu>) provides resources for international scholars. OISS convenes its own [orientation for international students](#) and provides information about checking in and [onboarding](#) upon arrival for incoming international students. Much of this is time-sensitive, so be prepared to complete these steps quickly when entering the program.

## The Faculty

The following provides a brief overview of each full-time faculty member's research interests and experience in the department.

JENIFER L BRATTER, Professor and Associate Director of Graduate Studies. Bratter received her Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography from the University of Texas at Austin. Bratter's research areas are race and ethnic relations, quantitative methods, family, and demography. Her research explores the implications of race and racial mixing (i.e., interracial families, multiracial identity) for family, identity, and social inequality. Current projects focus on indicators of social well-being such as poverty, residential segregation, and health and the new ways that race is linked to these phenomena. She has recently published works appearing in the *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Demography*, *Social Forces*, *Family Relations*,

*Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, and several upcoming book chapters. Bratter is also the founding Director of the Rice University BRIDGE Initiative, which stands for Building Research on Inequality and Diversity to Grow Equity; BRIDGE aims to support and foster research on social inequality's patterns, causes, and consequences.

**TONY N. BROWN**, Professor. Brown earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. As a critical race scholar, he can confirm social scientists struggle to specify the meaning and significance of racism for U.S. blacks and blacks of the global south. Hence, he studies how racism works, from the womb to the tomb, to disadvantage blacks and privilege whites. Its workings include interactions across interpersonal, institutional, and cultural levels, implicating the mundane and extraordinary in the maintenance of white supremacy. His scholarship covers a broad range of topics including health disparities, race socialization, racial attitudes, racial identity, social determinants of health, psychiatric epidemiology, and the sociology of mental health. He is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology, and the Founding Director of the Racism and Racial Experiences (RARE) Workgroup and the Statistical Training and Research Techniques at Rice University (STaRT@Rice) program.

**BRIELLE BRYAN**, Assistant Professor. Bryan received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University, her M.P.P. from Georgetown University, and her A.M. and Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Policy from Harvard University. Dr. Bryan's research examines inequality and barriers to opportunity in the United States, with an emphasis on racial inequities and the role of the criminal justice system. Her current projects examine how incarceration and felony conviction shape housing, economic stability, and interaction with the social safety net over the life course. Before receiving her Ph.D., she worked at the Urban Institute, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Foundation Center.

**SERGIO CHÁVEZ**, Associate Professor and Undergraduate Director. After graduating from Hartnell Community College in the Salinas Valley, he received his B.A. and M.S. from UC Davis and his Ph.D. from Cornell University. He was also a postdoctoral scholar in Sociology and the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Dr. Chávez has conducted field research in the US and Mexico on issues related to internal and international migration, including labor markets, family separation, social networks, and border studies.

**CHRISTINA DIAZ**, Assistant Professor. Diaz earned a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of social demography, immigration, and family formation. Her projects shed light on the health and well-being of Latin American immigrants who reside in the U.S. or have returned to their country of origin. In her most recent work, Dr. Diaz examines whether—and to what extent—immigration-origin populations influence social, cultural, and economic change in the U.S. She is particularly interested in understanding how “American” culture contracts and expands in response to immigration. Dr. Diaz is a 2018 Career Enhancement Fellow through the (formerly named) Woodrow Wilson National Foundation and has received recognition for her scholarship from the American Sociological Association, the Population Association of America, and the National Council for Family Relations. She is a current Council member of the Population Section for the American Sociological Association.

**JAMES R. ELLIOTT**, Professor and Department Chair. Elliott received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and trained as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of North Carolina's Population Center. His recent research focuses primarily on urban inequality and the environment, with published work on topics ranging from neighborhood and network effects on housing and employment outcomes to social dynamics of natural disaster recovery, hazardous waste accumulation, and related policy responses. He is a former advisor to the National Science Foundation's Program in Sociology and a recent co-editor of *Sociological Perspectives*, the official journal of the Pacific Sociological Association. He is currently on the editorial boards of *Demography*, the official journal of the Population Association of America, and *American Sociological Review*, the flagship journal of the American Sociological Association.

**ELAINE HOWARD ECKLUND**, Professor. Ecklund received a PhD from Cornell University. She is also Herbert S. Autrey Chair in Social Sciences and was Founding Director of the Religion and Public Life Program (2010-2022). Ecklund currently directs the Rice University Boniuk Institute for Religious Tolerance. As a sociologist of religion, Ecklund's work examines how individuals use gender, racial, and religious identities to bring changes to institutions like science, workplaces, and religious organizations themselves. Ecklund's most recent book is *Varieties of Atheism in Science* (OUP, 2021). Ecklund received the Rice University Charles O. Duncan Award for outstanding research and teaching achievement in 2013 and in 2018 gave Scotland's Gifford Lecture on Science and Religion. In addition to her own scholarly work, Ecklund is deeply committed to mentoring and institution building. She has served as President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and is incoming President of the Religious Research Association. She recently completed her ninth year as Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Sociology at Rice University.

**SHANI EVANS**, Assistant Professor. Evans received her Ph.D. in sociology and education and M.S.Ed. in education policy from the University of Pennsylvania, and her B.A. in anthropology at Amherst College. As a sociologist and qualitative researcher she focuses on race and ethnicity, space and place, sociology of education, intersectionality, housing and qualitative research methods. In her book, *The World Was Ours: Race, Memory, and Resistance in the Gentrified City*, Evans draws on fifty in-depth interviews and participant observation, the book examines the experiences of long-term residents of a recently gentrified, historically Black neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. She shows how long-term residents respond to the changing meanings of space, while continuing to engage in Black placemaking. Another significant part of her work focuses on how students and parents gain access to high status educational programs and institutions. Her works have been published in *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Sociology of Education* and *Research for Action*.

**JEREMY FIEL**, Assistant Professor and Director of Graduate Studies. Fiel received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His research and teaching focus on education, segregation and inequality, and quantitative research methods. Past projects have sought to understand contemporary racial school segregation, as well as education's role in the processes by which inequality in one generation is (or isn't) passed on to subsequent generations. He is currently researching how recent education policies have affected school segregation and equality of opportunity. Other ongoing research examines how institutions have segregated or otherwise regulated different types of relations (economic, political, familial, etc.) between racial categories. He has recently published works appearing in *Sociological Theory*, *Sociology of Education*, *American Journal of Sociology*, *Demography*, and *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

**BRIDGET GORMAN**, Professor and Dean of Undergraduate Students. Gorman received her Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography from Pennsylvania State University. Her research addresses how social conditions and experiences shape group differences in health and well-being among children and adults. During her career, she has organized her research efforts to examine disparities in morbidity, physical functioning, and medical care use across major U.S. demographic groups – particularly racial/ethnic, nativity, gender, and sexuality groups. She is interested not only in how men vs. women, minorities vs. whites, and the foreign vs. native-born differ in health outcomes but also in how these social categories intersect to shape health outcomes (e.g., black women vs. white men, heterosexual men vs. gay men). A guiding framework for her work is that health disparities are driven by fundamental social causes (e.g., socioeconomic status, social integration, and support) that underlie and shape group differences in health outcomes.

**RACHEL TOLBERT KIMBRO**, Professor and Dean of Social Sciences. Kimbro received her Ph.D. in sociology with a focus in demography from Princeton University. After completing her doctoral studies, Kimbro was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholar at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her teaching and research interests include poverty, race/ethnicity, migration, child obesity, maternal health behaviors, and the influence of family dynamics on children's health and wellbeing.

**ANNA RHODES**, Assistant Professor. Rhodes received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Johns Hopkins University. Her research combines urban sociology, the sociology of education, and environmental sociology to investigate household residential decision-making. One area of her research investigates the dynamic relationship between residential and educational inequality, and specifically examines the intersection of families' school and residential choices to explore the role of housing, neighborhood, and school contexts on children's educational opportunities and outcomes. Her current projects examine how low-income families sort into communities and schools across different metropolitan areas and the social processes through which their residential and educational contexts influence children. Another vein of her work examines the residential decisions of households in the wake of disaster, and highlights the ways that climate change and disasters increase economic vulnerability and inequality among households in affected communities.

