

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

**Fall 2026**

**[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 Ph.D. 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, Ph.D. 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 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY CONTACT INFORMATION

Program Administrator  
Gina Stayshich  
713-348-3286  
Email: [gina.stayshich@rice.edu](mailto:gina.stayshich@rice.edu)

Director of Graduate Studies  
Jeremy Fiel  
713-348-7432  
Email: [jeremy.fiel@rice.edu](mailto:jeremy.fiel@rice.edu)

Department Administrator  
Carrie Hodgeson  
713-348-4225  
Email: [carrie.hodgeson@rice.edu](mailto:carrie.hodgeson@rice.edu)

Department Chair  
Jenifer Bratter  
713-348-4254  
Email: [jbratter@rice.edu](mailto:jbratter@rice.edu)

# 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.

Our department maintains a [shared Box folder](#) with resources and information that will be useful at various times in the program, including [guides for specific milestones](#) and a [NotebookLM helper tool](#) that can help answer questions. Make sure you have access.

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), Christina Diaz, Jim Elliott, Kevin Thomas, and Miranda Waggoner.

## The Director of Graduate Studies

The Director of Graduate Studies is 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.

## First-Year Advising

Upon entering the program, each student is assigned a **provisional advisor**. This advisor is intended to be a general source of mentorship and support and may not be an expert in the student's areas of research. The provisional advisor should support the student through the first semester as they get acclimated to the department. We hope this provisional advisor can remain a source of support over the long term. Each student should meet regularly (monthly or as needed) with their provisional advisor during the first semester, which they should spend focusing on coursework, exploring their research interests, attending working group or research team meetings, and meeting with faculty in the department. *Students are not expected to work for faculty in the first semester.*

By the end of the first semester, each student should identify a **primary advisor** who agrees to advise them going forward, beginning in their second semester. To make this official, students

should complete the **Advisor Change Form**, which the Program Administrator can provide, and which must be signed by the advisor and the DGS. The primary advisor's role is to provide guidance on the student's research and overall progress in the program. Beginning in the Spring semester of the first year, the student will work under their primary advisor's supervision on research tasks for 15-20 hours a week. If the student selects multiple primary advisors, the student should consult with the advisors to determine how research hours should be split. We discuss advising and students' research and teaching responsibilities 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 keep up with which forms must be filed with which office to ensure that students remain in good standing. They 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 Ph.D., and our staff are ready to assist. However, students should be proactive and seek them out with questions. *Students are ultimately responsible for following these procedures and should be familiar with all paperwork needed to advance their degree progress.*

## Sociology Graduate Student Association

The Sociology Graduate Student Association (SOCI-GSA) is an officially recognized student organization. The SOCI-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 SOCI-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 SOCI-GSA's mission, purpose, etc., please refer to the SOCI 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.

### TENURED AND TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

*All faculty in this tenured and tenure-track section meet University requirements to serve as thesis or dissertation committee members.*

**COREY ABRAMSON**, [Professor](#). Abramson's research traces how inequality, health, and culture converge to shape American life—through urban and clinical ethnography, survey analyses, interviews with people who are terminally ill, and computational analyses of health narratives. He is author of [The End Game: How Inequality Shapes Our Final Years](#) (Harvard, award-winning) and co-editor of [Beyond the Case: The Logics and Practices of Comparative Ethnography](#) (Oxford, with Neil Gong). Abramson's NIH-funded collaborations integrate team-based ethnography and computational analyses to scale insights with students in the Computational Ethnography Lab Group; related works appear in *Sociological Methodology*, *Health Affairs*, *Ethnography*, and the *Russell Sage Foundation Journal*. Abramson's work informs policy and science worldwide, reflected in invited presentations at the National Academies of Medicine, Sciences, and Social Insurance, and advisory service to the ERC-funded GENDHI project. Abramson earned his Ph.D. in sociology at UC Berkeley and held tenure at the University of Arizona before joining Rice.

**JENIFER L BRATTER**, Professor and Department Chair. 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**, Distinguished 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 mental health. He is the Founding Director of the Racism and Racial Experiences (RARE) Workgroup and the Statistical Training and Research Techniques at Rice University (STaRT@Rice) program. He also serves as Deputy Director of the Institute of Health Resilience and Innovation (IHRI).

