

WELCOME TO THE FLORIDA STUDIES PROGRAM

AT USF ST. PETERSBURG

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK (AUGUST 2011)

For everyone who lives, works, or studies in Florida, the best way to understand our state and the issues we face is to put them in the context of our history, distinctive regional culture, and unique ecosystems. The Florida Studies Program (FSP) brings together faculty from history, literature, political science, geography, and other disciplines to create an integrated, in-depth exploration of our state's changing identity as a part of the American South as well as a bridge to the Caribbean Basin.

From environmental policy and resource management to political challenges and immigration reform, Florida presents distinctive issues that merit close attention. Students from any discipline can benefit from Florida Studies courses as they prepare for careers ranging from urban planning to social work, from historic preservation to international business. For anyone who is interested in how our state fits into matters of regional and global significance, this program presents the ideal opportunity to use the State of Florida as a teaching and research laboratory.

We offer an interdisciplinary Master of Liberal Arts (MLA) degree with a concentration in Florida Studies. Graduate students in our program often interact with and take classes along side students in other programs, but it is important to keep in mind that each graduate degree program has its own requirements. Remember, the USF St. Petersburg graduate catalog is the ultimate authority on degree requirements, but this handbook is intended to help both incoming and returning graduate students fulfill graduation requirements by highlighting significant university requirements as well as rules and policies of the Florida Studies Program.

Admission to the Program

Degree-seeking students admitted to our program are normally required to have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, achieve an overall undergraduate grade point average of 3.0, and receive a score of at least 1000 on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). A limited number of exceptions to these requirements can occasionally be authorized. For example, due to the nature of our program, it is more important that applicants score higher on the verbal than quantitative portion of the GRE. Prospective students with exceptionally high verbal scores are encouraged to apply even if their overall GRE score is less than 1000. In another example, several of our students have already engaged in much graduate level study elsewhere before applying to the Florida Studies Program. Students with prior graduate level coursework might consider discussing the GRE requirement with the Program Director.

The Florida Studies Program also requests a 1-2 page letter outlining your academic interests, your goals and objectives related to graduate school and beyond, and relevant life experiences. This letter, along with your application form and fee, as well as transcripts should be sent to the Office of Graduate Studies in Bayboro Hall at USF St. Petersburg (NOT the Tampa campus). GRE scores may be sent to "USF" because graduate admissions staff members at USF St. Pete have access to these. Only after the Office of Graduate Studies deems your application complete will we receive your materials. Applications for admission to the Florida Studies Program are welcome throughout the year because in most cases, the Program reviews these shortly after they are received. But prospective applicants should note that we cannot guarantee a timely decision on any application packet received less than one month before the start of any given term.

Program Highlights

Students in the Florida Studies Program are required to take several classes that focus entirely on, or contain significant content about, some aspect of the Florida experience—but many other classes treat Florida on the periphery or not at all. Florida is the glue that ties the program together, but it is not the only ingredient: the FSP teaches intellectual breadth and interdisciplinary scholarship. Recent courses include:

Intro to Florida and Regional Studies; Environmental History; Sports and American Culture; History of the Modern South; Civil Rights and the Law; American Culture in the 1960s; Southern Politics; Modern Florida History; Food and History; World War II; History of the Caribbean; History of Cuba; Florida in Film; Archival Management; Imagining Early Florida; Nature Writing; Ecology of Florida; Seminar in Advanced Regional Geography

(Fla.); Seminar in Adv. Human Geography (Sustainability); Wetlands, People and Public Policy.

Moreover, you should know that most graduate-level classes are different from those you took as an undergraduate student. For starters, you will probably read more in each class than you have ever read in your life! Indeed, most of our classes are taught as seminars, meaning you will be expected to contribute regularly to class discussions based on reading assignments. Students learn from professors, but they also learn from each other. You will also have the opportunity to write more than ever before—and many of your papers will be longer than you have written in the past. This requires deep familiarity with your subjects (hence the need to read a lot!). More than just reading and writing, however, you will learn how to make use of information and evidence to tell a story or build an argument. Research is not just reading what everybody else has already written, it is discovering how things work or why things happened they way they did.