**ELIZABETH ROBERTO**, Assistant Professor. Roberto received her B.A. and M.P.A. from George Washington University and her Ph.D. in Sociology from Yale University. She has broad research interests in social and spatial inequality, a substantive focus on residential segregation, and methodological expertise in computational social science and quantitative methods. Roberto was a James S. McDonnell Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at Princeton University and has held positions as a Presidential Management Fellow and Research Analyst at the U.S. Department of Transportation, Brookings Institution, and Government Accountability Office.

**RUTH LÓPEZ TURLEY**, Professor. Professor López Turley directs the [Kinder Institute for Urban Research](#) at Rice University, which brings together data, research, engagement, and action to improve lives. In 2011, she founded the [Houston Education Research Consortium](#) (HERC), a research-practice partnership between Rice University and eleven Houston area school districts, representing over 700,000 students. A program of the Kinder Institute, HERC works to improve

educational equity by connecting research to policy and practice, working directly with district leaders. She directed HERC from 2011 to 2022, during which she raised over \$30M so that school districts would not have to pay for research. She also founded the [National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships](#), which connects and supports over 60 partnerships between research institutions and education agencies throughout the country. She is a graduate of Stanford and Harvard and is originally from Laredo, Texas.

MIRANDA R. WAGGONER, Associate Professor. Dr. Waggoner earned her PhD in Sociology and Social Policy from Brandeis University and was a postdoctoral fellow in the Office of Population Research at Princeton University. Using primarily qualitative methods and focusing particularly on topics related to gender, risk, and reproduction, her research examines how social structure and culture shape biomedical knowledge production, medical care, and public health practice. Waggoner is the author of an award-winning book, *The Zero Trimester* (University of California Press), and her recent articles have appeared in outlets such as *American Sociological Review* and *The American Journal of Bioethics*. She currently serves on the council of the Body & Embodiment Section of the American Sociological Association and on the editorial board of *American Sociological Review*.

#### AFFILIATED FACULTY

MINJAE KIM, Assistant Professor. Kim received his Ph.D. in Management (Economic Sociology) from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His research focuses on commitment as a coordination device, addressing questions such as, on one hand, what causes people and organizations to be committed despite alternative options and risks of betrayal, and, on the other hand, how people and organizations respond to others' commitment. In addressing these questions, he studies diverse contexts (e.g., culture, politics, police, startups, labor market, workplace dynamics) and builds on theories in economic and organizational sociology and social psychology. His research has been published in *American Sociological Review*, *Organization Science*, *Sociological Science*, and *Social Science Research*.

#### ADJUNCT AND EMERITUS MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT

CRAIG CONSIDINE, Senior Lecturer of Sociology at Rice University. He earned a Ph.D. from Trinity College – University of Dublin, a Master's degree from Royal Holloway – University of London, and a Bachelor's degree from American University. As a sociologist, Craig is interested in the sociology of religion, racial and ethnic relations, and diasporic communities' experiences. Craig's early research focused primarily on American identity through the lens of Muslims, with an emphasis on religious pluralism and Islamophobia. More recent research explored the experiences of young Pakistani Muslim and non-Muslim men in Dublin, Ireland, and Boston, Massachusetts. His Ph.D. project focused on the ethnic and civic nation dichotomy, the impact of crisis racism, intergenerational dynamics in diaspora, and the developments of hybrid and liquid identities.

RICHARD JOHNSON, Professor in the Practice of Environmental Studies in Sociology. He earned a degree in Civil Engineering from Rice University and a Master's in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia. He is the Executive Director for Sustainability at Rice University, and he co-directs Rice's Environmental Studies program. His work at Rice bridges the operations, administration, teaching, and research functions of the campus to achieve enterprise-

wide environmental excellence. Beyond Rice, Richard co-chairs the Texas Regional Alliance for Campus Sustainability (TRACS), and he chairs the Futures Council for the University of Arizona's College of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape Architecture (CAPLA), helping to guide the CAPLA's leadership role in the university's "Building a Changing World" initiative and beyond.

JING LI, Quantitative Methodologist and Adjunct Associate Professor of Sociology. She earned a Ph.D. in Sociology and a M.S. in Statistics from University of Texas at Austin. As a social demographer and sociologist, Li is broadly interested in immigration and its intersection with race/ethnicity, education, health and work. Her past projects have focused on Asian American health, education and acculturation. As a methodologist, Li has extensive teaching and consulting experiences in various quantitative research methods. In addition, one of her recent interests is to explore how to best integrate quantitative and qualitative methods to answer research questions for hard-to-find populations.

STEPHEN L. KLINEBERG, Professor Emeritus of Sociology and the Founding Director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research. As director of the annual "Kinder Houston Area Survey" (1982-2022), he and his students have tracked the shifts in demographic patterns, economic outlooks, life experiences, attitudes, and beliefs among successive representative samples of Harris County residents during four decades of remarkable change. His book exploring the national implications of this research, entitled *Prophetic City: Houston on the Cusp of a Changing America*, was published in June 2020. He is the recipient of twelve major teaching awards at Rice and a much sought-after speaker in the Houston community and beyond. He is a graduate of Haverford College, with an MA from the University of Paris and a PhD from Harvard.

ELIZABETH LONG, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Rice University. She has published in the fields of cultural sociology, sociology of gender, sociology of knowledge, qualitative sociology, contemporary sociological theory, and the interdisciplinary fields of American Studies, cultural studies, and women's studies. Her most recent book is *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). The National Endowment for the Humanities has funded her research. She has served on several Editorial Boards, including *Communication Review*, *Book Research Quarterly*, and *Socialist Review*. She has also served as Chair of the Culture Section of the American Sociological Association and on the Program Committee for the American Sociological Association and the American Studies Association.

ROLAND B. SMITH, JR., Retired Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Adjunct Professor of Sociology. He received his B.A. in Anthropology/Sociology from Bowie State University, an M.P.A. in Public and Environmental Affairs from Indiana University, and an Ed.D. in Teaching, Curriculum, and Learning Environments from Harvard University. He teaches ethnographic research methods and mentors students while serving on the Graduate Council and Institutional Review Board. He chairs the Rice Council on Diversity and Inclusion and is the principal investigator/coordinator for the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship program at Rice, preparing undergraduates for Ph.D. studies. He came to Rice from the University of Notre Dame, where he served as executive assistant to the president, concurrent associate professor of sociology, and founding director of the Center for Educational Opportunity. He also served as a research intern in the United States Senate.

## UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND INFORMATION

### Transfer Credit

If you are entering the Rice University Sociology Ph.D. Program already having completed a Master's Degree (in Sociology) elsewhere, you may wonder how many credits will count toward your Ph.D. at Rice University. The University has a few [transfer credit guidelines](#). We address some common questions and department-specific policies here.

*Does coming in with a Master's degree or coursework mean I can spend less time in the program?* The University requires that each graduate student spends at least four semesters in residence at Rice University.

*If I've taken similar courses elsewhere, can they count?* The Department of Sociology has stipulated several required courses (including Classical Social Theory, Contemporary Social Theory, Qualitative Research Methods, Statistics courses, and Research Methods). If you have taken similar courses elsewhere and wish for one or more of these requirements to be waived, you should submit to the Graduate Committee, preferably before the beginning of the first semester of study, a request that includes a copy of the syllabus from the similar course, all required written work for the course, and your final grade. We typically allow no more than six transfer credits, although some exceptions may be made.

*Can my previous master's thesis count towards my PhD?* If you already completed a master's thesis, this might also count toward your Ph.D. in Sociology (although not toward thesis credit hours). If you wish to have your previous master's thesis considered instead of completing our program's required thesis, you may submit your thesis to the DGS for consideration. The DGS will work with the Graduate Committee to identify faculty reviewers with expertise in the area of the thesis to evaluate it. The Graduate Committee will assess the faculty reviews and decide whether to accept the thesis as is, require revisions to the thesis, or reject the thesis and require the student to complete another thesis.

The Graduate Committee will review all course waiver and master's thesis waiver requests and make its decisions early in the fall semester. In addition to these formal guidelines, we are happy to discuss your situation in detail once you arrive on campus.

### Registration

In addition to these departmental requirements, a variety of registration rules apply to all graduate students at Rice University (see <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-all-degrees/>). We summarize a few of them here.