**BRIELLE BRYAN**, Assistant Professor. Bryan received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University, her M.P.P. from Georgetown University, and her Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Policy from Harvard University. Dr. Bryan's research examines inequality in the United States, with a primary focus on the collateral consequences of criminal justice system contact and secondary focus on housing instability and wealth inequality. Some of her current and upcoming projects include a nationwide experimental study of housing discrimination against individuals with felony convictions, a study of multi-decade income patterns among formerly incarcerated men, analysis of the implications of children's incarceration for maternal employment, and projects using linked credit report data and administrative data on incarceration and safety net program participation. Before receiving her Ph.D., Bryan worked at the Urban Institute, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Foundation Center.

**SERGIO CHÁVEZ**, Associate Professor. After Chávez graduated from Hartnell Community College, he received his B.A. and M.S. from UC Davis and his Ph.D. from Cornell. He then completed a postdoctoral fellowship at UNC Chapel Hill. Chávez makes theoretical and methodological contributions to areas that scholars have previously studied to death.

**CHRISTINA DIAZ**, Associate Professor. Diaz earned her Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research and teaching interests revolve around social stratification, immigration, and family demography. Many of Diaz's projects examine the health and well-being of immigrant families living in the U.S. In her most recent work, Diaz explores gendered and ethnic inequalities among immigrant farmworkers. Diaz is motivated by academic boredom and enjoys asking different questions that are motivated by social theory. In 2024, she received the Sarah Burnett Teaching Prize in the Social Sciences at Rice University.

**ELAINE HOWARD ECKLUND**, Professor. Ecklund received a Ph.D. from Cornell University. She is Herbert S. Autrey Chair in Social Sciences. Ecklund currently directs the Rice University Boniuk Institute for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance. As a sociologist of religion, Ecklund's work examines how individuals' religious identities bring changes to institutions like science, workplaces, and religious organizations themselves. Ecklund's most recent academic book is *Religion in a Changing Workplace* (OUP, 2024). Ecklund received the Rice University Charles O. Duncan Award for outstanding research and teaching achievement in 2013, gave Scotland's Gifford Lecture on Science and Religion in 2018, received Rice's Presidential Mentoring Award in 2023, and in 2026 received the Excellence in University Service and Leadership award. 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, President of the Religious Research Association, and Chair of the ASA's Sociology of Religion Section and co-Chair of the American Academy of Religion's Sociology of Religion Unit. And she completed nine years as Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Sociology at Rice University.

**JAMES R. ELLIOTT**, Professor. Elliott received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and trained as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of North Carolina Population Center. He is the David W. Leebron Chair in Social Sciences and Founding Co-Director of Rice's Center for Coastal Futures and Adaptive Resilience (CFAR). His current research focuses on the pressing intersections of rising social inequality and environmental hazards, particularly those related to climate change and related policy interventions. He serves on the editorial boards of the *American*

*Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review* in addition to serving on the National Academies' Committee on Population. He is a former advisor to the National Science Foundation's Program in Sociology and co-editor of *Sociological Perspectives*.

SHANI EVANS, Assistant Professor. Evans uses qualitative research methods to study race and racism, space and place, culture and inequality, and urban change. [\*We Belong Here: Gentrification, White Spacemaking and a Black Sense of Place\*](#) was published by University of Chicago Press in 2025. Her [research](#) has appeared in *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, *City & Community*, *The Sociological Quarterly*, *Sociology of Education*, and *Urban Education*. Evans received a Ph.D. in Sociology and Education and an M.S.Ed. in Education Policy from the University of Pennsylvania, and a B.A. in Anthropology from Amherst College.

JOSEPH EWOODZIE, Associate Professor. [Ewoodzie](#) uses qualitative methods to examine how marginalized populations in urban locales make sense of inequalities in their everyday lives. His work investigates how they interpret their social selves and order their relationships; how they create, maintain, and transform social and symbolic boundaries; and how boundaries constrain and enable their lives. Ewoodzie's first book, *Break Beats in the Bronx: Revisiting Hip Hop's Early Years* (2017, University of North Carolina Press), combines historical methods with sociological theorizing about symbolic boundaries to provide an account of the making of hip hop. With the help of previously unused archival material, he sheds light on a crucial period (1975-1979) consistently ignored in the historical literature. In his recent book, *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in The American South*, Ewoodzie provides a vivid portrait of African American life in today's urban South that uses food to explore the complex interactions of race and class. He received a bachelor's degree from Ithaca College and his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

JEREMY FIEL, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies. [Fiel](#) received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin Madison. His [research](#) uses quantitative methods to examine processes that shape segregation and inequality, usually with respect to race or class, and most often in the context of education.

