

CURRICULUM PLAN FOR THE DOCTORAL DEGREE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL SCIENCE

**SCHOOL OF HUMAN EVOLUTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**
Fall 2014 Revised

I. Mission and Overview

The Graduate Program in **Environmental Social Science (ESS)** offers graduate students rigorous interdisciplinary training in social science approaches to investigating human-environment processes and issues. It spans a number of disciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches including but not limited to political ecology, environmental justice studies, environmental anthropology, archaeology, environmental sociology, diverse approaches in human geography, political science, sustainability studies, and others. To facilitate this interdisciplinarity, ESS currently lists more than 30 graduate faculty in 10 different units at ASU. While ESS is housed in SHESC, and core faculty from SHESC, the inclusion of select faculty from other units gives it the unique ability to advance robust and critical social science training in environmental studies. ESS is one of the few programs nation-wide (see Section III.B.2, below) to focus on the *social* dynamics of environmental issues from interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary social science approaches.

This document sets forth the requirements for all students pursuing a PhD in ESS. This includes students entering without an MA (who are accepted into the MA/PhD program and begin in Phase I) and students entering with an MA (who are accepted into the PhD program and begin in Phase II). The ESS Graduate Committee, in consultation with other ESS graduate faculty, govern the curriculum for ESS, consistent with other degrees in SHESC, and in compliance with the requirements of the Graduate College at Arizona State University.

The baseline curriculum is outlined in section II A below. Within this context (i.e., meeting the baseline requirements) and working in close consultation with faculty advisors, each student designs a Plan of Study (iPOS) to meet her or his educational needs. This is typically accomplished by taking advantage of the flexibility intrinsic to the ESS curriculum in consultation with the ESS Director and the student's committee chair. In this way students can tailor the plan of study to promote the interdisciplinary research focus of their dissertation projects. (See the *ESS Roadmap* document for additional information as to documentation and timing of your activities)

II. General Requirements for Graduate Students

A. Organization of the ESS Curriculum

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The following curriculum structure applies to all students entering the ESS graduate program. (Note: **ESS does not require students to take the professionalism course required for the anthropology degree**). The ESS curriculum is organized around cross-cutting *conceptual domains* and *topical foci*. The general curriculum is outlined below. Students who enter without an MA (Phase 1) may begin taking conceptual domain and topical foci courses after first consulting with the ESS graduate director and their committee chair. **A normal course load is 9 hours a semester. Fewer than 9 hours per semester prior to advancement to candidacy will result in a lower score for progress to degree in the annual evaluations (see the ESS Evaluation Criteria document posted on Blackboard).**

Figure 1. ESS Graduate Curriculum

Curricular Structure		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Content / Specific courses</i>	<i>Credits</i>
1) Previously awarded master's degree or 30 hrs. of approved course work.	Topics relevant to environmental social science (these may include Core I and Core II classes in consultation with your advisor.	Up to 30 credit hours
2) Conceptual Domains (Core I): Two course survey of the conceptual domains of ESS, required for all students.	ESS 501: Social Theory and the Environment (3) ESS 502: Political Ecology: Theory and Research (3) (Phase I students should take 501 prior to 502)	6
3) Topical Foci (Core II): Three courses covering the methods and theories of the topical foci of ESS. Students choose among those listed in Column 2.	ESS 510: Urban Environments (3) <i>or an approved alternative</i> ESS 504: Introduction to Analyzing Sociotechnical Systems (3) ESS 512: Landscapes (3) <i>or an approved alternative in the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning</i> ESS 513: Institutions, Society, and the Environment (4) ESS 514: Health and the Environment (3) <i>or an approved alternative</i>	9
4) Research Design and Proposal Writing: One course; with the specific focus determined based on the student's interests and research plans.	GCU 585 or ASM 579 Research Design and Proposal Writing <i>Or another approved alternative from other units.</i>	3
5) Technical Expertise: Two courses that provide intensive background in some area of science relevant to the student's research interests.	A wide range of courses can satisfy this requirement, depending on the student's interests and committee approval. Examples include course in mathematical modeling, physical geography, ecology, social science research methods, Geographic Information Systems.	6
6) Electives: At least two courses relevant to the student's research interests and educational needs and approved by their Chair.	Electives include courses in many fields. Students should discuss possible courses with the ESS director and their committee chairs.	6
7) Research/Dissertation Hours	ESS 792, 799	24
TOTAL		84