- Students must maintain continuous program involvement and enrollment unless granted an official leave of absence.
- Failure to register before the registration deadline will result in a de facto withdrawal.
- All full-time graduate students are required to register for nine credit hours each semester, and for nine credits of Summer Research hours each summer.

- Graduate students may not take a course pass/fail within their own department.
- Registration for all courses must be complete before the end of the second week of the semester.
- The last day to drop courses is the end of the seventh week of classes.
- Students must maintain their required course load. Exceptions to these deadlines may be granted only in extenuating circumstances and require approval by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.
- All students are required to register in the semester of their dissertation defense. An exception is granted automatically if the defense occurs during the first week of classes and the student was registered during the previous semester.

### *How to Register for Classes:*

To register for classes, add or drop courses, check your grade reports and degree requirement completion, make payments or perform any number of self-serve functions, visit the ESTHER (Employee and Student Tools, Help, and Electronic Resources) external link system: <http://esther.rice.edu/>.

Please note: Depending on the week of the semester, ESTHER's functions may be limited. If you have questions regarding ESTHER, first check the ESTHER FAQ page ([https://registrar.rice.edu/students/esther\\_FAQs](https://registrar.rice.edu/students/esther_FAQs)), and then call (713-348-4999) or email the Registrar's Office ([registrar@rice.edu](mailto:registrar@rice.edu)) for assistance.

Please visit <https://registrar.rice.edu/students/registration> for information about how to register for classes, special registration, holds, registration FAQs and more. GPS provides information specifically for graduate students as well: <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/registration>.

### *Away Status, Leaves, and Withdrawals*

At times, students may seek to step away from graduate study for a semester or more. You can find detailed university policies regarding interruptions of study and readmission in the [General Announcements](#). These interruptions include releases, leaves, and withdrawals (both voluntary and involuntary). The GPS website summarizes these [policies](#) and provides the necessary [forms](#).

### *Residency*

Being physically present in the program is an important part of participating successfully. Therefore, the Department and the University have requirements about residing close enough to engage in-person in departmental activities. Rice University requires all Ph.D. students to be in residence at least four semesters. Our departmental expectation is that graduate students should be in residence locally and available to complete tasks (courses, teaching, comprehensive exams, research) in person until they have achieved candidacy for the Ph.D. (i.e., after the comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal). Program requirements and tasks in this period often require students' presence.

Students requesting to be away from campus for an extended period *before achieving Ph.D. candidacy* should seek the approval of their advisor(s) and the DGS. Even after achieving Ph.D.

candidacy, we recommend that students consult with their advisor(s) before being away from campus for an extended period of time.

## Vacation Policy

Graduate students in Sociology are expected to fulfill their research assistant or teaching assistant duties approximately 48 weeks per year for about 15-20 hours per week, with approximately four weeks of vacation time allowed per year. *Students should work with their advisors in advance to schedule time off.* We recommend that students seek approval from advisors at least four weeks in advance of requested time off to ensure that vacation timing does not conflict with research assistantship duties.

## Establishing Eligibility as a Student With a Disability

The Sociology department, as well as the University, view inclusion regardless of ability status as a part of our mission. To advance this goal, the University provides assistance and support for students through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Visit <https://drc.rice.edu/about> to learn about the DRC. Students registered with the DRC have a wide range of disabilities, including learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, physical or medical conditions, sensory loss, psychiatric or psychological conditions, etc. The DRC establishes eligibility for disability-related assistance, notifies and consults with faculty on needed accommodations, and provides adaptive equipment or resources as needed. Find more information about Disability Resources for students and disability documentation guidelines at: <https://drc.rice.edu/students>.

New students interesting in registering with the DRC are advised to contact the DRC following admission to ensure eligibility is established, and any needed, reasonable accommodations are evaluated and approved in a timely manner. Accommodations are not retroactive. The DRC is located on campus in the Allen Center, Room 111. They can be reached by email at [adarice@rice.edu](mailto:adarice@rice.edu), or by phone at 713-348-5841.

## Health Insurance

All degree-seeking students are required to maintain health insurance, either via the Rice Plan or their own insurance carrier. If you already have health insurance and want to waive the Rice Plan, complete an Insurance Waiver form indicating that other coverage is in place. Please find the most up-to-date information about Student Health Insurance at <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/finance/insurance>. See the following links for more information.

- Health Insurance Frequently Asked Questions: <https://studenthealthinsurance.rice.edu/resources/faqs>
- Health Insurance subsidy for PhD students: <https://graduate.rice.edu/health-subsidy>
- Payroll Deduction for Health Insurance: <https://studenthealthinsurance.rice.edu/about/payment-plan>

## Stipends

The most common form of financial compensation for graduate students are stipends. Currently, Sociology Graduate stipends are distributed on a 12-month basis and distributed bi-weekly through the Rice Procurement system. The conditions below must be completed for your check to be released on the appropriate payday:

- You must be registered full-time (at least 9 hours in fall/spring; 9 hours in summer) for the current semester in which you are receiving a student stipend.

Detailed information on payroll is available at the Controller's Office website: <https://controller.rice.edu/payroll-home>. For pay periods, see the Semi-Monthly Payroll Calendar on the Human Resources website at <https://controller.rice.edu/payroll-schedules>.

Be attentive to announcements about changes in these policies. For specific questions about your stipend not answered here, please contact your department Graduate Program Administrator.

It is important to note that students judged to be not in good academic standing may have their stipends reduced or terminated, even if they are allowed to continue in the program (see Termination of Financial Support section below). If a student is at risk of this, it will be clearly communicated in an evaluation letter from the DGS.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND PROGRESS TO DEGREE

### Sociology Degree Requirements

The most detailed and current information on curricular requirements and opportunities is available in the Rice University General Announcements:

- You can find general university requirements at: <https://ga.rice.edu>.
- Sociology degree requirements are at: <https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/sociology/sociology-phd/#requirementstext>
- Information on admission to our program is at: <https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/sociology/sociology-phd/#policiestext>.

We provide an overview of Sociology program requirements here, but the General Announcements prevail as the authoritative source if there are any discrepancies.

*Coursework.* The Ph.D. program is typically a five to seven year degree program during which students must complete 90 credit hours of graduate study. The Sociology department does not admit students seeking only a Master's degree, although students earn an MA degree en route to a Ph.D. The course work is sequenced and *is typically* completed in two and a half years, at which point students should have completed their master's thesis and earned their MA degree. Students generally take one comprehensive exam (discussed below) soon after completing the MA degree and complete their dissertation in the next two years.

Graduate students have a range of courses within the department to choose from, with availability

shifting from semester to semester. Courses generally reflect faculty expertise, which focuses on causes and consequences of social inequality and patterns and processes of culture. A full list of course offerings and schedules for upcoming semesters is available at: <https://courses.rice.edu>.

*Research Assistantships.* The program is built on an apprenticeship model, and students who receive funding are required to work on research or teaching tasks with a faculty member in the department for 15-20 hours per week (with the exception of the first semester) in addition to fulfilling course requirements. Research assignments from faculty can take many shapes but are generally guided by an interest in training students to produce publishable work. Research assistant hours are supervised by an advisor; they generally will not include time spent on independent research projects or the dissertation or master's thesis. It is strongly suggested that students write regular, weekly reports describing their research or teaching progress to their advisor and explaining how research hours were utilized.

There are two typical exceptions to these research assistantship expectations. During students' first semester, they are expected to focus solely on coursework and are released from these research hours. In addition, students will complete at least two formal Teaching Assistant assignments, during which they have reduced research expectations (more details below).

## Academic Advising

Each first-year student is assigned a provisional advisor or co-advisors for the first year (see First-Year Advising). After the first year, students should consult with the DGS if they would like to change advisors; these changes will typically only occur at the conclusion of each semester. Students can consult about advising changes with the Associate DGS or Department Chair if their advisor is the DGS.

In some cases, students have two advisors, or co-advisors. These arrangements can work well, but they are often unnecessary and present challenges. We generally caution against co-advising unless working with a sole advisor is not feasible or recommended for good reason. Students who seek co-advising should be aware that these arrangements can be difficult to manage, as the student may have research or teaching expectations with multiple faculty, and faculty may be unclear about their respective roles in student mentoring. Additionally, if the goal of seeking a co-advising arrangement is to connect with multiple faculty, there are numerous ways to do so that do not require a faculty member to become one's adviser.