BRIDGET GORMAN, Trustee Professor, Dean of Undergraduates, and Vice Provost for Student Life. 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. 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.

ELIZABETH HORDGE-FREEMAN, Associate Professor and Associate Department Chair. Hordge-Freeman earned her B.A. from Cornell University, M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from Duke University, and was a Fulbright postdoctoral fellow at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil. As a qualitative researcher, she examines how global white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and gender

hierarchies are negotiated in the context of the family. Her work centers emotions to explore racial socialization, colorism, labor exploitation and trafficking, with a focus on Black Diasporic communities in the U.S. and Latin America. Hordge-Freeman is the author of two multiple award-winning books, *The Color of Love* (UT Press) and *Second-Class Daughters* (Cambridge University Press). In addition to publishing two co-edited books on racism in Latin America and qualitative research, her work appears in the *Journal for the Study of Race & Ethnicity*, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, and *Qualitative Research*, among others. She is also co-creator of the Imagine Blackness Project and Exhibition which leverages the intersection of art, technology, and Afro-futurism to catalyze meaningful conversations around racial resistance and liberation.

**JALEH JALILI**, Assistant Professor. Jalili received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Brandeis University. Her research interests include urban sociology, social movements, space and place, cultural sociology, gender, and inequality. In her forthcoming book, *Tehran's Borderlines: Urban Development and Public Life in Contemporary Iran* (Cambridge University Press), Jalili explores how public spaces mediate social relations in rapidly changing urban environments and examines the social, political, and cultural meanings of space. She is currently working on two other projects that engage with different sociological aspects of space and place. One is a qualitative study of Black Lives Matter protests in Portland, Oregon, and the other is a collaborative project on redlining and the built environment in the U.S. Her published articles appear in *Social Problems*, *Sociological Perspectives*, *Sociology Compass*, *The Middle East Journal*, *Frontiers*, and as book chapters in edited volumes.

**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**, Associate Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies. 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 and founding Co-Director of the [Center for Computational Insights on Inequality and Society](#). Roberto received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Yale University and was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Sociology at Princeton University. Her research examines the complex relationship between the social and built environment of cities, with a substantive focus on spatial inequality and methodological expertise

in computational social science and quantitative methods. She works with students through her [Spatial Inequality Lab](#) to develop theoretically grounded methods and apply them to answer fundamental questions about how segregation and inequality are spatially organized, physically embedded in the built environment, and produced across multiple geographic scales. She is also a faculty Co-Director of the department's Spatial Processes and City Environments (SPACE) working group. Her work appears in journals including *Social Forces*, *Sociological Methodology*, and *Sociological Methods & Research*. Her research is supported by a CAREER Award from the National Science Foundation and has previously received support from the American Sociological Association, the National Academies, the Swedish Research Council, and the James S. McDonnell Foundation.

MICHELLE SMIRNOVA, Associate Professor, inaugural Director of the Center for Neighborhoods and Housing at the [Kinder Institute for Urban Research](#). Dr. Smirnova earned her B.A. from Washington University in St. Louis, M.A. and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Maryland, College Park. Her first book, [The Prescription-to-Prison Pipeline](#) (Duke, 2023), provides an often-overlooked perspective on the "opioid epidemic," from those who have been criminalized for their use. Dr. Smirnova's second book, *Tenant Power: How to Grow a Housing Justice Movement* (under contract with Princeton University Press), examines how tenant unions play a pivotal role in shaping housing policy and society in more equitable ways. Across each of these projects, she seeks to learn from and build power with those who have had their knowledge discredited or silenced by systems of power.