Finally, you will have the opportunity to learn outside the seminar room. The program occasionally hosts guest speakers and you can be sure that several of your classes will take you into the field in order to connect with many of the things you are reading about. In recent years, our students have traced the footsteps of civil rights activists from the 1960s; we have taken trips to Everglades National Park and the rapidly vanishing scrub habitat of Archbold Biological Station near Lake Placid; we've crossed the St. Johns River via ferry boat; we've eaten seafood in Apalachicola and toured Florida's most significant hydroelectric power plant near Chattahoochee. And we have taught students to appreciate local environments by canoeing on (and occasionally in!) several central Florida rivers; we've also tramped through Ybor City, Weedon Island, Egmont Key, and the Green Swamp.

Faculty and Advising

Students in the Florida Studies Program are provided academic and curricular guidance by the Program Director. Before each semester, the Program Director will distribute a list of graduate level courses that can be counted toward your master's degree in the Florida Studies Program. If you are interested in a course not on that list, please ask the Program Director if that class can be counted toward your degree requirements.

Sometime before you complete 12 credit hours, you should formally adopt a major professor who will provide you research guidance for the rest of your master's degree program. Your major professor can be *any* full-time USF St. Petersburg faculty member (remember that librarians are also faculty members), although the most likely candidates appear on

the list of Florida Studies contributors on page 4 of this handbook. Just fill out a simple signature form (see attached), get your major professor's signature, and deliver this form to the Snell House for the Program Director's approval before completing 12 credit hours. It is that simple. Get over being shy and get to know the Program's faculty during the early part of your academic career so that you can adopt a major professor sooner rather than later!

Continuous Enrollment and Time Limit Requirements

USF St. Petersburg is committed to helping students graduate in a timely manner. To help ensure this happens, students are required to register for at least SIX (6) credit hours in each three consecutive semester period after they have been admitted to the program. Although the summer is divided into A, B, and C terms, coursework taken during any of these terms is, for the purposes of this requirement, credited to the "summer semester." For example, if students take three (3) credit hours during the fall term, and zero (0) credit hours during the subsequent spring term, they must take at least three (3) credit hours during the summer semester (or apply for a leave of absence) in order to meet the university's continuous enrollment requirement. Also, graduate students must complete all degree requirements within FIVE (5) years of admission into the graduate program. Part-time students in particular are expected to keep track of their progress, and if they encounter circumstances that prolong their course of study, they should discuss with their major professor the possibility of applying to the Office of Graduate Studies for a time-limit extension.

USF St. Pete Faculty contributing to the Florida Studies Program:

Dr. Ray Arsenault: political, social and environmental history; Southern history; civil rights; regional culture.

Dr. Julie Armstrong: literature of the civil rights movement; African American and Southern literatures, 19th and 20th century American literature; Women's Literature; Creative Non-Fiction.

Dr. Susan Fernandez: Florida and film; Latin American and Caribbean history.

Dr. Thomas Hallock: early American and Florida literature; William Bartram; experiential learning, nature writing.

Dr. Al Hine: geological oceanography; coastal sedimentary environments.

Dr. Seth McKee: Southern politics; the presidency and congress; campaigns and elections; public opinion.

Dr. Christopher Meindl: environmental geography, wetlands and public policy; water resources; sustainability; the Florida environment.

Dr. Gary Mormino: modern Florida history; immigration history; World War II; food and history.

Dr. Melanie Riedinger-Whitmore: ecology of Florida, aquatic ecology, wetland ecology, and paleolimnology of lakes in Florida.

Mr. James Schnur; archival management; local and Florida history.

Dr. Mark Walters; journalism; science and medicine; feature writing.