Hence, it is *critical* to get clarity from each advisor about their expectations and their respective roles before pursuing co-advising. Students should consult with the DGS and/or the Associate DGS about these arrangements.

## Student Assessment and Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the program. On an annual basis, students must submit a *personal evaluation form* (the template will be provided by the DGS and the Graduate Program Administrator) and an *updated curriculum vitae*. The student's advisor(s) will then write a short evaluation of the student to be reviewed by the DGS, the DGS will write a short review that is shared with the student and their advisor(s), and the Program Administrator will file

the compiled annual review document with the Department of Sociology.

To facilitate this evaluation, it is suggested that students keep an accounting of their work from week to week. This could include their research or teaching activities to explain how research hours were utilized, as well as documenting important goals, achievements, or challenges.

## Required Coursework

The Ph.D. program is a five-year degree program, although students often stay a sixth or seventh year (but cannot stay longer than eight years). This includes the MA, which is a thesis master's degree.

For general university requirements regarding the MA degree, see: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-thesis-masters-degrees/>.

For general university requirements regarding the Ph.D. degree, see: <https://ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-doctoral-degrees/>.

Students pursuing the Ph.D. degree in the field of Sociology must complete a minimum of 90 credit hours to satisfy degree requirements. Students will typically obtain a master's degree after two years of coursework (43 credit hours) and research as they progress toward the Ph.D. They will usually need at least an additional three years to complete the requirements for a Ph.D. The coursework is sequenced and will typically be completed in two-and-a-half years. By this point, students will be required to have written their master's thesis and completed their MA degree. This leaves one year to take the comprehensive exam and complete the dissertation proposal, and at least two years to complete the dissertation.

*Until students have passed the comprehensive exam and defended the dissertation proposal (thereby advancing to Ph.D. Candidacy and achieving All But Dissertation status), they must enroll in at least one substantive course in the Sociology Department each semester (e.g., an "on the books" course, generally an elective; independent study and research hours do not qualify). Students must petition the DGS (see Petitions and Appeals section) for an exception to this policy. If students meet this requirement, they can also take elective courses in other departments.*

## Official Course Requirements

You can find official Sociology course requirements and a proposed plan of study at: <https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/sociology/sociology-phd/#requirementstext>.

## Professionalization Workshop

In addition to other coursework, first- and second-year students are required to attend the Professionalization Workshop (SOCI 610), which the department holds throughout the academic year and is led by the Director and Associate Director of Graduate Studies. With 8-10 meetings per semester (generally on Fridays at 12PM), these will cover a wide range of topics designed to help students prepare for the variety of roles and obligations involved with an academic career, and to

become familiar with the research of individual faculty members. Topics may include writing a CV, preparing for academic job interviews, and applying for grants. Students in their first two years should register for SOCI 610 each semester (up to four semesters) and will receive one credit per semester for a total of four credits. Students beyond their second year are encouraged to attend when the topic is relevant, but are no longer obligated to register.

### Departmental Colloquia

The department hosts the *Sociology Speakers Series* between 2 and 4 times a month. These are meant to be attended by faculty, students, and post-docs and are free and open to the public. These are important opportunities to learn about recent research in the field and hear about scholarship from colleagues within and beyond the department.

*First-year and second-year students are required to attend these talks as part of their professionalization.* Students beyond the second year may be required to attend by their advisers. Please note, even if they are not explicitly directed to do so, all students are strongly encouraged and expected to be present.

### Additional Courses

Aside from substantive courses, students can sometimes enroll for credit hours related to research or other topics.

- SOCI 500, Summer Research: students must enroll for 9 hours with their primary advisor as they work on independent research related to their master's thesis or dissertation.
- SOCI 606, MA Thesis Research: students may enroll for 3 hours in up to two semesters with their primary advisor as they work on their master's thesis.
- SOCI 605, Non-Thesis Graduate Research: generally an independent reading course with the primary advisor (usually to prepare for comprehensive exams).
- SOCI 609, Graduate Independent Study: generally a topically focused course supervised by a faculty member.
- SOCI 700, Dissertation Research: after advancing to Ph.D. candidacy, students enroll for 9 hours with their primary advisor while working on their dissertation.

### Departmental Grade Requirements

Sociology students must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.66 (or a B-) in all required courses. Please note that this GPA is higher than the 2.33 GPA required by the graduate school guidelines to avoid academic probation. In addition, if a student receives a grade lower than a B- in any required course, they must retake the course in question once more or work with the DGS and their advisor to find a satisfactory summer course. If the student again receives a grade lower than a B, the student is not making satisfactory progress and will be dismissed from the program. After the first grade in a required course below a B-, the student, their advisor, and the DGS will meet to make a plan to assist the student in making adequate progress.

### Teaching Requirements

Each student is required to assist faculty in their undergraduate teaching by serving as a Teaching

Assistant (TA). Students also have curricular requirements to improve their teaching. To fulfill all teaching requirements of the Ph.D. program, students will need to:

- Act as a TA for at least two courses.
  - TA duties may include holding office hours, assisting students, preparing course materials, grading, guest lecturing, and other activities as needed.
- Take a three-credit course offered by the Center of Teaching Excellence (CTE) on either the Principles for Effective College Teaching (UNIV 500) or Research on Teaching and Learning (UNIV 501).
  - If students choose, they may earn the Certificate in Teaching and Learning offered by the CTE, which includes taking these courses in addition to others (see <https://cte.rice.edu/grads> for details).

### Teaching Assistant Work

During semesters that a student acts as a TA, they will spend about 10 hours a week on average (at the instructor's discretion) in teaching-related activities for a course; students spend the remainder of their expected 15-20 hours of work on research assistance with their advisor(s). Students may also provide their advisor(s) minor help with a course during other semesters, but semesters that a student is not an official TA should be devoted primarily to research with their advisor(s).

Graduate students typically first TA during their third or fourth semester, (i.e., during their second year in the program). These appointments are assigned by the DGS (with input from the Graduate Committee and the Department Chair), and will not necessarily be with the student's advisor. First-time TAs are typically expected to lead at least one lecture, attend classes, hold office hours, and conduct substantial grading. For the second TAship, which generally occurs after the MA thesis is completed, students consult with their advisor and the DGS for the appropriate timing. These second appointments should involve a greater degree of responsibility on the part of the student, such as providing multiple lectures, organization of lecture content, input on syllabus construction, and meetings with students. The faculty member who supervises the student's TAship will provide an evaluation of performance to the graduate committee.

TAs usually assist faculty teaching required or large undergraduate courses. The department tries to assign TAs courses that align with their own interests, but we balance this with department needs. Eligible TAs will be contacted as part of this process, usually in the Spring semester. If approved by the DGS, some TAships outside the department will meet the TA requirement. Departmental TAships generally do not provide additional compensation. Sometimes courses outside the department request that we provide them TAs, and some of these come with additional responsibilities and do provide additional payment. In such cases, the DGS will evaluate candidates based on their ability to perform those duties.

### Teaching Courses

After acting as a TA twice and taking the required teaching courses, post-MA students may apply to teach their own course as the instructor of record. At least one year in advance of the potential course, graduate students should (1) discuss with their advisor whether teaching fits their goals, (2) discuss with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) which courses they might teach that fit

departmental needs, (3) discuss with the DGS how their plans to teach fit with any other program requirements and their departmental funding, then (4) apply by emailing the Graduate Program Administrator. Students must then submit a syllabus for their proposed class for approval by the DGS and DUS; students should do so one year in advance for a new course that has not yet been offered, or six months in advance for a course that is already on the books.

Students teaching under the terms of their original funding (usually during the first five years) should expect teaching to take up the full 15-20 hours of work per week, and they are not expected to perform additional work as a research assistant. In these cases, students should not expect extra pay. The exceptions to this usually involve courses with additional responsibilities that are compensated outside the department; in these exceptional cases, the DGS will evaluate candidates based on their ability to perform those duties.