KEVIN J.A. THOMAS, Distinguished Professor, Director of Demography at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research. He obtained his Ph.D. in Demography at the University of Pennsylvania. His research focuses on international migration, global health, racial and ethnic inequality, children and families, as well as development and social change in Africa. His current research projects examine the outcomes of the children of STEM graduates, children in adoptive families, foreign-born graduates in the STEM workforce, trends in legal immigrant admissions to the United States, and the implications of race-ethnic minority status for the social incorporation of Black immigrants. Dr. Thomas has received several awards including the Andrew Carnegie Fellowship, the Ray Lombra Award for Distinction in the Social Sciences of the Pennsylvania State University, and the Outstanding Book Award of the American Sociological Association's Peace, War, and Social Conflict section. Dr Thomas is the author of four books - *Diverse Pathways: Race and the Socioeconomic Incorporation of Black, White, and Arab-origin Africans in the US* (Michigan State University Press); *Contract Workers, Risk, and the War in Iraq: Sierra Leonean Labor Migrants at US military bases* (McGill-Queen's University Press); *Global Epidemics, Local Implications: African Immigrants and the Ebola crisis in Dallas* (Johns Hopkins University Press); and *Life After Epidemics: Ebola Survivors and the Social Dimensions of Recovery* (In press, Johns Hopkins University Press).

RUTH N. 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 ten 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](#) (NNERPP), which connects and supports 78 partnerships between research institutions and education agencies throughout the country. In 2022, President Biden appointed her to the [National Board for Education Sciences](#), which advises and approves priorities for the research arm of the US Department of Education. She is a graduate of Stanford and Harvard and is originally from Laredo, Texas.

**MIRANDA R. WAGGONER**, Associate Professor. Dr. Waggoner earned her Ph.D. 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*.

#### TEACHING, RESEARCH, AND AFFILIATED FACULTY

*\*In this section, faculty who are marked with asterisks meet University requirements to serve as thesis or dissertation committee members.*

**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.

**TODD W. FERGUSON**, Assistant Teaching Professor, Director of Social Sciences Quantitative Methods Program, and Director of Religion and Public Life Center. Ferguson received his Ph.D. in Sociology and B.A. in Psychology from Baylor University, and his M.Div. from Duke University. As the Director of the Social Sciences Quantitative Methods Program, he coordinates the curriculum and labs with graduate student instructors for SOSC 302 and SOCI 102 (Social Statistics and its lab). Ferguson is a sociologist of religion, and his research focuses on congregations and their clergy. His recent work has been published in *Social Forces*, *Sociology of Religion*, and the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. In his book *STUCK: Why Clergy Are Alienated from their Calling, Congregation, and Career* (Fortress Press, 2022), he analyzed in-depth interviews to explore the structural and organizational issues leading to clergy feeling that the congregation was no longer the place to fulfill their calling. Most recently, he was the Texas team leader for “EPIC” (Exploring the Pandemic’s Impact on Congregations), a mixed-methods national project looking at how COVID changed religious congregations.

**KERBY GOFF\***, Research Assistant Professor, and Associate Director of Research of the Boniuk Institute for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance. Goff received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Penn State University, and he also has an M.A. in Intercultural Studies from Fuller

Theological Seminary and a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Texas A&M. Goff is a mixed methods sociologist whose research spans sociology of religion, social movements, race and gender, and culture and morality. Goff's work explores how moral frameworks shape interactions with primary social institutions—religion, the state, education, and work—and how such frameworks shape our attempts to change them. In this work, Goff has examined historical and contemporary social movements for gender and racial equality, the cultural and moral sources of fit with educational and workplace settings, the causes and consequences of religious bias and hostility, the moral and religious contexts of nationalism and patriotism, and the conditions which facilitate inter-religious cooperation and leadership. Goff's work sheds light on how people navigate difference and negotiate solidarity. His research has been published in *Sociology of Education*, *Criminology*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Social Science Research*, and other journals, and he has written on the 2020 racial justice protests for *The Washington Post*. Goff is also chair-elect for the Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity section of the American Sociological Association and is co-host for the section's podcast, *Moral Matters: Conversations with Sociologists about Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity*.

**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.

**KAVYA PADMANABHAN**, Lecturer of Sociology. Padmanabhan received her B.A. from Wesleyan University, M.A. from Columbia University, M.Sc. from the London School of Economics, and Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge. Her research takes an interdisciplinary approach to interrogating marginalized women's experiences with systems of punishment and welfare and explores the efficacy of gender-responsive, community-based models of care. Her work is based upon the principles of abolition feminism and is informed by intersectional and queer theory.

