BROCHURE: PhD PROGRAM, SOCIOLOGY

In the heart of Waterloo Region, the University of Waterloo is home to world-changing research and teaching. The University’s reputation for excellence and innovation attracts some of the most inspiring and creative graduate students and researchers in the world. The University of Waterloo is committed to significantly increasing research-based graduate studies at the University in the next decade, and recognizes the important need for more graduate programs in professional fields to meet the needs of Canada’s changing economy.

The University of Waterloo’s PhD program in Sociology is located in a department that provides a supportive, friendly, and intellectually vibrant environment in which to learn and to cultivate a sociological analysis of the most pressing issues confronting societies today. Our PhD program provides graduate students with a stronger understanding of social, political, economic, and cultural relations through sociological theory and methods, critical analysis, and interdisciplinary research training. Our program offers courses and research agendas in areas such as: law, crime, and security; knowledge, education, and digital media; migration, borders, and transnationalism; and social inequality and public policy. Our sociology faculty have a diverse range of research strengths and interests, including social theory, feminist analysis, criminology, socio-legal studies, surveillance, studies of migration and citizenship, education, health, and social policy, to name a few.

Our alumni engage in research that enables them to hold key positions in academic and non-academic environments. Some of our former PhD students are professors holding positions in and outside of Canadian universities, and others are working in the public, non-profit, non-governmental, and private sectors.

“The flexibility offered in this program truly lets me tailor my degree around my research interests. This is combined with amazing, helpful, and knowledgeable faculty as well as a collegial and innovative atmosphere that has made me feel more at home in UWaterloo Sociology than anywhere else before.”
Patrick Lalonde (2nd Year, PhD Candidate) Borders, security, policing, governance.

“I really like that faculty and advisors in this department are truly invested in my personal success. This department also does a fantastic job at bringing in a diversity of guest speakers / lecturers, which gives graduate students wonderful opportunities for networking and exploring new areas of research.”
Angela Willmott (2nd Year PhD Candidate) Critical migration and citizenship studies; governance of refugees; women and gender studies.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admission requirements for students seeking admission to the PhD program are as follows:
• normally a Master's degree or its equivalent in Sociology with at least an A- average (80%) in course work;
• three letters of reference from academic sources;
• official transcripts from all other post-secondary institutions;
• a sample of written work, preferably a chapter from the MA thesis;
• a curriculum vitae;
• a statement of academic interest (approximately a page, outlining areas of interest and reasons for choosing to study at the University of Waterloo);
• proof of competency in English (if applicable). A score of at least 600 is required in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). See Academic Regulations - English Language Proficiency Certification for other acceptable tests of English;
• (optional) applicants may choose to submit results from the Graduate Record Examination (both the General Section and the Special Field, Sociology).
APPLICATION AND DEADLINES

The deadline for applications is February 1 for Fall admission. Applications received after this deadline will be considered only if positions are available. You can access the online application at this website: https://uwaterloo.ca/discover-graduate-studies/ready-apply

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Excellence in our PhD program, and in all graduate studies at the University, is supported through the availability of funding so that our students can devote their time and energy to the successful completion of their studies and research.

The department provides financial support to PhD students in the form of teaching assistantships, research assistantships and scholarships. Full-time PhD students typically receive eight teaching assistantships, contingent upon the achievement of satisfactory progress in their degree programs (see below). In addition, there are a number of scholarships awarded each year to students with superior academic records. Both incoming and continuing students are automatically considered for these awards.

In order to be eligible for financial support from the department, students are required to make satisfactory progress in their academic programs. An important indicator of "satisfactory progress" is the timely completion of basic academic program requirements (namely, graduate course work, comprehensive examinations, dissertation proposal, and dissertation).