If a student is no longer funded under their original five-year funding package, teaching in the department will be compensated with pay. The possibility of teaching for salary will vary from year to year and depend on the department's availability of funds and teaching needs. In some circumstances, students in their first five years may apply for these paid positions in lieu of their original departmental funding, in which case they can have their unused departmental funding credited for a subsequent year. These positions are competitive, and students will generally apply in the spring preceding the academic year in which they want to teach. Salary fluctuates, so contact the Department Administrator and DGS for specifics.

### M.A. Degree and Master's Thesis

University guidelines for completion of the master's thesis and MA degree are provided in the [General Announcements](#), which elsewhere provide requirements specific to the [Sociology MA](#). We highlight a few details here.

In addition to required course work for the MA degree, graduate students must write and orally defend a master's thesis. This should be a publishable-length paper, suitable for submission to a scholarly research journal shortly after it is defended. To stay on schedule, the thesis should be defended at the end of the second year and must be defended no later than the end of the first semester of the third year. If the MA thesis is not successfully defended, a student will exit the program without an MA.

### Master's Degree Candidacy

The attainment of MA candidacy marks the completion of all requirements for the degree other than those related to research leading to the writing, submission, and defense of the thesis. Master's students must be approved for candidacy before the beginning of the fifth semester of their residence at Rice.

Students must file their applications for approval of MA candidacy in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) by the end of October for January conferral and by the end of February for May conferral. Petitions for candidacy and other forms are available at: <http://graduate.rice.edu/forms>. Students may take the final oral examination in defense of their thesis only after the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies approves their candidacy. GPS

provides additional information about [candidacy and defense processes](#).

### Master's Thesis Committee

When candidacy is approved, a thesis committee is appointed. In practice, students should begin to invite faculty to their committee, with input from their advisers, during their first two years as they become more aware of their thesis topic. This committee is responsible for reviewing the thesis and for examining the candidate on the subject matter contained therein. Almost all other actions necessary for the completion of the remaining degree requirements are the sole responsibility of the candidate. Resources for thesis defense and thesis submission are available at: <http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis/>.

The thesis committee administers the oral examination for the student's thesis defense and has final approval/disapproval authority and responsibility for the written thesis. A thesis committee is composed of at least three members. Two, including the committee chair, must be members of the Sociology department. At least three members of the committee must meet one of the following requirements:

- Tenured or tenure-track members of the Rice faculty
- Rice research faculty holding the rank of assistant research professor, associate research professor, or research professor

Additional members of the committee, who may or may not meet the above criteria, may be selected with the approval of the Department Chair.

### Oral Defense of Thesis

*Oral examinations for the master's degree must be announced at least one week in advance.* Announcements are to be submitted to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by completing the Graduate Students Thesis Defense Announcement form at <http://events.rice.edu/rgs>.

The public oral defense of a thesis is intended to examine a completed body of work and should be scheduled only when the master's thesis is essentially completed. At least one copy of the thesis must be available in the departmental office not less than two calendar weeks prior to the oral defense date (this can be provided in electronic format, such as a Word document or PDF). The length of the oral examination and the subject matter on which the candidate is questioned is left to the committee's judgment. The student should schedule the defense after consultation with the thesis advisor, who agrees that the thesis is completed and ready to be defended. All members of the master's thesis committee must be present for the oral defense.

A candidate must be enrolled in the semester in which their oral examination is held. Should a candidate fail, the committee chair may schedule a second examination. Students who fail a second time must withdraw from the university.

Master's students must defend their theses before the end of the eighth semester of their residency at Rice, but please note that our department expects that students will not take more than two-and-a-half and ideally two years to complete this step. Additional information on time boundaries for

graduate students at Rice may be found here: <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/candidacy-defense-thesis-submission/candidacy>.

## Thesis Submission

After the MA thesis is successfully defended, completing the MA degree requires submitting the proper paperwork and the thesis itself to the Office of Graduate studies (GPS). Please note these are two separate steps.

Students must send a copy of their Approval of Candidacy form, signed by the thesis committee signifying successful defense of the thesis, to GPS. This step must be taken *no more than one week* after the oral examination (i.e., the defense). The original approval of candidacy form must be turned in when the thesis is submitted. Forms can be signed and submitted electronically.

Students have six months from the date of their defense to submit their thesis to GPS. Students may need to make revisions to the thesis before it is deemed ready to submit. Once the final copy of the thesis is prepared, it must be verified and submitted to GPS; GPS provides [thesis submission guidelines](#) and even a [Thesis Template Library](#) to help you. Also see the [thesis requirements](#) in the General Announcements.

For other relevant forms, see: <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/forms>.

## Mid Program Evaluation

After completing core coursework, the MA thesis, and typically at least one TAship, students receive a Mid Program Evaluation (“Mid-Career Review”) to assess their readiness for the Ph.D. This typically occurs before the end of their 5<sup>th</sup> semester and always before the beginning of their 7<sup>th</sup> semester. The evaluation covers three major components:

- **Core Coursework.** Students will be evaluated in their core courses: classical and contemporary theory, research design, quantitative data analysis I, quantitative data analysis II, and qualitative methods. The Mid Program Evaluation will consider discrete grades in each class and evidence of scholarly development across them over time based on evaluations from instructors and faculty advisor(s).
- **Research and Teaching Assistance.** Students will also be evaluated in their performances as Research and Teaching Assistants. The Mid Program Evaluation will consider input from all faculty advisors and mentors involved in the student’s performance of associated duties, including hours performed, quantity of work, and quality of output.
- **Master’s Thesis.** The Mid Program Evaluation will consider input from the chair of the student’s master’s thesis committee related to the quality of the work.

In the Mid Program Evaluation, the Graduate Program Committee (GPC) provides a holistic review based on evidence related the above comopnents. If the student’s primary advisor is a member of the GPC, she or he will provide advisory input to the GPC but recuse themselves from voting on the student’s Mid Program Evaluation.

The GPC’s evaluation will result in one of the following decisions:

- **Continue towards a Ph.D.** Student has shown adequate to excellent performance on core competencies in required courses and assistantship duties, and the student has crafted a thesis that shows true potential for independent scholarship and publication (e.g., a thesis that could eventually be submitted as a scholarly journal article).
- **Provisional pass.** While the student has passed required courses, fulfilled basic assistantship duties, and completed a thesis, the student has struggled in significant ways that jeopardize their ability to advance to Ph.D. candidacy. The student will be required to meet specific benchmarks and undergo an additional review the following year.
- **Exit the program with an MA.** While the student has passed required courses, fulfilled basic assistantship duties, and completed a thesis, the student has struggled in significant ways suggesting that our program is not a good fit for the student. The student will be asked to leave the program but will receive the degree of MA.
- **Exit the program without an MA.** If the student has produced a sub-standard thesis and does not successfully defend the master's thesis, the student will be asked to leave the program without an MA completed.

### Advancing toward the Ph.D.

Please see the [General Announcements for Doctoral Degrees](#) for detailed regulations and procedures regarding the completion of the Ph.D. We provide a brief outline of the process here, with some additional details on each step.

Several steps follow the MA thesis and Mid Program Evaluation:

- (1) Select a comprehensive exam committee.
- (2) Develop a reading list in consultation with committee.
- (3) Take the written comprehensive exam.
- (4) Take the oral comprehensive exam.
- (5) Select members of dissertation committee (usually the same as comprehensive exam committee, with the addition of a Rice University faculty member outside of Sociology).
- (6) Prepare dissertation proposal in consultation with the dissertation committee.
- (7) Defend dissertation proposal.

Upon successful completion of steps 1-7, the student meets university and departmental requirements for *Doctoral Candidacy* and achieves *ABD (All But Dissertation) status*. The student then works with the Program Administrator to petition GPS for Approval of Ph.D. Candidacy, which requires DGS approval. Rice University rules require that Ph.D. Candidacy **MUST** be achieved prior to the student's ninth semester. This includes defending the proposal and filing the appropriate paperwork (students are responsible for checking the [Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website](#) to make sure they understand all paperwork requirements and timelines for submitting relevant paperwork).

## Comprehensive Examination (written and oral)

Once the student has completed the master's thesis and advanced past the Mid Program Evaluation, a committee will evaluate their ability to be an emerging specialist in their sociological subfields through the comprehensive examination.