B. Self-Reporting and Evaluation

Every Spring semester, graduate students at all levels submit a progress report and vita to the Graduate Coordinator. These reports represent student activity for the previous calendar year (i.e., January through December). These reports are solicited, and deadlines specified, by the Graduate Coordinator. The student's progress report is then evaluated by the ESS Graduate Committee in consultation with the student's Committee Chair.

Before the end of the Spring semester, the student will receive a letter from either the ESS Director or their Committee Chair informing her or him of the results of the evaluation and expectations for the future.

The evaluation is determined to be satisfactory, concerned, or unsatisfactory. In cases where the evaluation deems the student's progress to be "unsatisfactory," the letter specifies what the student must do (including a timeline) to improve their status. Failure to follow what is specified in that letter (i.e., continual unsatisfactory status) results in dismissal from the program. Normally, a student who receives an unsatisfactory evaluation two years in a row is dismissed from the program.

III. Phase I (30 hours)

Students who enter the program without an MA begin in Phase I. Receipt of an MA in Passing (MIP) is the culmination of Phase I and marks the transition to Phase II.

A. Program objectives: Students in Phase I begin to develop skills and background necessary to identify significant research problems regarding topics relevant to ESS. Students are expected to develop or expand their areas of expertise, build broad knowledge of disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to socioenvironmental issues and problems. Students should also develop methodological expertise to promote their dissertation research.

B. Phase I supervisor and committee: Students select a Phase I faculty advisor (chair) in their first semester, who helps the student develop an appropriate Plan of Study (iPOS) and prepare a Research Skills Portfolio (Sections IV C and D). The faculty advisor must be a member in good standing of the ESS Graduate Faculty. The chair **does not** have to be SHESC graduate faculty as long as he or she is ESS Graduate Faculty approved to chair committees. By the end of the first year, the student selects another two faculty members to serve on their MA committee. The chair writes a memo to the SHESC Graduate Committee explaining how she or he is appropriate to guide the student and supervise the student's research for an MIP in ESS. The memo should also provide justification for other committee members. The Graduate Committee then approves the faculty advisor and committee. Any subsequent change to the student's Phase I committee must be approved by the SHESC Graduate Committee.

C. Plan of Study: By the end of the second semester, the student, in close consultation with their Phase I chair, develops an individual Plan of Study (iPOS) for Phase I that addresses the course requirements listed in **Figure I**, and the research skills portfolio requirements described below. In accordance with Graduate College policies, the iPOS must include at least 30 hours (which may consist of formal courses as well as readings and conference courses (ESS 790)). The iPOS is formally filed with Graduate Education and must be approved by the student's Phase I chair. Subsequent changes to the plan of study may be made by filing appropriate paperwork with the Graduate Coordinator, and must be approved by the student's Phase I chair.

D. Research skills portfolio: The student writes two research papers that demonstrate the ability to systematically gather, analyze, and interpret relevant information; and to use that information to address a question of interdisciplinary environmental research interest. Such papers are normally written in the context of courses taken to meet the Phase I requirements, but papers written in other contexts are also encouraged. The papers must meet the following requirements:

