

Master of Arts Program in Latin American and Caribbean Studies
Guidelines for Final Program Requirements
(approved by Steering Committee, November 2010)

Students must choose between the options of completing 2 final exam essays, a final research paper, or a thesis for graduating. Students admitted prior to 2011 may choose between the following guidelines and those that were in place when the student was first admitted to the degree program.

FINAL EXAM ESSAYS

1. A written exam consisting of two essays must be passed in the last semester of course work. The final written exam will consist of 2 essays of approximately 8-10 pages (3-4 thousand words) each. These essays must be delivered by the end of the 13th week (2 weeks before the start of finals week) of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. At the discretion of the CLACS Director or Committee Chair, an oral examination may be required following the written examination.
2. Students choosing this option should meet with the CLACS Director and fill out the Final Examination Form **by the end of the semester before the semester of graduation**. Based on a review of the student's transcript and a discussion with the student, the Director shall invite two other faculty members (at least one must be CLACS-affiliated, from the Major concentration) to comprise the exam committee. Normally, the CLACS Director will serve as the Committee Chair, unless the student indicates a preference for a different Chair.
3. Students will prepare for exams by constructing and consulting 2 reading lists of app. 20 items each. These lists will be defined by region and thematic problem, respectively. The readings list must be submitted **by the second week of the semester** in which the student plans to complete the exam. After review and emendation, **the final list must be approved by the committee by the fifth week of the semester**. Each written essay must then **meaningfully cite at least ten of these readings**.
Question #1. Define a particular country or sub-region of interest (e.g., Mesoamerica, the Andes, the Southern Cone). According to your reading of the literature on this region, as well as your own perspective and values, what are some (2-3) of the most pressing social, cultural, political, and/or economic issues the region faces? How has the scholarly literature attempted to address these issues, and what new questions or research seem necessary to move our understanding of this region forward? **Question #2.** Define a particular practical or theoretical problem that encompasses the entire Latin American and Caribbean region (e.g., development, democratization, educational inequality, historical memory, language revitalization, information access). How have the disciplines and fields comprising Latin American Studies attempted to explore and address this problem through generating scholarly and practical knowledge? How have your M.A. studies enabled you to better understand this problem, and how might you continue to work on them, in the future? What new approaches, concepts, or methods seem most promising to advance our understanding—and/or solution—of this problem? Your discussion should incorporate concrete examples from multiple sites within the Latin American and Caribbean region; it should not confine itself only to the region that you discuss in Question #1.
4. Note: Students desiring 3 credits of LTAM 803 Independent Readings credit for preparation of the essay exam will produce and submit an annotated bibliography for ALL items on both lists by the end

of the semester. Annotations consist of brief summary and critical commentary. Annotations of books should consist of app. 200 words, with annotations of articles ranging from 100-200 words.

5. The written essays are read and evaluated by the 3 members of the exam committee. At the discretion of this committee, the student is convened for an oral exam during the final week of classes or during Finals week. The oral exam may cover areas addressed in the written exam, as well as other aspects of the student's MA program and future plans.
6. After completion, the exam committee evaluates the student's performance on the exam, coming to agreement on a rating of high pass, pass, or fail. The Director submits a report on the committee's evaluation, signing the requisite form for the Graduate School. In case of failure, the committee may recommend a remedial project (e.g. a review essay or an annotated bibliography), or may insist that the student go through the exam process again.