The comprehensive examination process involves students conducting extensive reading, preparing for a written and an oral examination that reflects competency, the ability to engage, synthesize, and critique work, as well as understanding conceptual and methodological components of scholarship for the different subfields relevant to their dissertation. This examination will be closely tied to preparing the student to write a dissertation proposal and teach courses in the areas covered by the thesis (dissertation).

*The Committee.* With the approval of the DGS, the student will identify three Rice Sociology faculty to serve on the comprehensive examination committee. This committee generally reflects diverse substantive areas that are all relevant to the student's developing research agenda and dissertation, and students generally choose faculty for the comprehensive examination committee who represent different subfields. Generally, the comprehensive exam committee members will also serve on the student's dissertation committee. Demonstration of expertise in subfields means that students should be able to: a) summarize basic questions, issues, and debates within each specialty area; b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations and middle-range theories in each area; c) understand and apply methodological approaches specific to each substantive area; and d) develop specific policy implications of theory and research in each area.

*Generating the reading list.* The group of Rice Sociology faculty chosen for the comprehensive examination committee will guide the student on crafting the reading list for the examination. The list will be essentially student-generated and aim to elaborate on and inform the research question(s) that the student wishes to pursue for their dissertation proposal. In addition to covering core readings for the areas covered by the dissertation proposal, it should reflect the committee's substantive areas of expertise. The comprehensive exam will be aimed at examining the candidate in those areas, which will then lend themselves to the specific dissertation project.

*Comprehensive Examination.* The comprehensive exam committee will administer the examination that will include (1) a 12-hour written examination spread over two days (i.e., 6 hours each day), followed by (2) a two-hour oral examination. During the written component, students are allowed to use a list of the references from their reading list, but they are not allowed to use their sources or notes, and they must disable internet access on their computers throughout the exam.

*Evaluation.* The committee will evaluate the student's performance on the comprehensive examination. There are four possible outcomes.

- **High pass.** The student achieves excellence across all components (i.e., written exam and oral defense of exam). The student *achieves doctoral candidacy*.
- **Pass.** The student performs adequately on the examination. The student *achieves doctoral candidacy*.

- **Conditional Pass/Revisions needed.** The student shows clear ability but does not perform to the standard deemed “passable.” In this case, the student will revise one or more parts of the comprehensive examination based on instructions from the committee.
  - This revised examination must take place within a brief period of time determined by the student’s advisor (no more than three months after the original exam).
  - The committee must provide the student detailed feedback on what was lacking in their original examination.
- **Fail and leave the program.** The student performs poorly on the examination, revealing concerns for the student’s ability to complete a dissertation. The committee is obligated to provide a detailed memo describing the components of the student’s performance.

*The comprehensive examination is expected to occur before the end of the seventh semester.*

### Approval of Ph.D. Candidacy

Achieving candidacy for the Ph.D. signals that a graduate student has: (a) completed required coursework, (b) passed required exams demonstrating their comprehensive grasp of the subject area, (c) demonstrated the ability for clear oral and written communication, and (d) shown the ability to carry on scholarly work in their subject area. This marks the completion of all requirements for the degree other than those related to research leading to the writing, submission, and defense of the thesis (dissertation).

Ph.D. students must be approved for candidacy before the beginning of the ninth semester of their residency at Rice. If a student plans to defend and submit a thesis (dissertation) for the next degree conferral, they must file their applications for Approval of Ph.D. Candidacy in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by the end of October for January conferral and the end of February for May conferral. Petitions for candidacy are available at: <http://graduate.rice.edu/forms>. Students may take the final oral examination in defense of their thesis (dissertation) only after the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies approves their candidacy.

When candidacy is approved, a thesis (dissertation) committee consisting of at least three tenured or tenure-track faculty or research fellows is appointed. This committee is responsible for reviewing the thesis proposal and the thesis, and for examining the candidate on the subject matter contained therein. Almost all other actions necessary for the completion of the remaining degree requirements are the sole responsibility of the candidate. Resources for thesis defense and thesis submission are available at: <http://graduate.rice.edu/thesis/>.

### Dissertation Proposal

During the semester that the student prepares for their comprehensive examination, they will also be crafting their dissertation proposal per guidelines below. This will be submitted to faculty *within sixty business days after passing their comprehensive exam*.

For the dissertation committee, *in addition to at least two tenured or tenure-track Rice Sociology faculty members (we recommend three)*, at the time of the dissertation proposal defense, the student will identify a faculty member at Rice with a primary faculty appointment outside of Sociology to serve on the dissertation committee. We recommend that the non-Sociology member attend the

proposal defense, if possible. At least three total faculty should be present at the proposal defense.

Unlike advancing to MA candidacy, advancing to Ph.D. candidacy in our department involves the public defense of a thesis (dissertation) proposal. This is routinely a closed hearing with the student and their committee where they present the scope of their project, its significance and connection to the larger literature, the specific questions and associated research methods employed to conduct the research, and a timeline for completion. This document should be approximately 20-25 pages in length, including an abstract (500-700 words), background literature review of the area related to a central topic (about 5-7 pages), motivating theoretical and empirical rationale, central research questions, the assertion of data collection or description of secondary data source, the rationale for how data collection or data sources will allow an answer to the research question, and detailed timeline for completion of work. If relevant, it should include the rationale for funding needed and a plan to acquire funding. While students should work with their advisor and chair on the exact format, the above are guidelines that students are encouraged to follow.

## Dissertation

After Ph.D. candidacy is granted and the student passes the dissertation proposal, the student will commence work on their dissertation.

Each dissertation committee will consist of at least three tenured or tenure-track faculty members, including one outside faculty member from another department at Rice University. Members must meet the same eligibility requirements as for the Master's Thesis committee. Students may add additional faculty members to their committee from outside Rice, but a minimum of three Rice faculty must be on the committee (at least two from the Sociology department and one from a different Rice department). Students are urged to have three Rice Sociology faculty on their committee. The committee chair need not be the thesis director. The chair, however, must be either a tenured or tenure-track member of the Sociology department or a research faculty member of the Sociology department. Additional members of the committee, who may or may not meet the above criteria, may be selected with the approval of the department chair. The key members of this committee will meet annually with the student to examine their research progress and provide a written evaluation of the student's progress.

The dissertation itself must follow a three-paper or book format unless the student petitions for a different format and that format is approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, with dissertation committee support. Finally, the candidate must pass a public oral examination, defending their dissertation, to obtain the Ph.D. degree.

NOTE: The writing of the thesis should be a serious concern. Correct grammar and spelling and logical organization, and a clear, literate prose style are expected. [Guidelines for thesis format](#) are available on the GPS website. Rice's [Center for Academic and Professional Communication](#) offers consultations, workshops, and writing groups to assist in writing.

## Public Lecture for Final Year Ph.D. Candidates

Generally students who have achieved candidacy will be required to give a lecture in the department (coordinated with the Sociology Colloquium series) during the semester they anticipate going on the job market. This should be a 40-minute lecture that is modeled after an academic job

talk. These lectures will be hosted by the department and include faculty and graduate students as audience members. Students must complete this before defending their dissertation, even if not applying for a university position. Students planning to go on the job market should notify the Director of Graduate Studies in the summer prior to the academic year in which they will be applying for jobs.

### Oral Examination in Defense of Thesis (Dissertation Defense)

Students should schedule the final oral examination in defense of the thesis to take place at a time agreeable to all committee members. Be sure to consult the [deadlines](#) listed in the [Academic Calendar](#) to ensure that you meet the defense deadline for commencement. A candidate must be enrolled in the semester in which their oral examination is held.

*Oral examinations for the doctoral degree must be announced at least two weeks in advance.* Oral examination announcements are submitted to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies by completing the Graduate Students Thesis Defense Announcement form at <http://events.rice.edu/rgs>.

The Original Approval of Candidacy form (initials in the top right corner will be red) will be sent to your department as soon as the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies receives the defense announcement. The members of your committee must sign the candidacy form. If your thesis committee has changed since you achieved candidacy, the candidacy form must be revised prior to your defense.