From time to time, other USFSP faculty members offer courses that are appropriate for Florida Studies students. If you find an interesting graduate course in the USFSP class schedule, please ask the Program Director if it can be counted toward your MLA in Florida Studies.

Remember, if you take classes without first receiving approval from the Program Director, you risk not being granted credit for those classes in the Florida Studies Program.

Classes and Seminars

The Florida Studies Program is truly interdisciplinary; we demand that students take classes/seminars from several academic disciplines. We view this as an intellectual strength. At the same time, some students may ultimately wish to concentrate on a particular academic discipline or field of inquiry. For example, our campus generally offers sufficient coursework to prepare students for doctoral level study in history, literature, and geography. Moreover, the absolute minimum qualification required to teach lower division (1000-2000 level) college classes in Florida is a master's degree, *including* 18 graduate level credit hours of coursework in the field one is teaching. Finally, the vast majority of our courses and seminars are available at night (6-9 pm), so it is possible to work during the day and complete degree requirements in the evening.

Curriculum

ALL graduate students in the Florida Studies Program shall complete a total of at least 33 credit hours of coursework, at least 23 of which must be at the 6000 level. There are five core area course requirements*: Intro to Florida and Regional Studies (which you should take as early in your program as possible); Modern Florida History; Florida or Southern Politics; Nature Writing or Florida Literature; and a course in some aspect of the Florida environment (see options below). With permission from the Program Director, FSP graduate students may take up to FOUR (4) credit hours at the 4000 level and (if you earn at least a B) have this counted toward your master's degree. Under no circumstances will graduate students be permitted to count any courses below the 4000 level toward a master's degree. *Florida Studies Program core courses:*

<u>Course #</u>	<u>Core Course Name</u>
AMS 6934	Intro to Florida and Regional Studies
HIS 6939	History of Florida
POS 6xxx	Florida or Southern Politics
AML or LIT 6xxx	Florida Literature or Nature Writing
*GEA/EVR/HIS 6xxx	Sem. in Adv. Regional Geog (Fla.) or Ecology of Fla. or Wetlands, People and Public Policy or Environmental History

* This forthcoming requirement has not yet made its way into the university catalog. Accordingly, for all students beginning coursework in the Florida Studies Program before Fall 2012, the Florida environment requirement is merely a recommendation.

ALL Florida Studies Program graduate students will take either THREE (3) credit hours of directed research **or** SIX (6) credit hours of master's thesis toward the end of their program (see thesis and non-thesis track options below). The 3 credits of directed research **or** 6 credits of thesis shall be counted toward your required minimum of 33 credit hours.

Remaining course work must be approved prior to each term by the Florida Studies Program Director. With prior approval, students may apply to transfer up to 12 credit hours of graduate coursework (with a grade of B or higher) taken at USF Tampa or some other accredited graduate program. WARNING: Students who take unauthorized courses may end up not being able to count them toward their FSP master's degree at USF St. Petersburg. Always ask!

Most graduate level classes are offered only once every two years, so students should always make every effort to take required classes when they are offered.

Keep in mind that most graduate level courses demand much time outside of class reading and writing, and that 9 or 10 credit hours (three classes) in any given semester is considered a full-time course load. The Florida Studies Program offers two basic tracks: a thesis option and a *non-thesis* option.

THESIS TRACK: graduate students must take at least 27 credit hours of course work, and at least SIX (6) credit hours of thesis (AMS 6971) for a grand total of at least 33 credit hours. A thesis is strongly recommended for those who think they might ultimately pursue doctoral level study, or who might want to write a book in the future. Graduate students may take more than 6 credit hours of thesis during their academic career (although only SIX (6) credits are counted toward one's master's degree

requirements), and they may take small numbers of thesis credits spread over more than one term—but ALL graduate students must be registered for at least TWO (2) credit hours of thesis in the term they intend to defend and submit their thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies for final processing. Keep in mind that the University requires that students must register for at least TWO (2) credits (of anything) in the semester they intend to graduate. In most cases, students register for two credits of thesis because this is their last requirement; however, if students complete and submit their thesis in a term before they intend to graduate, they still have to register for at least TWO (2) credit hours of coursework/independent study in the term they intend to graduate.