- The papers are normally written in a form that *could be* published in a professional book or journal.
- The student must be a major contributor on both papers, and must be the sole author of at least one.
- At least one of the papers must receive comments and be revised based on those comments. In the case of papers written for a course, the comments are normally from the professor who taught the course. With Phase I chair approval, comments from other professionals (e.g., book or journal editors) are also acceptable.
- One of the papers is presented in a School-wide research symposium in the student's fourth semester. This paper must be completed by the end of the student's third semester.
- The second paper must be completed no later than four weeks prior to the last day of classes in the fourth semester.
- The research portfolio is documented with the *Documentation of the Research Skills Portfolio for an MA in ESS* form. The portfolio and accompanying form must be submitted by the student to her/his Phase I chair upon completion of the second paper, and no later than four weeks prior to the last day of classes in the student's fourth semester.
- The student's Phase I chair must complete (i.e., approve or disapprove) the *Documentation of the Research Skills Portfolio for an MA in ESS* form no later than one week prior to the last day of classes in the student's fourth semester.
- In order to meet the above deadlines and have the research skills portfolio approved on time, students who are completing their second research portfolio paper in their fourth semester should be in close contact with their chairs regarding that paper.
- Students are, of course, encouraged to write many papers, but they should select only two for the research portfolio.

E. Presentation of Research: Students present one of the research papers in a School-wide research symposium, held in the latter part of each Spring semester.

F. Timeline: The MA should be completed within four semesters. Detailed deadlines regarding the research portfolio are outlined above. Taking 9 hours per semester, you will have 36 graduate hours at the time your MIP is awarded.

G. Award of MA: Upon completion of the Phase I Program of Study with a grade point average of at least 3.2, the research skills portfolio (documented with the *Documentation of the Research Skills Portfolio for an MA in ESS*), and presentation of research at the School-wide research symposium, the student is granted a Master's degree.

H. Transition from Phase I to Phase II. Continuation into Phase II of the PhD program follows the completion of all documentation relevant to Phase I outlined above. The transition is contingent on:

- The student's coursework and grades.
- The research portfolio and accompanying Documentation of the Research Skills Portfolio for an MA in ESS form.
- A memo, one page or less in length, to the Director of ESS, from a faculty member (normally the student's Phase I chair), approving the transition to Phase II. This must be submitted **no fewer than two weeks before the last day of classes in the student's fourth semester.**

The evaluation is done by the ESS Graduate Committee and the ESS Graduate Director upon receipt of relevant documentation noted above.

IV. Phase II (30 hours coursework, 24 hours research or dissertation)

Students who enter the ESS program with an MA in relevant field begin in Phase II. Students who earn their MIP in ESS move from Phase I into Phase II. Receipt of the PhD in Environmental Social Sciences is the culmination of Phase II.

A. Program objectives: Phase II of the program trains students to become expert scholars able to contribute to their ESS research focus; to advance knowledge and understanding of critical socioenvironmental issues across a range of scales and sites. Students develop in-depth expertise that will allow them to: carry out research on a problem of significance in interdisciplinary socioenvironmental studies; learn research methods most relevant to their research focus; receive interdisciplinary training compatible with the research focus; and develop the skills to train students at a college/university level or to work in applied fields.

B. Supervisory Committee: Within the first year in Phase II, the student selects a dissertation committee. The PhD supervisory committee consists of three or more faculty members who agree to serve on the student's committee. The majority of the committee must be members of the ESS graduate faculty, whether in SHESC or in other units. The chair or co-chairs of the student's PhD dissertation committee must be an ESS graduate faculty member who has been approved to chair doctoral committees by the ESS Graduate Committee and ASU Graduate Education. If the student completed the MIP in SHESC the chair of their Phase I committee may or may not be their Phase II chair. The proposed committee chair writes a memo to the SHESC Graduate Committee explaining how the committee membership is appropriate to guide the student and supervise the student's research for a PhD in ESS. The SHESC Graduate Committee and ASU Graduate Education then approve the supervisory committee. Subsequent changes to the student's committee must be approved by the student's committee chair/co-chair and the SHESC Graduate Committee, and reported to ASU Graduate Education. The supervisory committee helps the student develop an appropriate Phase II (doctoral) Plan of Study.

