2013-2014 GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDACY EXAMINATION IN SOCIOLOGY

When Does a Student Take the Candidacy Examination?
Students may begin their candidacy examination, commonly referred to as the “comprehensive exams,” at any point during their graduate studies with the approval of their committee. Students must complete their comprehensive exams within one year of completing all of their registered doctoral coursework. Students who cannot make this deadline must petition COGS (in consultation with their advisor) with an explanation to receive an extension past the one year mark.

What is the Purpose of the Candidacy Examination?
The purpose of the candidacy examination is to ensure that a student has mastery in two substantive areas of sociology. The Committee on Graduate Studies requires that one of the exams be in a departmental area of concentration: (1) Gender; (2) Globalization; (3) Class, Race, and Ethnicity; (4) Urban Sociology; and (5) Environment and Health. Students are expected to complete the area foundation course and two area electives prior to beginning the comprehensive exam in that area. The other exam can be in one of the other areas of concentration (with the same requirements), or taken in another field of specialization that has broad recognition within sociology (e.g., an area covered by an ASA section). The student must petition COGS for approval of any comprehensive exam area that is outside of our five areas of concentration.

How Should the Candidacy Exam Committees be Structured?
A student must form a committee of three faculty members to administer each exam. One committee member should be designated as the committee chair. This member should be a tenure-track member of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Faculty from outside the department may serve on candidacy exams with the approval of COGS. Each committee can be composed of the same faculty members, but this is not a requirement. Students are encouraged to establish their candidacy exam committees as early as possible in their residency so that a working relationship can be developed. They are strongly encouraged to take classes or directed studies from the faculty members they desire to serve on their candidacy committees.

How is the Examination Reading List Constructed?
In consultation with their faculty committee, a student prepares a reading list in their particular area of specialization. The reading list should contain 40-60 books and articles that are central to the field. For exams in one of the five departmental concentrations, at least half of these readings must be selected from the “official” concentration reading list provided on the departmental website. In consultation with the exam committee, the student selects the remainder of the readings on their own. If the student is conducting an exam in an area outside the five concentrations, they must work with the chair of the exam committee to construct an acceptable reading list.

How is the Exam Scheduled?
Students should schedule both their writing period and their oral defense in consultation with their committee. Oral defenses are generally held a week or two after the writing period, but this is not a requirement. Once a date for the oral defense is determined, students must petition COGS to officially schedule it (at least one week prior to the oral defense). The form for doing
so is available on the website. Students are given a maximum of seven days to complete the written portion of the exam. The candidacy examination requirement must be completed at least nine months before the commencement at which the PhD is to be granted.

Separate oral defenses are required for each area of specialization. However, if the committees for both areas of specialization are identical, the student may elect to conduct an oral defense of both areas in one meeting. If the student is combining both written comprehensive exams into one oral defense, that defense must follow the last written exam.

A time frame of approximately two hours is considered sufficient for a single oral exam, and three hours for a combined oral defense.

**How is the Exam Administered?**
The exam must include the submission of written work prepared exclusively for this examination and an oral defense of the written material. The questions are established by the exam committee. Some committees may allow students to participate in constructing the questions, but this is not a requirement.

COGS recommends that two questions be answered. The first should be in the general field of study related to the concentration (or another area), and should be designed to test the student’s breadth of knowledge. The second question should be more focused on a particular area of study within the larger field, and should test the student’s depth of knowledge. The comprehensive examination committee may provide more than one question per section of the exam for the student to choose from. The written portion of the examination should be between 30-40 typed, double-spaced pages in total (i.e., 15-20 pages per question). A bibliography is mandatory, and does not apply toward the page requirements.

**How is the Candidacy Exam Evaluated?**
Each portion of the exam is evaluated on a pass or no pass basis. Examinations given a conditional pass must be rewritten within two months to address the exam committee’s concerns and must be resubmitted for a final evaluation.

**What Does it Mean to Achieve Ph.D. Candidacy?**
Students are considered doctoral candidates once they have (a) completed their coursework requirements, (b) completed the qualifying examination, and (c) passed both of their candidacy exams. Once the candidacy examination is complete, a student is then free to construct a dissertation proposal.

**To Whom Do These Guidelines Apply?**
Students who entered the program in the fall of 2010 or after are expected to comply fully with these guidelines. Students who entered the program prior to the fall 2010 are strongly encouraged to adhere to these guidelines but there will be additional flexibility (e.g., students may take both exams outside of the departmental concentrations). Students should consult with their committee and the Graduate Director regarding specifics.