Note: Students are also reminded that there are other external scholarships (e.g. OGS, SSHRC, CIHR) for which they may apply. See also: President's Graduate Scholarship.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Students must complete the following PhD requirements:

- five graduate-level one-term courses (with a unit weight of .50 each) beyond the MA degree, three of which must be selected from regularly scheduled graduate courses;
- professional development seminar
- two comprehensive examinations
- dissertation proposal
- dissertation

Note: Course work beyond these minima may be required at the discretion of the Associate Chair, Graduate Affairs. Additional course work may be required if the student's MA preparation is not the equivalent of that required for the MA degree in Sociology at the University of Waterloo. Students whose area of specialization and/or thesis requires familiarity with a subject not normally given in the Department of Sociology are encouraged to undertake additional work in the appropriate department. If further course work is required, the student will be notified in writing at the time of entry into the program.

ACADEMIC COURSE WORK

Students will take five courses. Normally, PhD students will fulfill their course work requirements by taking:

- at least three of the five courses as regularly scheduled sociology graduate courses;
- reading courses from UW sociology faculty or adjuncts (maximum 1);
- regularly scheduled courses in other UW cognate departments (maximum 1);
- regularly scheduled courses at other universities where no equivalent course is available at UW (maximum 1).
Note: The University of Waterloo has the largest post-secondary co-operative education program in the world. Students who choose the co-op option for the PhD program will be required to submit a work report upon completion of each work term placement. Any special course work requests will need the approval of the student's advisor/ supervisor and the Associate Chair, Graduate Studies. Normally, course work must be completed by the end of the fourth term of the PhD program. For further information on the co-op option, please see the University of Waterloo Co-Operative Education website.

Professional Development Seminar Milestone
The Professional Development Seminar Milestone is required of all PhD candidates. In this seminar, faculty members provide information on topics relevant to PhD students, including scholarship applications, conference presentations, choosing a supervisor, socialization into the discipline, job applications, and academic publishing.

A Selection of our Graduate Courses
PhD students are able to choose from a wide variety of graduate courses in Sociology, such as:

SOC 696 Sociology of the Life Course
SOC 700 Sociological Theory
SOC 704 Key Theoretical Debates
SOC 707 Canadian Sociological Thought
SOC 709 Selected Problems in Sociological Theory
SOC 710 Intermediate Social Statistics
SOC 712 Element of Social Research
SOC 714 Ethnographic Research in the Social Sciences
SOC 715 Research Design
SOC 716 Qualitative Methods
SOC 720 Social Inequality
SOC 725 Sociology of Health
SOC 744 Sociology of Crime and Justice
SOC 751 Theories of Gender Relations
SOC 760 Social Networks
SOC 765 Political Sociology
SOC 776 Sociology of Knowledge
SOC 781 Global Development Governance
SOC 782 Law, Globalization and Women’s Empowerment
SOC 783 Security and Regulation
SOC 784 International Migration
SOC 789 Graduate Readings in Sociology

“As a student, my time here has been incredibly enriching. Our smaller department size fosters a welcoming and supportive environment that allows students to develop relationships with fellow colleagues and faculty members. The connections we have with the Balsillie School of International Affairs provide a means to form relationships with an extended group of well-established academics and researchers. Finally, students in the department are provided with opportunities to gain much desired hands-on research experience that builds upon theoretical and practical understandings of our social world.”

Laura Connoy (3rd year PhD Candidate) Migration, refugees, citizenship and border studies.

“I find that our graduate program offers one of the most flexible yet rigorous environments in which to not only excel in the PhD program, but to gain expertise in core fields such as sociological methods and theory. Although I still have much work ahead of me, I am quite happy I returned to this department after my MA, and would recommend it to anyone interested in pursuing graduate studies in Sociology.”

Michael Holland (3rd Year PhD Candidate) Education, post-secondary recruitment.
“As a PhD student, I have benefited from excellent mentorship and practical experience in conducting research, preparing publications and presenting at conferences. Students work closely with faculty and with each other in ways that are only possible in small departments, but the research training opportunities here compete with much larger graduate programs.”

-Amelia Howard (4th Year PhD Candidate) Social theory, cultural sociology, and digital sociology.