#### EMERITUS MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT

**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 M.A. from the University of Paris and a Ph.D. from Harvard.

**ELIZABETH LONG**, Professor Emerita 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.

## 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 have 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 and programming courses, and Research Design). If you have taken similar courses elsewhere and wish for one or more of these requirements to be waived, you should submit a request to the DGS for review by the Graduate Committee, preferably before the beginning of the first semester of study. It should include 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 Ph.D.?* 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. If the DGS decides the thesis meets standards for further review, the DGS will work with you to identify a committee of three faculty reviewers with expertise in the subject matter, one of whom will chair

the committee, to evaluate it. That review committee will determine when the thesis is suitable for a mandatory but informal defense (comparable to our normal master's thesis defense). After the defense, the review committee will decide whether to accept the thesis as is, require revisions, or reject the thesis and require you to complete another thesis. The DGS will determine final approval in consultation with the Graduate Committee. Approval would meet the master's thesis requirement for the Ph.D. program, although you would not earn an M.A. from Rice University.

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](#), 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](#). Leaves often entail disruptions to students' work and pay, whereas Away status does not. We provide more details regarding Away status here.

[GPS defines Away status](#) as follows: *This designation is used for students that participate in a course of study hosted at another institution, such as a Rice-sanctioned Study Abroad program, or an approved Inter-Institutional agreement. Graduate students pursuing their studies outside of the Houston area must be registered and pay tuition but are not required to pay fees, with the exception of students in Humanities. Away status is considered being outside of the Houston area for more than 51% of a given semester.*

**Students requesting Away status must do so through our department, with their advisor's knowledge, and with DGS approval.** Our Department informs the University of students who have Away status each semester. **Students should make these requests using the following procedure.** We will not approve Away status for students who do not follow this procedure.

1. Discuss your plans to be away with your advisor so that you are both on the same page regarding work expectations and availability. You should be clear with your advisor about when you will be away, where you will be, and for how long. You should both consider any difficulties this might cause and plan for ways to resolve them.
2. Email the DGS to request Away status. Let the DGS know that your advisor is aware of your plans. Let the DGS know when you plan to be away, where you will be, and for how long. The DGS needs to make sure this does not disrupt other programmatic requirements. You should only expect to be approved for Away status for semesters in which you will not be in the Houston area for the majority of that semester. The DGS will decide whether to approve the request.
3. You email the Program Administrator (Gina) and copy the DGS indicating that you have requested Away status and that your request has been approved.

Note that our department must confirm which students are and are not in residence each semester and report this to GPS. Our Program Administrator or Department Administrator will circulate surveys periodically to collect that information from students. You should always respond to this information. However, **you only need to follow the procedure above to seek new approval for Away status when you are seeking to change your status for semesters for which Away status has not already been approved.** When you return to the Houston area and are in residence, you should inform our Program Administrator.

## Residency

Being physically present in the program is an important part of participating successfully. Therefore, the Sociology 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 passing 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 interested 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. Students who do not complete an Insurance Enrollment or Waiver form will be auto-enrolled in insurance. If you already have health insurance and want to waive the Rice Plan, complete the Insurance Waiver form indicating that other coverage is in place. If you are leaving Rice at the beginning of a semester and need assistance identifying insurance options, please contact [studenthealthinsurance@rice.edu](mailto:studenthealthinsurance@rice.edu) to learn about your options. 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 Ph.D. students: <https://graduate.rice.edu/health-subsidy>
- Payroll Deduction for Health Insurance: <https://studenthealthinsurance.rice.edu/about/payment-plan>

## Stipends

Stipends are the most common form of financial compensation for graduate students. Currently, Sociology Graduate stipends are distributed on a 12-month basis and distributed bi-weekly through Rice Payroll. 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.

Rice [Policy 502](#) (recently updated) explains graduate student appointments. The Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies provides detailed information on [graduate student pay](#).

Be attentive to announcements about changes in these policies. For specific questions about your stipend not answered here, please contact your Department Administrator (Carrie Hodgeson).

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/#requirements-text>
- Information on admission to our program is at: <https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/social-sciences/sociology/sociology-phd/#policies-text>.

Our [Rice Soc Grad Resources](#) Box Folder also provides details on major departmental milestones. See the [Program Guides and Timeline](#) folder and the [NotebookLM helper tool](#).

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 M.A. 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 M.A. degree. Students generally take one comprehensive exam (discussed below) soon after completing the M.A. 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 departmental 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 students' independent research projects or the dissertation or master's thesis. It is strongly suggested that students write regular short, 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 semester (see First-Year Advising), after which they select a long-term primary advisor. Students must submit an **Advisor Change form**, available from the Program Administrator, to finalize this selection. Students should consult with the DGS if they would like to change advisors, and they will need to submit an Advisor Change form for approval. These changes will typically only occur at the conclusion of each semester. Students can consult about advising changes with the 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 ways to do so that do not require a faculty member to become one's advisor. 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 about these arrangements.