The public oral defense of a thesis is intended to examine a completed body of work and should be scheduled only when the Dissertation is essentially completed. At least one copy (an electronic copy is fine) of the thesis must be available in the departmental office not less than two calendar weeks prior to the oral defense date. The student should schedule the defense after consultation with the thesis advisor, who agrees that the thesis is completed and ready to be defended. All members of the thesis committee must be present for the oral defense. Should a candidate fail, the committee chair may schedule a second examination. Students who fail a second time must withdraw from the university.

Within a week after the final oral examination is passed, students must submit a copy of the Approval of Candidacy form, signed (and dated) by the thesis committee, to the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (MS-13) (see [GPS forms here](#)). This signifies a successful defense of the thesis. Students passing the oral examination on or before the end of the first week of classes of any semester do not have to register for that or any subsequent semester, even though they may be continuing to make minor revisions to the final copy of their thesis.

Ph.D. students must defend their theses before the end of the sixteenth semester of their residency at Rice. Additional information on time boundaries for graduate students at Rice may be found at <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/candidacy-defense-thesis-submission/candidacy>.

### Submission

Students have at most six months from the date of their defense to submit their thesis. Students aiming to qualify for a particular degree conferral date (e.g., to walk at commencement) may need to submit sooner to meet that deadline (see [GPS guidelines](#)). Once the final copy of the thesis is

prepared, it must be verified and submitted to the Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies; GPS provides [thesis submission guidelines](#). Also see the [doctoral degree requirements](#) in the General Announcements.

Also see the GPS thesis Template Library: <https://graduate.rice.edu/current-students/candidacy-defense/thesis-templates>.

For other relevant forms, see: <https://graduate.rice.edu/academics/forms>.

## FUNDING AND RESEARCH SUPPORT

### Research and Travel Expenses

The department provides each student some funds for research expenses, which students may use to pay for travel and fees for conferences and workshops, dues for professional associations, purchases of books, software, other research supplies or equipment, etc. Students can see the Department Administrator (Lisa Giron) to check their balance and access these funds. Note that some of these funds are allocated on a yearly basis, but students can request permission from their advisor or the DGS to access some future funds in advance (e.g., if a student wants to spend some of their third-year funds for a conference in their second year). Also note that non-computer purchases of \$500 or greater are university property and will need to be returned upon leaving the university. Laptops and electronics purchased with these funds that are less than three years old must either be returned or purchased by the student for their estimated value.

A core part of the graduate student experience is students presenting their work and engaging with scholars at academic conferences. Below is a summary of the travel policy for the department.

Support for travel may cover some or all of the following travel-related expenses: hotels or other lodging arrangements, airline flights to and from the destination, mileage for gas to and from the destination, parking, public transit tickets, and/or taxis. In the event of a conference or course, travel funding may also cover the costs of registration or attendance. In some instances, per diem travel support may be available to cover the costs of meals.

There are multiple avenues by which students may obtain funding for travel. It is important to note that students must identify a funding source and what it will cover prior to making travel arrangements to receive support from the department.

- *Student Departmental Travel and Research Fund*. Students may use their aforementioned research accounts to support travel to conferences and workshops.
- *Sociology Department Conference Travel Grants*. The department is allocated limited funds to support conference travel grants. These are competitive and require an application with support from the student's advisor. Grants will typically be limited to students who are presenting their research at conferences. Students must apply at least 30 days prior to travel. Contact the DGS or the Program Administrator for more details.
- *Advisor Provided Travel Support*. Students should discuss with their academic advisor whether travel support is available for each travel event. If a student's advisor had agreed to

provide travel support for a particular trip, the student should then discuss with their advisor the amount of funding that will be provided for the trip (e.g., a lump sum) and/or what expenses will and will not be covered. Prior to making travel plans, the student should email the Program Administrator to notify them that the student's advisor will be funding their travel expenses. The student's advisor should be copied (CCed) on this email.

- *Student Grants.* Students who have been awarded other grants may use their own grant accounts without departmental approval. Students should notify the Program Administrator of the funding source when turning in receipts for reimbursement or assistance in ensuring that the receipts are returned to the foundation or agency in the case of an external grant.
- *Non-Departmental Funding.* For any other funding sources, please follow the appropriate procedures for using funding and obtaining reimbursement. The Program Administrator is not involved with travel funding procedures when funds are provided from outside the department.

## Internal and External Funding

We encourage students to explore additional funding options through grants, awards, and fellowships. Applying for these opportunities builds grant-writing skills and exposes students to foundations, agencies, and organizations that might support their research. Students awarded these opportunities gain support for research or living expenses and recognition that bolsters their academic record. Students can also use these awards to supplement or extend their five years of departmental funding; note that many students require a sixth year or more to complete their Ph.D.

Grants typically provide funds for research-related expenses, including conference travel. Fellowships often carry prestige and provide training, networking, and mentoring opportunities in addition stipends to support living expenses. The University typically covers tuition support for students who receive competitive external fellowships. *When students win awards that cover significant portions of their stipend, the department will credit the student's unused departmental funding for use beyond their fifth year in the program.*

The Sociology department provides assistance in identifying and applying for external funding. You can start by discussing potential opportunities with the Director or Associate Director of Graduate Studies and your advisor(s). Additional resources are available throughout the university.

- The [School of Social Sciences Research Institute](#) (SSRI) provides assistance in finding opportunities and preparing applications and budgets for [various funding opportunities](#).
- The University's [Office of Proposal Development](#) has information about external funding opportunities and resources to assist in writing applications and proposals.
- Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies keeps a [searchable database for fellowships](#).
- [Fondren Library](#) provides information on a range of fellowship, grant, and internship opportunities.

## Alternative Funding Opportunities

Students can perform additional tasks for hourly pay outside the standard departmental funding framework. The departmental funding structure requires students to work 15-20 hours per week on

research or teaching tasks for their advisor(s). This leaves some time in which students can work at an hourly pay rate on other tasks, which might include research assistance for faculty or tasks related to some other departmental need.

When classes are in session during the academic year, students can work up to a total of 20 hours per week. Thus, if a student is only working 15 hours per week for their advisor, they can work an additional 5 hours per week for an hourly pay rate on other tasks.

When classes are not in session (e.g., summer), students can work up to 40 total hours per week. Students on departmental funding remain expected to work on research for 15-20 hours per week, but they can work additional hours (up to the 40 total) for hourly pay on other tasks.

Note that these opportunities depend on faculty or program needs and are not regularly available. The best way to find out about these opportunities is to read your email, ask your advisor, the DGS, or other faculty.

### Emergency Funding

The department has limited benevolence funds available for students with emergency financial needs; please contact the DGS to inquire about these funds. The university also provides some [low-interest loans for emergency assistance](#).

## GUIDELINES

Please check the [GPS office website](#) and [General Announcements](#) for the most recent regulations and policies. The GPS office may have current guidelines that take precedence over this handbook. We highlight a few important policies here and add department-specific information.

### Dismissal

The two most common grounds for dismissal of a graduate student are (1) inadequate academic progress or (2) a disciplinary violation resulting in a Rice University sanction.

### University Grade Requirements

Graduate students are placed on *academic probationary status* by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies if their overall grade point average falls below 2.67, their semester grade point average falls below 2.33, or they receive an unsatisfactory grade in a research credit course. The period of probation extends to the end of the next semester in which the student is enrolled. If that probationary semester results in an overall grade point average below 2.67 or a semester grade point average below 2.33, the student may be dismissed without further warning. Graduate students with a cumulative or overall grade point average below 2.00 may be dismissed by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies without a probationary period. Additionally, students with two unsatisfactory grades in research during their graduate student tenure at Rice may also be dismissed by the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies without further warning. As a courtesy, students

will be notified of their probationary status once final grades have been received and posted to their records. S/U grades cannot be used to end probationary status for low overall grade point average.

### Program Requirements

Graduate programs must provide students with detailed requirements, deadlines, and other program policies upon entry to the program. This handbook, and the Sociology program requirements in the [General Announcements](#), serve this purpose. Students are responsible for meeting program and university requirements. A student failing to meet departmental or university requirements, such as failing to meet grade requirements, failing to pass required examinations by the required time, or failing to advance to candidacy or defend their thesis within the required time, is subject to dismissal without further warning.