PhD DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

A Dissertation Committee consists of four members: the supervisor, two members of the Department, and a fourth faculty member from outside the Department of Sociology but within the University who will serve as the internal/external examiner. Committee members are chosen by the student and supervisor in consultation. The internal/external examiner may be chosen when the committee is originally formed or added later, at the discretion of the student and the supervisor. It is possible to have a faculty member from another university serve as a member of the Dissertation Committee, subject to the approval of the supervisor, the Associate Chair, Graduate Affairs, and the Associate Provost, Graduate Studies.

PhD DISSERTATION

Normally, the candidate must submit a proposal for the PhD dissertation no later than the end of the eighth term. The proposal should contain a detailed statement of the research problem and its significance for a body of sociological theory, a precise account of the methodology or research techniques to be employed, and a detailed outline of the proposed data analysis. The dissertation proposal will be circulated and defended before the student’s Dissertation Committee but need not include the internal/external examiner.

Once the dissertation is completed, there is an oral defence. The Examination Committee consists of the Dissertation Committee and a senior examiner from another university. A copy of the dissertation is retained in the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies Office and is available for inspection by Sociology faculty and graduate students prior to the oral examination.

For more detailed information regarding the PhD dissertation regulations and procedures see “The Supervisory Process: A Guide for Faculty and Graduate Students”. For university regulations pertaining to the format of the dissertation, submission dates, etc., please see the “Thesis Regulations”. Students are advised to consult the Graduate Course Catalogue for information on general regulations concerning graduate programs at the University of Waterloo.

PhD COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

PhD students must complete two comprehensive exams in one of our thematic areas while demonstrating mastery of relevant theory and methodology. Students may take more than one comprehensive examination in a thematic area; however, they must be distinct and sufficiently comprehensive to merit the title comprehensive examination.

Committees

Comprehensive Exam Committees will have three faculty members, all selected by the student. One is selected to serve as the chair of the committee. This chair should be a full-time member of the department. Ordinarily, the other two members would also be full-time faculty appointments from the Department.

There may be times when the specialized expertise required to mount an appropriate examining committee does not exist within the department. In this and other aspects of the comprehensive examination policy, the department will be guided by the principles that we use in supervising PhD dissertations; i.e., faculty members should be free to set and assess an examination and construct a committee that meets appropriate standards of academic excellence.

It is possible for two of the three committee members to be from either (a) other departments in the university or (b) other universities. Where the student and committee propose having one or more members from outside the department, this must be approved by the Graduate Officer.
Format
Students may take comprehensive exams in one of two formats: (1) a six-hour written examination; or (2) a take-home examination with oral defence.

Six-hour written examination
- A reading list is negotiated between the student and the committee. It may in no case contain more than 50 items.
- The examination is divided into two three-hour sessions – one in the morning and one in the afternoon – with a one hour break between sessions. Separate sets of questions will be handed out for the morning and the afternoon sessions, with the answer booklets or electronic files collected after each session.
- Normally, students are required to answer two out of four or five questions in each of the two sessions.
- Students may hand write the exam or use a computer provided by the Department.
- A member of the examining committee must preside over the administration of the written exam. S/he ensures that suitable space and all examination materials are provided. The committee member must remain in the Department for the duration of the examination in case any questions or problems should arise. A staff member may not supervise the exam.

Take-home examination with oral defence
- A reading list is negotiated between the student and the committee. It may in no case contain more than 50 items.
- The comprehensive examination takes the form of a set of questions. The number of questions is agreed upon by the student and the committee.
- Normally, students are required to answer two out of three or four questions. The entire examination (not including references) cannot exceed 40 pages (double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins).
- The oral defence does not involve a presentation by the student and normally does not last more than two hours.

Timing
The first comprehensive exam will be written in the second year of the PhD program by October 31st. The second comprehensive exam must normally be written by April 30th. Writing the exam on a different timeline would require permission from the Graduate Affairs Committee.
The 18-week timeline for the six-hour written examination is as follows:
- The committee has two weeks to approve the reading list.
- The student has 12 weeks to read the materials (starting between July 24 and August 7 for the October 31 exam or January 23 and February 6 for the April 30 exam).
- The exam will be administered within two weeks of the end of the 12 week period, on October 31 or April 30 (or the following Monday).
- The committee marks the examination and individually submits their assessment within two weeks.