## Student Assessment and Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the program. This includes an Annual Review at the end of each academic year. Students must submit a *personal evaluation form* (the template will be provided by the Program Administrator) and an *updated curriculum vitae* to the Program Administrator. The Program Administrator will share these materials with the student's advisor(s), who will then write a short evaluation of the student to be reviewed by the DGS. The DGS will then 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. In cases where this review indicates that a student is struggling to meet departmental expectations, the Graduate Program Committee may conduct a thorough review of the students' progress; if they deem that the student is making inadequate progress, the DGS will provide a formal notification with guidance on necessary improvements (more details below).

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 M.A., which is a thesis master's degree.

For general university requirements regarding the M.A. 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 M.A. 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; 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.*

Additionally, students entering the Sociology Ph.D. program in Fall 2024 or later must pass at least four total graduate-level Sociology elective courses to qualify for Ph.D. Candidacy; independent study and research hours do not count toward this requirement.

### 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 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 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, interact with colleagues within and beyond the department, and learn the craft of delivering and critiquing research talks.

*First-year and second-year students are required to attend these talks as part of their professionalization. All students are strongly encouraged and expected to be present, and they may be required to attend by their advisors.*

### 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 (often 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. The second TAsip, which generally occurs after the M.A. thesis is completed, 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 TAsip will provide an

evaluation of performance to the Graduate Committee.

TAs usually assist faculty who are 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 or several months before their appointment begins. 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 earning the M.A. degree, acting as a TA twice, taking the required teaching courses, and passing comprehensive exams, 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 DGS and 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 depends 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 M.A. degree are provided in the [General Announcements](#), which elsewhere provide requirements specific to the M.A. degree. We highlight a few details here. More details are available in our [Program Guides](#).

In addition to required course work for the M.A. 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 M.A. thesis is not successfully defended by that time, a student will exit the program without an M.A.

### Master's Degree Candidacy

The attainment of M.A. candidacy marks the completion of all requirements for the M.A. 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 M.A. candidacy in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (GPS) by the end of October for January degree conferral and by the end of February for May degree 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](#).

Several months in advance of completing their master's thesis, students should contact the Sociology Department's Program Administrator with any questions they have about completing and submitting candidacy paperwork.

### Master's Thesis Committee

When candidacy is approved, a thesis committee is officially appointed. In practice, students should begin to invite faculty to their committee, with input from their advisors, 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/>.

*Informal Proposal Defense:* we strongly recommend that students write a master's thesis proposal and hold an informal defense of that proposal with their committee before their second year in the program. This allows the student to get valuable advice and anticipate potential challenges to the project before undertaking most of the work. Some advisors will require this.

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 (usually the student's advisor), must be members of the Sociology department. At least three members of the committee must each 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 (e.g., a fourth member), who may or may not meet the above criteria, may be selected with the approval of the Department Chair. We recommend that students include three tenured or tenure-track Rice Sociology faculty on their master's thesis committee (see "The Faculty" section to identify faculty who meet these criteria).

## 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 one calendar week 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, but it is customarily scheduled for two hours. Additionally, the committee often arranges to meet briefly (15-30 minutes) without the student prior to the defense. The student should schedule the defense after consultation with the thesis advisor, who agrees that the thesis is completed and ready to be defended.

*University policy requires all members of the master's thesis committee to be present for the oral defense, or it cannot proceed.* Virtual attendance is permitted, but in-person attendance is preferred. Any members not in attendance must be removed from the committee by filing updated paperwork and getting approval from the DGS and GPS. The remaining committee must still meet the university's requirements.

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 M.A. thesis is successfully defended, completing the M.A. 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 at most six months from the date of their defense to submit their thesis. Students aiming to qualify for a particular degree conferral date may need to submit sooner to meet that deadline (see [GPS guidelines](#)). Students may need to revise 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 M.A. 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 Theory and Contemporary Theory, Research Design, Quantitative Data Analysis I and II, Statistical Programming, and Qualitative Methods. The Mid Program Evaluation will consider discrete grades in each class and evidence of scholarly development across the courses and over time based on evaluations from instructors and faculty advisor(s). It also considers evaluations of departmental elective courses taken to that point in the program.
- **Research and Teaching Assistance.** Students will also be evaluated in their performance 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 to the above components. 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, additional review required.** 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 in the following year.