An acceptable master's thesis is a significant study, generally between 75 and 120 pages, in which students work closely with a committee comprised of three faculty members. One of these committee members may be a professor from off campus (USF Tampa, Eckerd, or elsewhere) or even a working professional with an intimate knowledge of your research area (perhaps a museum curator, government employee, or local author); but remember, your major professor must be a full-time faculty member at USF St. Petersburg. The student's major professor shall serve as the thesis committee chair and should provide the bulk of the advice and guidance on thesis preparation. Faculty members provide guidance, but students have to do the work! Typically, a thesis should identify some gap in our knowledge; elucidate one or more research questions that you hope to answer or shed some light upon; survey the published literature related to the subject of your research; establish relevant theoretical and methodological concerns while explaining how you intend to investigate your research questions; review the evidence you assemble and explain what you have discovered; and summarize your conclusions and your contribution to our understanding of the research questions you posed.

Humanities-based students pursuing the thesis track need not feel shackled by the format outlined above. We welcome creative theses (novels, poetry, film, photography, etc.), but these should include a critical introduction (20-30 pages) that situates the work within the appropriate artistic, historical and/or cultural context. Note: students pursuing non-traditional theses should have a demonstrated background, or have completed courses, that prepare them to work in that medium.

Before beginning serious work on a master's thesis of any sort, students are required to prepare a thesis research proposal and seek approval for the proposed work from your major professor, at least one other committee member *and* the Program Director. The proposal should be between 10-15 pages long, and outline the proposed major elements of

the thesis including problem statement and research question(s), proposed research methods and sources of data/evidence, brief review of relevant literature, and expected findings or contributions to knowledge/the creative arts. It is expected that virtually all of the proposal can be used in the thesis. Thesis proposals are not considered approved until students have delivered the appropriate form to the Snell House and the Program Director signs off (see attached).

Six credit hours of thesis generally calls for more effort than that associated with a pair of 3-credit hour seminars! You should know that unlike most writing assignments for classes, thesis writing involves frequent revision as students receive guidance from their major professor and other committee members. After the major professor and other committee members agree that a draft of the student's thesis is essentially complete, students will participate in a thesis defense, a public event where students summarize and answer questions about ("defend") their work in front of their thesis committee, as well as any other interested faculty and students. Major Professors should schedule the defense and inform the Program Director of the defense date at least one week in advance—but in any case, at least TEN (10) days before the deadline for submission to the Office of Graduate Studies. This is because despite much revision *before* the defense, the defense process usually exposes the need for further revisions.

Finally, the USF St. Petersburg Office of Graduate Studies maintains strict deadlines each term for submission of faculty-approved theses, which must meet format guidelines before being accepted by the university. Your faculty thesis committee is responsible for the *intellectual content* of your thesis, but the Office of Graduate Studies is responsible for the *format* of your thesis document—and just as you must make whatever revisions your faculty thesis committee calls for, you must make whatever format revisions the Office of Graduate Studies calls for (and in the time frame they call for them) in order to graduate. In an ideal world, you will work with the Office of Graduate Studies as you begin to write your thesis in order to minimize revisions at the end of the process. Click here for details:
<http://www.usfsp.edu/spgrad/Thesis.htm>

NON-THESIS TRACK: graduate students in this track must take at least 30 credit hours of coursework *and* at least 3 credit hours of AMS 6915/HIS 6914/GEO 6918/ENG 6916, all Directed Research. Before pursuing this directed research, all students engaging in this non-thesis option must submit a one-page description of their proposed final paper *and* the appropriate final paper proposal form with signatures (see

attached). The directed research will culminate in the production of a 25 to 40-page essay appropriate for submission to an academic journal. This final paper may not be as long as a thesis, but it will have to be a high quality product that must be approved by the student's major professor and at least one other Florida Studies faculty member. (see attached approval form).