The 18-week timeline for the take-home examination with oral defence is as follows:
- The committee has two weeks to approve the reading list.
- The student has 12 weeks to read the materials (starting between July 24 and August 7 for the October 31 exam or January 23 and February 6 for the April 30 exam).
- The student is given the examination within two weeks of the end of the 12 week period, on October 31 or April 30 (or the following Monday) and has one week (7 days) to submit the written exam. Failure to submit within this time frame constitutes a failure of the examination.
- The committee schedules the oral defence to take place within two weeks of receiving the written exam.
- The committee marks the examination and notifies the Graduate Officer within two weeks.

Reporting of results
All comprehensive exams are assessed on a pass/fail basis.
Six-hour written examination
Each of the three examiners will independently assign a grade of (pass or fail) and provide written feedback on each answer, as well as the examination overall. These assessments (grades and comments) will be signed, i.e. are not anonymous. In the case of passing answers, the feedback may be quite brief.

These comments and results will be transmitted in writing to the Graduate Officer (or his/her designate, normally the Chair) within two weeks of the date the examination was taken. Overall passing grades from two out of the three examiners constitute a passing grade on the examination.

In the event that two of three examiners submit overall failing grades for a student, the Graduate Officer (or his/her designate) will convene a meeting of the examining committee to review the decision. Members of the examining committee may change their decision at this meeting.

The Graduate Officer will inform the student in writing of the result of the examination as soon as possible, normally within a week of grade submissions by committee members. The student will be provided with a copy of the examiners’ written comments.

Take-home examination with oral defence
The examining committee decides after the oral defence whether or not the written submission and the oral defence constitute a pass or fail. The decision is made within two weeks of the oral defence. There are no rewrites or revisions. If the examining committee cannot come to a consensus on whether the exam is a pass or fail, then they must vote. Two votes in favour constitute a pass. The Chair of the examining committee will notify the Graduate Officer in writing of the committee’s decision. After receiving the results from the Graduate Officer, a student may request to meet with his/her examiners individually or as a group.

Appeals and retakes
Internal appeals
Students may appeal their grades on procedural grounds to the Graduate Officer and the Department’s Graduate Affairs Committee.

External appeals
The University of Waterloo’s Student Grievance Policy describes additional appeal procedures administered outside the Department.

Retakes
A student has one chance to retake a failed comprehensive examination. They must take the examination in the same field and the same area, but they can choose any format and may strike a different examining committee. Students who fail the retake will be forced to withdraw from the program. Any retake of a failed comprehensive examination must be completed within 12 months of the notification that the student failed the first attempt. If registration is interrupted (e.g., if student changes to inactive status), the one-year time period will be based on the total number of months of regular registration from the original notification that the student failed the first attempt.

THE DEPARTMENT’S THEMATIC AREAS

Our faculty members place a high value on research and teaching that engages with fundamental and crucial aspects of social life. A wide array of sociological and socio-legal research projects are conducted by our faculty and students in four thematic areas.

Crime, law, and security
Crime, law, and security raise pressing issues for understanding contemporary policing and security practices and their cultural, political, and socio-legal implications. Our researchers study the causes, institutional responses to, and governance of crime, deviance, and anti-social behaviour. Our diverse and active faculty support theoretically informed research in a range of substantive areas such as border security, criminal justice, criminal networks,
national and international security, organized crime, policing, punishment, security and surveillance studies, socio-
legal studies, and terrorism.

Knowledge, education, and digital culture
Knowledge, education, and digital cultures examines the development, conditions, and transmission of knowledge,
values, and practices. Our researchers study how social contexts and informal and formal processes relate to the
following origins of ideas, ideology, scientific and technical expertise, human development, social structures, and
social stratification. Such research spans various levels of analysis, ranging from the individual to the structure of
relations among institutions. Faculty and graduate students working in these areas investigate a range of topics
including think tanks, intellectual networks, the culture of cities, parenting, the organization of schooling, academic
achievement, new media, and gaming.