C. Plan of Study: By the end of the first year in Phase II, the student develops, with the consultation and approval of their committee chair a Plan of Study (iPOS) for Phase II that addresses the course requirements listed in Figure I that have not been fulfilled during Phase I (MA) course work at ASU, as well as ASU Graduate College requirements as follows. In accordance with ASU Graduate Education policies, the POS must include at least 54 post-MA

hours, including (a) 30 hours of coursework or R&Cs prior to candidacy, (b) 12 research hours (ESS 792), and (c) 12 dissertation hours (ESS 799). The iPOS is formally filed with the ASU Graduate Education unit. Subsequent changes to the iPOS must be approved by the student's chair and formally reported to Graduate Education in an approved manner. See the **ESS Roadmap** for additional information on research and dissertation hours.

D. Doctoral Examination:

During Phase II, the student prepares for and submits a written document to count as their comprehensive examination. With **the approval of a student's chair** the Dissertation Proposal should (in most cases) serve as the written part of the comprehensive exam. In other cases, also in consultation with the student's chair, a student may instead prepare one or two papers (typically a theory paper and a methods paper which directly contribute to the proposal) for the written component of the comprehensive exam. The oral component of the examination is the defense of the dissertation proposal. These two steps are formally considered to constitute the written and oral doctoral examination, as required by Graduate Education.

Whether the proposal is used as the written component of the examination or not, the student should take an approved proposal writing class to prepare the proposal (see Figure I). The dissertation proposal will be presented publically. The actual defense of the proposal will take place with only the student's committee present. **A proposal should not go forward to a defense unless the student's chair has previously secured agreement with all committee members that the proposal is suitable and defensible.**

E. Advancement to Candidacy: Upon completion of 30 hours of coursework, successful completion of the written and oral components of the comprehensive exam, the student is advanced to candidacy.

F. Timeline: The doctoral examination (written and oral components) should be completed by the end of the student's fifth semester in Phase II of the program, although some students complete at the end of their 4th semester. Once the student has advanced to candidacy, a timeline for the dissertation work is set by the student and her or his dissertation committee consistent with Graduate Education policy. Annual evaluations regarding satisfactory progress are based on this timeline.

G. Dissertation

- Students write a dissertation, which must be approved by their supervisory committee. The format of the dissertation must be in accordance with ASU Graduate education guidelines. While the ASU Graduate College will accept either three published papers or a dissertation format, for ESS students a research dissertation is **almost always recommended** to speed completion of the degree.
- The culmination of Phase II is the public presentation and discussion of dissertation, including answering questions from both the student's committee and the public in attendance. Generally the public presentation will comprise a 20-25 minute summary of the dissertation and key findings, followed by questions from the committee and the audience, with no more than 2 hours allotted to the proceedings.

H. Teaching Experience: Phase II students are encouraged to develop skills and experience teaching at the college/university level **if it is relevant to their particular career goals.**

Because some students will be moving into applied, governmental, or NGO careers, teaching experience is not always necessary for their professional goals. Those students seeking a career in colleges and universities should participate in training opportunities offered by the school and university, and/or by other post-secondary teaching opportunities in the course of their studies.

I. Award of the PhD: Upon completion of the 24 research hours and satisfactory defense of the dissertation, students are awarded a PhD in Environmental Social Sciences.

V. Faculty Review of Critical Documents

In order for students to complete their degree requirements in a timely manner, it is very important that Phase I and Phase II Chairs and committees review critical documents and return them to students with comments promptly. During the regular Fall or Spring semesters, advisor and committee members should return short documents (including portfolio papers, documents for the doctoral written exams, and doctoral proposals) to students with comments within two weeks of receiving them. **Dissertations should be returned with comments by faculty within three weeks of receiving them from students.** This should be irrespective of how many documents the faculty member receives. Prompt turnaround is necessary to help students move through program in a timely manner.

Faculty are not obligated to review these academic documents outside of the regular Academic Year (i.e. in the summer). If documents are not received during the semester or not sufficiently prior to the end of a regular semester to allow for two to three weeks of review, students and advisors/committee members should jointly agree on a review period. Faculty may give priority to student work submitted on time, and in accordance with any timeline agreed to by the student and her/his committee.