### Adequate Academic Progress

When a student is judged not to be making adequate academic progress (apart from the requirements stipulated above), they must be warned in writing of the possibility of dismissal and given clear information about what must be done within a specified time period to alleviate the problem. These expectations must be reasonable and consistent with expectations held for all students similarly situated in the program. If the student does not meet the stated requirements within the time frame specified, they will be dismissed by the graduate program.

*In our department, these warnings will likely occur through annual student reviews or the Mid Program Evaluation.* When considering adequate academic progress, the Sociology department focuses on students' pace and quality of independent research, as well as their performance as a research assistant and teaching assistant. Failure to make adequate academic progress indicates that a student is not performing at a level at which they can meet departmental work expectations or complete a satisfactory master's thesis or dissertation. The Graduate Program Committee makes these decisions based on feedback from students' advisors, supervisors, and instructors.

### Notice of Dismissal

Dismissal of a graduate student requires that the student be notified of their dismissal from the graduate program. Such a notice is distinct from any earlier warning, which lets the student know of the possibility of dismissal. All dismissal notices and warnings of possible dismissal must be in writing, with a copy sent to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Email communication is considered to be "in writing." (Academic units should archive copies of all email communications pertaining to student dismissal.)

Because of the serious consequences of dismissal from a graduate program, dismissed students must receive a 15-day notice of the dismissal. Such notice may precede the trigger for the dismissal. For example, a program can notify a student 15 days before an examination that failure to pass the examination with a certain minimum grade would result in dismissal. In general, dismissal should not take effect during a semester in which the student is enrolled. Dismissals that take effect during a semester are exceptional and must be approved by the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. A dismissal will be held in abeyance until the petition and appeal process is concluded, as students may petition for a dismissal to be revoked as described below.

## Termination of Financial Support

Graduate students often receive financial support in the form of a graduate stipend and tuition waivers. The termination of financial support to a graduate student, while not equivalent to dismissal, is a serious action that could deprive students of their financial ability to continue graduate studies. Consequently, the procedure to terminate a student's financial support before the end of the financial-support commitment period should be analogous to those for dismissal as described above.

Active participation in required academic activities (for example, laboratory work in certain science and engineering programs) is a basic condition for continued financial support. Students who are absent from such required activities for contiguous two weeks without permission and without mitigating circumstances may be subject to termination of financial support. In addition, they may be judged to be not making adequate academic progress. Thus, if absences have to occur, they must be pre-arranged with the student's supervisor, except for medical and family emergencies, in which cases timely notification is required. Graduate advisors and programs should be aware of unexplained student absences. They must immediately provide written warnings when students are not present and carrying out required academic activities for more than one week.

When the source of a graduate stipend is an externally sponsored research grant, the principal investigator is responsible for certifying that compensation paid to those who are supported by the grant faithfully corresponds to actual effort in carrying out the sponsored research. This process is referred to as "effort certification." The requirements above to give students warnings and notices before dismissal or termination of stipend are separate and independent of the effort-certification requirement. If a principal investigator determines that a graduate student is not contributing to the sponsored project that is the source of the student's stipend, then the charge for the affected pay period must be reallocated to another fund by the program.

## Petitions and Appeals

The General Announcements provide current details of all [Dispute Resolution processes](#). Before making a petition, thoroughly read those policies; they explain who to petition or appeal to, timelines, etc. Here we provide a brief overview and department-specific information.

Graduate students may petition for exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments. A course requirement is an example of an academic requirement. Allowed time to degree is an example of an academic regulation. Course grades and dismissals from programs are examples of academic judgments. Such petitions should be viewed as unusual rather than typical. Extensions of various time limits, such as time to candidacy or time to defense, will not be granted routinely. Students requesting such extensions have to document the unusual circumstances justifying their request, demonstrate their academic progress towards the goal, and provide a concrete plan for meeting the goal within the requested extension.

In general, petitions will be handled at the lowest appropriate level. A petition regarding our department's requirements, regulations, or judgments will be handled by our program. Those petitions should be made in writing to the department's Director of Graduate Studies. A

petition/appeal should indicate the requirement, regulation, or judgment on the subject of the petition/appeal, the specific exception requested, and the grounds for the request. An appeal must indicate why the decision involving the earlier petition was incorrectly decided.

Petitions regarding academic decisions must be submitted in writing within 15 days from the time that the student knew or should reasonably have known of the decision being petitioned or within 15 days after an informal effort to resolve the situation has not been successful. Petitions seeking exceptions to academic requirements or regulations should be submitted in writing at least 30 days before the requirement or regulation takes effect. A student (or other parties affected by the decision) is allowed only one level of appeal from a decision regarding a petition. An appeal must be submitted within 15 days from receipt of the decision that is being appealed.

A petition by a student will be handled by a committee consisting of at least three faculty members. The committee must be independent of the cause for the petition. (The department chair or dean may appoint ad-hoc members to the committee to ensure the committee's independence.) Members of a student's thesis committee must not participate in handling a petition by the student. In general, the Graduate Program Committee serves this role in our department. When that presents a conflict, the Department Chair will appoint an ad hoc committee.

The committee will investigate the circumstances and reach a decision regarding the petition. Their written report to the graduate director and the chair (or dean) will describe the circumstances, the decision, and the rationale for the decision. The graduate director or chair (or dean) will convey the final decision to the student and include the committee report.

## Grievances

Grievances are different from petitions and appeals. A grievance is a complaint regarding inappropriate conduct by other students, faculty members, or staff. Inappropriate conduct encompasses inappropriate personal conduct, such as sexual harassment, and inappropriate official conduct, such as violation of University policies. Specific policies exist to address grievances based on discrimination or sexual harassment (more details below), and these policies must be followed in situations involving these issues. Note that all Rice employees are legally required to report behavior that violates Rice's policies against discrimination and harassment to the Office of AEEO, the SAFE Office, Deputy Title IX Coordinators, or other authorities on campus.

Grievances against another student may be raised with the Assistant Dean of Student Judicial Programs and addressed under the [Code of Student Conduct](#). In other cases, a student may present a grievance in writing at the lowest appropriate level, typically the department or school. If a satisfactory resolution is not obtained at that level, the student may appeal the outcome by presenting the problem at the next administrative level, such as the School, Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Provost, or President. Grievances against non-faculty staff members may also be brought to the Employee Relations Director in Rice's [Human Resources office](#).

The procedures for handling grievances are analogous to those for handling petitions and appeals. Students submitting grievances must so indicate in their submissions.

## Problem Resolution

During the course of graduate studies, problems that do not fall under the category of grievances described above may arise in the relationship between a graduate student and their program or their advisor. Students should attempt to resolve such problems by informing the appropriate faculty members and working together to resolve the problem. When attempts to resolve the problem informally are unsuccessful, the following problem resolution procedure will be used:

1. The student will submit the problem in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies, who will then attempt to resolve it.
2. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem will be presented to a program committee for resolution. This committee will be a standing committee and not the student's own thesis/dissertation committee. Both the student and the program chair will submit a written record of their views to this committee.
3. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem will be referred to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. A written report of proceedings at stage 2 will be presented to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, along with all other written materials generated during the investigation. The dean may, at personal discretion, handle these in a similar manner by enlisting the assistance of a subcommittee of the Graduate Council, which will submit its report to the chair of the Council and to the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The decision of the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is final.

The time frame for handling problem resolution is similar to that for handling petitions, appeals, and grievances. Students may seek guidance on any of these procedures through discussions with the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

## Title IX Policy Governing Experiences of Discrimination

All current Rice policies can be found at <https://policy.rice.edu>. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <https://sjp.rice.edu/code-of-student-conduct>.

[Policy 828](#) pertains to sexual misconduct. [Policy 829](#) pertains to consensual sexual or romantic relationships in the educational or workplace environment. You can find more information and reporting forms here: <https://aeo.rice.edu/sexual-misconducttitle-ix>.

[Policy 830](#) pertains to discrimination and harassment, and [Policy 830A](#) pertains to processes for investigating accusations of discrimination or harassment

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment, or gender discrimination to seek support. There are many options available on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university.

When seeking support on campus, students should be aware that Title IX requires most employees to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice

will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support: (713) 348-3311.