- **Exit the program with an M.A.** 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 M.A.
- **Exit the program without an M.A.** 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 M.A. 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. Further details are available in our [Program Guides and Timeline](#) folder.

Several steps follow the M.A. thesis and Mid Program Evaluation:

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

Upon successful completion of steps 1-6, 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 dissertation 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 student should consult the [Comp Exam Guide](#) for an outline of the comprehensive exam process and begin preparation shortly after completing the master's thesis.

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

tioned to preparing the student to write a dissertation proposal and teach courses in the areas covered by the thesis (dissertation).

*The Committee.* The student will identify three Rice Sociology faculty (tenured or tenure-track professors) to serve on the comprehensive examination committee. This committee should reflect diverse substantive areas that are relevant to the student's developing research agenda and dissertation; students generally choose faculty for the comprehensive examination committee who represent different subfields. The comprehensive exam committee members also typically 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 or practical 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, but it requires committee input and approval. 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 design the examination, which includes (1) a 12-hour written exam spread over two days (i.e., 6 hours each day), followed by (2) a two-hour oral examination. The Program Administrator administers the written exam. 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. In the oral exam, which occurs a few days after the written exam, the student answers questions from the committee in an in-person meeting.

*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 advances to the dissertation proposal.
- **Pass.** The student performs adequately on the examination. The student advances to the dissertation proposal.
- **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.
  - Revisions may be required when the student performs satisfactorily on most of the exam (after considering both the written and oral components), but a small number of specific and discrete improvements are necessary to demonstrate the student is prepared to advance to the dissertation. These should be minor enough that the student could address them in 5 or fewer single-spaced pages of writing over no more than 1 week. If revisions more substantial than that seem to be required, it

likely indicates the student has performed poorly and failed the exam. Within this framework, the comprehensive exam committee has discretion to determine whether revisions are required, how they are to be completed, and whether they are satisfactory.

- 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.** 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.
  - This decision could be conferred immediately following the written and oral exams, or after inadequate attempts at revision.
  - **Failing the exam results in dismissal from the program.**
  - If the comprehensive exam committee decides the student failed the exam, the faculty on this committee should immediately notify the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and prepare a memo **summarizing the rationale** for the decision for the Graduate Program Committee's (GPC) review. The comprehensive exam committee should then either (a) craft a more detailed memo for the DGS that can be shared with the student, or (b) indicate that the memo provided for the GPC can be shared with the student if it is sufficiently detailed.
  - The GPC will meet shortly after the exam to ensure that all departmental procedures have been followed, in which case the DGS will petition the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for the student's dismissal from the program.

*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 on the dissertation committee *within sixty business days after passing their comprehensive exam*. See the department's [Dissertation Guide](#) for more detailed advice on the proposal and dissertation.

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 on the dissertation committee should be present at the proposal defense.

Unlike advancing to M.A. 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 a 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 tenured or tenure-track 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 Speaker Series colloquium) 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 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, and the [GPS thesis Template Library](#).

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 to check their balance and access these funds. 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 (at the time of departure) 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, workshop 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. To receive support from the department, students must identify a funding source and what it will cover prior to making

travel arrangements.

- *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. See [our announcement](#) and contact the DGS or Department 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 agrees 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 Department 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. In the case of an external grant, students should notify the Department Administrator of the funding source when submitting receipts for reimbursement or ensuring the receipts are returned to the foundation or agency.
- *Non-Departmental Funding*. For any other funding sources, please follow the appropriate procedures for using funding and obtaining reimbursement. The Department 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 to 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). You can also explore resources and advice in our [Rice Soc Grad Resources](#) Box folder. 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.
- Also note that the [Center for Career Development](#) may have useful resources and events as you plan and search for job 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), and/or assigned TAs. 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, it is recommended that students only 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. Students requesting to work beyond 20 hours per week should discuss this possibility with their advisor(s), the DGS, and the Department Administrator.

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 emails and 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' performance in departmental coursework, the pace and quality of their 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 case 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 (DGS) and the chair (or dean) will describe the circumstances, the decision, and the rationale for the decision. The DGS, 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://aeeo.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.