Written Exams

ALL Florida Studies Program students must pass written exams based on THREE (3) different fields of academic inquiry (with questions written by three different professors). The purpose of these exams is to ensure that students demonstrate a level of interdisciplinary expertise appropriate for understanding a variety of Florida issues. Exam questions may be based largely (but not entirely) on course readings, but students intending to take written exams should consult with the faculty who will write the questions for preparation guidance. Graduate students are eligible to take their written exams after completing at least one class/seminar in each of three different fields (other than AMS 6934, Intro to Florida Studies); as a practical matter, students generally take their written exams toward the end of their program coursework but before significant work on their theses or final papers. Moreover, you may take each exam separately. After making arrangements with a professor to take an exam on a particular date, students will obtain hard copies of their exam question(s) from a staff or faculty member in the Snell House. Each written exam generally consists of two broad ranging questions (with an option to answer one or the other) about an academic area the student has studied, to be answered without reference materials of any sort. Proceed upstairs to the seminar room to compose your response and send it as an e-mail attachment to the appropriate faculty member. Grades for each portion of this exam shall be given as follows:

- Pass:* acceptable answer; no further work required
- Conditional Pass:* partially acceptable answer; student will be required to elaborate (either orally or in writing) on their answer.
- Fail:* unacceptable answer; student must re-take that portion of the exam after further study.

Professors grading each written exam will communicate the results (in e-mail or hard copy) to both the student *and* the program director, and a record of the grade for each exam will be placed in the student's file.

Oral Exam

ALL Florida Studies Program graduate students will sit for an oral exam based on the Introduction Florida and Regional Studies seminar. Students are eligible to take this exam only after passing AMS 6934 (Intro to Florida and Regional Studies) *AND* taking at least 25 credits of coursework. The purpose of this exam is to ensure that students are putting what they learn about Florida in the context of regional studies.

MAJOR PROFESSOR FORM

***MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS with a concentration in
FLORIDA STUDIES***

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA ST PETERSBURG

Date _____ USF ID# _____

(Student name) First Middle Last

requests that _____ from the Department of _____
(print *faculty* member name here) (print *Dept.* name here)

serve as his/her *Major Professor* and chair of their faculty advisory committee.

Major Professor (Signature) date

Florida Studies Graduate Student (Signature) date

Program Director (Signature) date

Date received by the Florida Studies Program _____

THESIS RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

***MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS with a concentration in
FLORIDA STUDIES***

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA ST PETERSBURG

Date _____ USF ID# _____

(Student Name) First Middle Last

Proposal Title (print or type):

We, members of the above-named student's faculty advisory committee, have read and approved the proposed thesis research project (attached) to be used in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Master of Liberal Arts degree with a concentration in Florida Studies. This form must be signed by the student's major professor and at least one other committee member.

Major Professor (print) (signature) date

Thesis Advisory Committee member (print) (signature) date

Thesis Advisory Committee member (print) (signature) date

Program Director (print) (signature) date

Date received by the Florida Studies Program _____

NON-THESIS OPTION
FINAL PAPER RESEARCH PROPOSAL FORM

MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS with a concentration in
FLORIDA STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA ST PETERSBURG

Date _____ USF ID# _____

(Student Name) First Middle Last

**Title of Proposed Non-Thesis Option Final Paper
(print or type):**

I have read and approve of this student's proposed non-thesis option final paper research project (one page minimum; attached) to be used in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Master of Liberal Arts degree with a concentration in Florida Studies. This form must be signed by the student's major professor and at least one other faculty advisory committee member.

