

Culminating Experience

Goal: Our goal is to offer intellectually meaningful options to the MA Plan B students by creating work that entails clear expectations for success, significant consequences for failure, and meaningful opportunity for intellectual development. We want to locate the MA differently on the department's academic map, making it a more robust and significant experience.

Organization: In each case, it is the responsibility of the student to assemble the needed supervisor or committee; faculty members are expected to accept a reasonable number of these obligations as part of their work with graduate students, but have the option of declining specific requests if they feel they are not qualified or have too many prior Plan B commitments.

Evaluation: Each option will be graded as pass or fail. In the event of a pass, *mazel tov*. In the event of failure, the candidate will be asked to re-write the problematic text until it is satisfactory.

Deadline: Submit the completed culminating experience form no later than 2 weeks prior to graduation.

Option I: M.A. Comprehensive Exams

The student must declare a specialization (in association with faculty). Students will then compose an MA committee consisting of two faculty members from the Department of Political Science. The MA committee will work with the student to agree upon a body of literature. Each professor will pose two questions to the candidate, and the student will select one question from each professor and write a 10-15 page essay in response to each question. Questions should be picked-up at the Department of Political Science office from 8am Monday and returned complete by 4pm the following Friday. Both professors will read and comment on both essays, while each professor is the ultimate arbiter as to the success or failure of his/her question.

Criteria for success: Successful essays must utilize a relevant literature and make a sound argument. The student may pass both essays, or fail both essays, or pass one and fail one. Timetable for re-writing failed questions is worked out between the faculty members and the student.

Option II: MA Paper

Students will select one seminar paper from a graduate class taken in the Department of Political Science and develop it into an article-length essay of publishable quality. The professor who offered the original class will normally be the supervisor of the MA paper, although if that person is not available another may be substituted. The seminar paper to be modified must be presented up-front to the supervisor so adequate progress in making revisions can be assessed.

Criteria for success: Successful papers must reflect considerably more work, both in quantity and quality, than was evident in the original seminar paper. A passing paper will be judged by both the professor and the student to be significantly improved over the first version. The student is strongly encouraged to work with his/her mentor to submit the essay to a refereed journal.

Option III: Intellectual Autobiography

Students will produce an original piece of analytical writing (not a re-circulated seminar paper, personal diary, or other previous work) of 15-25 pages in which the student reflects on his/her intellectual journey and explores the intellectual resources anchoring his/her graduate experience. The student will recruit a faculty member to act as supervisor for the work.

Criteria for success: A successful intellectual biography is one that both the professor and the student judge to contain the following elements:

1. Analytical reflections on the literature that has most informed his/her academic growth; not a passive or descriptive literature review, but an active encounter that puts texts into conversation with one another and with the student's own thinking;
2. Discussion of the political problems and opportunities that have most shaped her/his growth as a student of politics;
3. Speculations about her/his future directions and development as political thinker.
4. An appropriate bibliography of works actually used (not a laundry list of potentially relevant texts in some future life).

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CULMINATING EXPERIENCE FOR M.A. PLAN B (Non-thesis)

POLICY

(This policy was approved by the Department of Political Science April 24, 1996, and amended Oct. 10, 2006.)

Students in the Department's Masters' program Plan B (Non-thesis) entering in fall 1996 or later are required to complete a Culminating Experience. In each case, it is the responsibility of the student to assemble the needed supervisor or committee. Each option will be graded as pass or fail.

DESCRIPTION

Student's Name _____ Degree Sought _____

Address _____ Today's Date _____

UH I.D.# _____

Type of culminating experience (check one):

Comprehensive Exams _____ MA Paper _____ Intellectual Autobiography _____

If other, indicate specialization for which this has been approved, as well as title, date, and place of colloquium or other culminating experience : _____

COMMITTEE EVALUATION

Satisfactory (signatures)

Unsatisfactory (signatures)

Culminating Experience Supervisor

Culminating Experience Supervisor

FOR OPTION II: MA PAPER

FOR OPTION II: MA PAPER

MA Paper Advisor 1

MA Paper Advisor 1

MA Paper Advisor 2

MA Paper Advisor 2

Approved by Graduate Chair

Date

NOTE: Please submit the original of this form to the Secretary of the Department and retain a copy for your records.