RESEARCH PAPER

1. A polished and publication-quality paper of approximately 10,000 words (30 pages), oriented to a peer-reviewed journal, must be presented in the last semester of course work. The paper may or may not incorporate originally gathered data or source material, but it should in every case demonstrate the ability to synthesize, analyze, and critique a body of literature or evidence **in the service of an original argument**.
2. Students choosing this option should meet with the CLACS Director and fill out the Research Paper Form **by the end of the semester before the semester of graduation**. Based on a discussion with the student, the Director shall help to identify and invite 3 faculty members (at least two must be CLACS-affiliated, one from the Major concentration) to comprise the Paper Committee.
3. Note: Students desiring 3 credits of LTAM 803 Independent Readings credit for preparation of the paper will produce and submit an annotated bibliography for **most**, if not all, items on the paper's bibliography by the end of the semester. Annotations consist of brief summary and critical commentary. Annotations of books should consist of app. 200 words, with annotations of articles ranging from 100-200 words.
4. The research paper should be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the last week of classes. It is read and evaluated by the 3 members of the exam committee. At the discretion of this committee, an oral exam may be required toward the end of the semester. The oral exam may cover areas addressed in the research paper, as well as other aspects of the student's MA program and future plans.
5. After presentation of the paper, the committee evaluates the student's performance on the final draft and comes to agreement on a rating of high pass, pass, or fail. The Director submits a report on the committee's evaluation, and in the case of grades of "high pass" and "pass", signs the requisite form for the Graduate School. If the committee assigns a failing grade, then specific revisions and areas of improvement will be furnished in writing, and the student will be required to resubmit the final paper.

THESIS

- 1. Initial steps and committee formation:** Students choosing to pursue the option of a Master's Thesis should consider carefully how this will further their professional and academic goals. If choosing the thesis, it is advisable to **complete a research methods course** or complete an independent study with the appropriate faculty member, ideally by the 2nd semester of coursework, and in that context to develop a modest research proposal that details the problems, questions, methodology, and sources for the study. Using the draft of this proposal, the student should approach a CLACS-affiliated faculty member to serve as Chair for the advisory committee (by the end of the 2nd semester, or beginning of 3rd semester), and in consultation with this person, two other members of a thesis committee. Feedback on the initial proposal should be incorporated into a final polished draft, which will be approved by the Chair. The thesis should be based on a significant amount of primary source material, at least 40%, unless compelling reasons are adduced. Primary source material may include ethnographic field data or historical archives, but also electronic media and texts, artistic products, policy documents, and the like. **Note: If the Master's Thesis will involve the original collection of data with human subjects, then application should be made with the IU-Bloomington Human Subjects Committee, at least two months before the start of data collection, starting at: <http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/>.**
- 2. Thesis committee and format:** If the student is pursuing a dual degree with Business, Library Science, SPEA, or Public Health, it is advisable for the dual degree school to be represented on the committee. A guide to thesis preparation for the student is available at the University Graduate School website: <http://graduate.indiana.edu/preparing-theses-and-dissertations.php>. Typically, a Master's Thesis for the CLACS M.A. will have an extension of 50-100 pages, depending on the type of sources and analysis conducted.
- 3. Committee responsibilities:** The Chair is responsible for keeping track of the student's progress with the thesis. The other two committee members may be involved to a greater or lesser degree, according to their preferences. When the Chair determines that an acceptable first draft of the thesis is completed, the student, along with the Chair, schedules an oral exam on the thesis, and advises the Center of this date. The thesis should be distributed to the other members of the committee at least a week before the oral exam. The oral exam on the thesis normally is to be taken **at least two weeks before the end of the semester** in which the degree is to be granted.
- 4. Final steps:** At the conclusion of the oral exam, the thesis committee comes to an agreement regarding the student's performance on the MA thesis, with the following options: the thesis passes without revision; minor to moderate revisions are recommended or required; the thesis fails. If revisions are required, the Chair withholds signature until the specified revisions are accomplished to the satisfaction of the committee. Committee members may choose to delegate to the Chair responsibility for verifying completion of the revisions. The final evaluation is submitted to CLACS on the form provided after the Chair obtains signatures from each committee member. Ordinarily, the final version of the thesis, and the final form, must be submitted **by the end of finals week of the semester** in which the degree shall be granted.

Note: All proposal forms, which require approval of the CLACS Director, are available at: <http://www.indiana.edu/~clacs/academics/graduate.shtml>