

## **TO PROSPECTIVE AND CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENTS**

### **To Graduate School Applicants:**

I am just beginning to build a new focus in the concentration of environment, science, and technology and am thus interested in recruiting students in closely related areas who might be interested in working with me on these related topics. In the next few years I hope to accept students to work with me on issues of environmental justice and political ecology, on the politics and history of science and technology, and those issues related to nature and race, class and gender. In general, I am most interested in students with a proven record of performance both in academics and professional or advocacy work. My focus is to wed rigorous social and political theory to understanding nature, environment, and science in ways that are unapologetically political.

The students I work with research on a wide range of issues: the politics of bioterrorism & biosecurity; new forms of privatization of science and institutions in the nuclear energy industry; the political history and racial science of germ theory of infectious disease; water and land grant politics in northern New Mexico; and the cultural politics of photography and environmentalism in Japan, to name a few.

Please read about my current research before you contact me. If you feel your work fits closely with my research and you would like to inquire about applying, please send me an e-mail with your research interests and resume.

Also, if you have any detailed questions about the admissions process, GRE score requirements, etc., please contact Sandy Rodrigue at [rodrigue@unm.edu](mailto:rodrigue@unm.edu) 505) 277-3929 Fax: (505) 277-1208 Graduate Information Office.

### **To Prospective and Current Graduate Students:**

I have put together the following information primarily for students who might be interested in working with me so that they have a clear sense of the goals and expectation I have as a advisor, which go beyond those of the departmental requirements. It is a working document so if you have suggestions I would very much welcome them. This does not apply to new graduate students who are temporarily assigned to work with me for their first year that we do give students a chance to get to know the different faculty. This is for interested students coming into the program who might be interested in working with me and to students who are choosing a Masters or Ph.D. advisor in their second year.

#### **I. CHOOSING AN ADVISOR**

Choosing an advisor to work with on a Ph.D. or a MA is serious decision for both you and your advisor as it is a long-term commitment involving many hours of work, sharing, and camaraderie. It is a relationship that will last well beyond graduate school. The choices you make now will significantly influence everything from your dissertation topic to your methodological approach to your future job prospects. As such it should not be entered into lightly. Being honest and direct about our expectations and goals right from the beginning will decrease the likelihood of misunderstanding and help me better work towards supporting you in becoming type of scholar, practitioner, or activist you hope to be.

### **Do our interests match?**

I advise those who might be interested in working with me to do the following:

- First, explore my published work to determine if it interests you topically, conceptually, politically, or methodologically. It does not have to necessarily be a perfect match in any of these areas; however, if there is not significant overlap in our interests then it is worth looking for someone who better fits your needs and would therefore be more helpful.
- Next, look at my website for my teaching philosophy, courses offered, future projects, background from my CV, etc. Think about your interests and our places of overlap. Again, to work together does not mean we have to work on the same things but there should be some harmony of approaches, politics, and/or interests.
- Talk to current graduate students whom I advise. You will probably get more honest and direct answers about my strengths and weakness from them than I could give you. For these names contact the department administrator Sandy Rodrigue or one of the above grad students.
- What I would ask of people interested in working with me on your Ph.D. committee is the following: a CV, a statement of your research interests and priorities, and a writing sample. Masters students should come talk with me in person. This is not a personal evaluation but affords me the opportunity to see how closely our interests and approaches overlap so I can make sure that I am in the best position to help you pursue your goals.
- Finally, read over the expectations below. These are not set in stone but they do give you some idea of what I expect from the students I work with and what you can expect from me beyond what the department officially requires so that if we choose to work together they will not come as a surprise.

## **II. ADVISING STYLE AND EXPECTATIONS**

- **What I will expect from the graduate students I work with.**

If you decide you want to work with me what I will need from you is a general timeline of what you hope to achieve. This lets me know what your goals are so I can advise you on what you need to do to achieve these goals and the costs and benefits of a longer or slower approach to grad school. This will not be set in stone; we will likely revise it several times but it give us a starting point and helps us be clear about our objectives.

### **What you can expect from me**

I am not a day-to-day intensive advisor. This does not mean that I am not there when you need me or that I do not care deeply about students' future, only that it is honestly not my style. It is my experience that students need to do their work on their own. This type of independence in scholarship is important and best supported by my being there when needed only for specific help.

### **Course advising**

I expect to see you or talk with you at the beginning and end of every semester (I will see you a lot more than this, which is a minimum) to go over the courses you are taking and discuss how they fit into your overall plan and interest. These meetings do not have to be formal but just a chance to go through the logic of your choices and for me to make sure that you have the necessary methods, courses, conceptual background, etc. you will need to do your research and write your dissertation. We will also revisit your timeline to chart and discuss the overall progress to date.

### **• Exam reading list**

I take your exam reading list very seriously for it will help develop the basis from which you will draw your conceptual framework for both your dissertation work and beyond. What I hope to see here is conceptual depth, a genealogy of intellectual ideas, and a rigor relating to the topic/region you hope to work on. It is not just a list of books that you are interested in or ones that relate to your interests but is an intellectual engagement with the concepts, relationships, and debates, that form your specific approach. It is, as such, an argument and foundation from which you will explore your interests. Developing a strong reading list take a lot more time than one would expect and normally goes through at least four iterations before settling on a solid draft version. I will look and comment on each of these, understanding that you will have to balance my suggestions with those of the other members of your committee. I expect you to have this reading list complete a full three to four months before your exam date so I have enough time to carefully prepare for your exam.