Major Professor (print) (signature) date

Advisory Committee member (print) (signature) date

Program Director (print) (signature) date

Date received by the Florida Studies Program _____

NON-THESIS OPTION
FINAL PAPER APPROVAL FORM

MASTER OF LIBERAL ARTS with a concentration in
FLORIDA STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA ST PETERSBURG

Date _____ USF ID# _____

(Student Name) First Middle Last

**Title of Non-Thesis Option Final Paper
(print or type):**

I have read and approve of this student's non-thesis option final paper research project (attached) to be used in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the Master of Liberal Arts degree with a concentration in Florida Studies. This form must be signed by the student's major professor and at least one other faculty advisory committee member.

Major Professor (print) (signature) date

Advisory Committee member (print) (signature) date

Date received by the Florida Studies Program _____

Florida Studies Program Graduate Student Checklist

Term/Year

Completed Core classes for ALL Florida Studies Program graduate students:

_____ AMS 6934 Intro to Florida and Regional Studies

_____ HIS 6939 History of Florida

_____ POS xxxx Florida *or* Southern Politics

_____ AML or LIT 6xxx Florida Literature *or* Nature Writing

_____ * HIS or GEA or EVR 6xxx Seminar in Adv. Regional
Geog. (Fla.) *or* Ecology of Florida *or* Wetlands, People and Public Policy *or*
Environmental History

* This requirement is not yet in the catalog, so it is only a recommendation for all students admitted before fall 2012.

_____ Select your Major Professor and submit the signed *Major Professor Form* to the Snell House before you complete TWELVE (12) credit hours of course work.

_____ Pass your *Written Exams* after taking courses in three substantive fields (other than Intro course). Make sure you register for at least TWO (2) credit hours in the term you take these exams.

_____ Pass your *Oral Exam* on Florida and Regional Studies.

_____ Prepare a thesis research proposal (*or* non-thesis final paper project proposal) and submit the appropriate *Research Proposal Form* (with proposal) to the Snell House before you begin work on your thesis or final paper.

_____ *Continuous enrollment requirement*: make sure that you are registered for at least SIX (6) credit hours in any three consecutive semesters after being accepted into the graduate program.

For *Thesis Students*: Complete at least ELEVEN (11) credit hours of *elective* course work beyond the five core classes listed above:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Complete at least SIX (6) credit hours of thesis research (AMS 6971):

Term/Year of each thesis credit _____

_____ Register for at least TWO (2) credit hours of thesis in the semester you plan to defend and submit your thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies for final processing.

_____ Register for at least TWO (2) credit hours in the term you intend to graduate.

_____ Have your major professor schedule a *thesis defense*, and successfully defend your thesis no more than FIVE (5) years after you begin graduate study at USFSP. Thesis defenses should generally be scheduled not less than TEN (10) days before the deadline to submit theses to the Office of Graduate Studies (because the defense almost always generates additional revisions to your thesis).

_____ Submit an electronic copy (as a pdf) of your committee-approved thesis to Mr. Eric Douthirt in the Office of Graduate Studies here on the St. Pete campus.

_____ Complete any further edits of your thesis requested by the Office of Graduate Studies and submit (electronically) the finally revised edition to that office before the deadline posted for that semester.

For *Non-Thesis Option Students*: Complete at least FOURTEEN (14) credit hours of elective course work beyond the four core classes listed above:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Term/Year _____ course number and name:

Complete at least THREE (3) credit hours of *Directed Research* (AMS 6915/ HIS 6914/ GEO 6918/ ENG 6916):

Term/Year of Directed Research credit: _____

_____ *Register* for at least TWO (2) credit hours in the term you intend to graduate. In most cases, this requirement will be met by registering for your THREE (3) credit hours of Directed Research. If you do not complete or successfully defend your final paper in the term you expect to graduate, you must register for at least TWO (2) credit hours of any course (including any seminar or more directed research with a new topic) in the term you intend to graduate.

_____ Complete any further edits of your final paper requested by your Florida Studies faculty committee; submit one hard copy of the finally revised edition and a completed *Final Paper Approval Form* to the Snell House not later than final exam week during the term in which you plan to graduate.