Migration, borders, and transnationalism
Migration within and between countries has reached unprecedented levels and continues to shape the societies we
live in. Simultaneously, the proliferation of border and migration controls contributes to an increase in inequality
and violence and to the classification of populations as citizens and non-citizens, and as wanted and unwanted
migrants. Such practices shape political, legal, and cultural frameworks and have lasting effects on migrants and
their socio-economic wellbeing, as well as on areas of origin, transit, and destination. Faculty and graduate students
working in this area investigate how migration, borders, and transnationalism intersect with issues of global and
national inequality, freedom of movement, citizenship and belonging, humanitarian and development governance,
and security.

Social inequality and public policy
There are many dimensions of systematic inequality in society. Scholars of social inequality and public policy are
interested in understanding the production and reproduction of systematic inequality, and social policy’s role in
these dynamics. Dimensions of inequality include age, race/ethnicity, income, Aboriginality, gender, religion,
immigration status, sexuality, rural/urban geography, health status, and (dis)ability and social class, among others.
Social policy areas of focus include educational policy, health and health care, pensions and income support,
welfare, social assistance, environmental legislation, immigration and security, and policing and law enforcement.

FACULTY RESEARCH

Within the four thematic areas, our faculty secure research grants and conduct projects on a broad range of topics.

Faculty

Janice Aurini. Organizations; occupations; professions and education; inequality; qualitative methods
Philip Boyle. Security and policing; surveillance; urban governance
Peter J. Carrington. Life-course criminology; juvenile justice; social networks; criminal networks; research
methods and statistics
Martin Cooke. Life course; welfare state; population health and labour force ageing; social demography of
Aboriginal peoples; research methods. Jointly appointed at School of Public Health and Health Systems
Lorne Dawson. Sociology of religion; sociology of science; sociological theory; New Religious Movements
(NMR); religion and violence; terrorist radicalization
Weizhen Dong. Sociology of health; social determinants of health; comparative health care systems; health, illness
and society
Owen Gallupe. Individual and group offending dynamics; substance use; social networks; drug
dealing/smuggling.
Rick Helmes-Hayes. Sociological theory; history of Canadian sociology; knowledge, education and digital
culture.
Suzan Ilcan. Mobilities and migration; humanitarianism; refugees and refugee camps; social justice and
citizenship; global governance; international aid; critical development studies.
Cetta Mainwaring. Irregular migration; asylum seekers and refugees; migration politics and management;
international relations; border studies.
John McLevey. Sociologies of science and knowledge; technology; comparative cultural sociology; sociological theory and methods; social movements. Primary association with Department of Knowledge Integration

E.D. (Adie) Nelson. Criminology; victimology; sexuality and the law; gender; law and literature.

Daniel O’Connor. Security and policing; borders and governance; regulation and law; social theory.

Jennifer Schulenberg. Criminology; juvenile delinquency; policing; criminal justice system; socio-legal responses to crime; mental health; quantitative and qualitative methods.

Rashmee Singh. Post-colonial feminist thought; gender violence; civil society-state relations; governance and regulation; sociology of law; criminology.

Jennifer R. Whitson. Sociology of digital media; governance of online spaces; game and software studies; surveillance studies; qualitative methods.

Affiliated faculty

Kieran Bonner. Radical interpretive theory and methodology; culture; power; Socratic tradition of inquiry.

Primary association with St. Jerome’s University

Susan Brophy. Historical relation between law and capitalism; legal theory; political economy.

Primary association with St. Jerome’s University

Fred Desroches. Criminology; legal studies.

Primary association with St. Jerome’s University

Kristina Llewellyn. History of education; sociology of education; gender, democracy, and schooling; teaching profession; civics curriculum; global citizenship education; oral history; qualitative methods.

Primary association with Renison University College

Tracy Peressini. Gender inequality and homelessness; single parents mental health; Aboriginal poverty; role of pets in the health and well-being of Canadians.

Primary association with Renison University College

Sharon Roberts. Transition to adulthood; identity resolution; youth and risk-taking; eating disorders; mental health; primary healthcare evaluation; furries.

Primary association with Renison University College