### **Comprehensive exam**

The comprehensive exam in American Studies is a written exam taken over two weeks with a minimum of three professors. You will be given three questions based on three fields of study

that make up your reading list (see above) worked out with your chair and other committee members. You will have a two weeks, working on your own, to answer these questions before they will be reviewed and approved by every member of your committee. For administrative details see the graduate student handbook on the American Studies website. These exams play a particularly important role in your formation as a scholar. It is also rare that you will have the full attention of three or four professors collectively thinking, asking, and exploring your topic together. As such, it is a very important moment for you to begin to defend your ideas and readings to those who will become your peers, and a great opportunity to explore and develop your ideas and understandings. I take the exam very seriously. I ask student to take few other classes in the semester before their exam and to meet with me biweekly during this time to answer questions and explore concepts. What I expect from these exams is not just an ability to discuss the individual texts on the reading list but an ability to discuss the overall fields, the trends and debates within each fields of study, and the ways the different fields relate to each other.

#### **Dissertation prospectus defense**

The dissertation prospectus has recently become a much more formalized process in American Studies. Once you begin your own fieldwork, or archival work, etc. you will be very much on your own and it can be challenging. The more you have worked out in your prospectus the easier it gets when you actually arrive at a field site or in an archive. In many ways it is an outline, plan of research, and conceptual framework for your dissertation in which the different components (the research questions, theory, history, methods) have to be in harmony. It is often a difficult process and one that will require a series of iterations. I will help you with the original draft and give you some detailed comment, but I will only reread it when you have completed the revisions to the overall prospectus. There are a lot of reasons for this, but primary among them is letting you work with the material so that ultimately it is your approach, topic interests. My being involved in every small step gets in the way of you developing your own strengths as a scholar. I have developed a detailed handout on prospectus and grant writing that spells out the specific detail of each part of the proposal.

#### **Grant writing**

I expect all of Ph.D students I work with to write grant applications for funding. This does not mean you need to get money to have my support. In fact, many of the topics I have been most interested in are not easily funded. But I do require that you at least go through the process; because of the current state of funding at universities it will be a requirement throughout your career. Moreover, it is a very useful exercise in honing your research questions, developing rigorous methods, and a relevant conceptual framework. It is

normally a variant of your prospectus but requires a condensed version and a tailoring of your topic to the different funding agencies. Again, the details are in a handout that I will give you when you get to this stage.

### **Dissertation Writing**

Dissertation writing is one of the most solitary aspects of getting your Ph.D. You need to talk to people and read but you also need to know when to stop and just sit and engage in the writing process that for many of us is painful but also tremendously rewarding. I will work hard to help you develop and revise first your prospectus and then a detailed outline. I will also read the first two chapters of your dissertation carefully to make sure you are on track and to help get you going. However, I do not normally read the rest of the chapters until the entire first draft is done (unless there is something that needs special attention). I believe that once you are on track, getting detailed feedback on each chapter often slows you down and keeps you from developing the overall cohesion between the chapters. I then read that first draft very carefully and provide extensive comments before you begin revisions. I will of course meet with you as needed to work on and discuss challenges you are confronting.

### **Publishing**

At least one, preferably two articles will need to be submitted to a peer review journal before you are finished with your dissertation. These are usually chapters from your dissertation and are important to demonstrate a willingness to engage in the field and show your work and conceptual approach to search committees. They also are an important part of learning to engage in the academic community that you will be a part of for a long time to come.

### **Job Searches**

#### *a. For academic positions*

The job search is a critical juncture and a very difficult one given the job market. I can make no guarantees other than I am very committed to helping students who are interested in jobs in the academy get those jobs and negotiate the hiring process. This is one area of the process where I will be intimately involved in every step. I will look over your job letter in each iteration; I will talk to friends and contacts at other Universities about openings; and I will take writing letters of recommendation for you very seriously and dedicate a great deal of time to those letters. I will do my best to help you achieve a career in or out of the academy.

You will need to have a draft job letter ready at the beginning of the fall semester (job and post doc listings are normally advertised in the fall) when you intend to start applying for jobs – normally when you are close to finishing your dissertation. I have never seen a job letter that has not been through at least ten iterations and many have been through a

lot more than that. It is the primary way that a search committee will come to know you and decide whether they will invite you to have an on campus interview and will be the central document of your application. You are expected to have a current copy of your CV ready at the same time. This, too, will go through numerous versions for style and content.

*b. For non-academic positions*

I am equally committed to helping students after grad school who are committed to a life outside the academy. Many of the students I work with go on to activist, non-profit, and public service jobs. I have myself spent a good deal of time outside of the academy and will work with equal effort and commitment to make you prepared for the positions you are interested in. Because these positions vary so much in form and requirement they will take effort on both our parts to determine what will be the most important preparation you will need to be an attractive candidate.