

**WELCOME TO THE
FLORIDA
STUDIES
PROGRAM**

AT USF ST. PETERSBURG

**GRADUATE STUDENT
HANDBOOK**

JULY 2020

TABLE of CONTENTS

<u>Introduction</u>	3
<u>What we Offer</u>	3
<u>Admission to the Florida Studies Program</u>	4
<u>Program Highlights</u>	5
<u>Academic Advising and Mentorship in Florida Studies</u>	6
<u>USF St. Pete Faculty contributing to the Fla. Studies Program</u> ...	6
<u>Continuous Enrollment & Time Limit to Degree Requirements</u> ..	7
<u>Classes and Seminars at USFSP—and Transfer of Credit</u>	8
<u>Academic Program</u>	9
<u>Thesis or Non-Thesis Option</u>	10
<u>Research Proposal</u>	11
<u>Research Proposal Defense and Comprehensive Exam</u>	11
<u>Thesis</u>	12
<u>Thesis Defense and Final Approval</u>	12
<u>Non-Thesis Option</u>	13
<u>Funding for Graduate Students</u>	14

Introduction

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, Anthropology, Political Science, English, 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 contemporary political challenges and re-writing the colonial history of the state, 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 public history and museum studies to education, water and land management, and public service. 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.

What we Offer

We offer a Master of Arts in Liberal Arts (MA) degree with a concentration in Florida Studies. Graduate students in our program often interact with and take classes alongside students in other programs, but it is important to keep in mind that each graduate degree program has its own requirements. Remember, the USF 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.

Moreover, some prospective students earn a master's degree from us with an eye toward teaching at the college level. This is possible, but students have to remember two things. First, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) demands that all instructors of lower level college classes have at least a master's degree that includes at least 18 graduate credit hours in the field one intends to teach. For example, students who want to meet minimum qualifications to teach history at the college level must have a master's degree (not necessarily in history) that includes at least 18 graduate credit hours in history. This holds true for teaching in other academic disciplines as well. Second, meeting the minimum qualifications for teaching at the college level is good, but each college/university has its own standards and makes its own hiring decisions. Reach out to the human resources office of schools where you might like to teach for guidance on what THEY want from applicants.

Admission to the Florida Studies Program

Degree-seeking students admitted to the FSP are normally required to have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, and have an overall undergraduate grade point average of 3.0. A limited number of exceptions to these requirements can occasionally be authorized. For example, those applicants whose undergraduate grade point average (GPA) is less than 3.0 might demonstrate their suitability for graduate study by taking the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and earning a score of at least 153 on the verbal section and 144 on the quantitative section. Alternatively, applicants with GPA's below 3.0 might consider taking up to twelve (12) credit hours of graduate level coursework as a *non-degree seeking student*. Solid performance in such classes is not a guarantee of admission to the FSP, but it helps provide evidence of suitability for graduate study. Finally, 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 are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but in general, no more than two approved courses taken at other institutions can be transferred to any graduate program at USF St. Petersburg. Those with more than 6 graduate credit hours in another USF graduate program who are interested in Florida Studies are encouraged to speak with the program director.

The Florida Studies Program also requests a two-page letter outlining your academic interests, your goals and objectives related to graduate school and beyond, and relevant life experiences. We would also like to know which faculty member appears to have academic interests closest to your own, because this professor might ultimately serve as your academic mentor. This letter, along with your application form and fee, writing sample, two letters of recommendation, as well as transcripts from institutions outside the USF system should be sent to the Office of Graduate Studies at USF St. Petersburg (NOT the Tampa campus). GRE scores (if available) may be sent to "USF" because graduate admissions staff members at USF St. Pete have access to these. Furthermore, applicants need not order transcripts of coursework taken at USF because this material can be accessed by graduate admissions staff. 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. Prospective applicants should note that we cannot guarantee a timely decision on any application packet received after the posted deadlines on the USF web page. Finally, the FSP will occasionally be able to offer Graduate Assistantships (GA) that begin in the Fall semester. In order to be considered for a GA, prospective students must submit complete applications not later than 1 February.

Program Highlights

All students in the Florida Studies Program are now required to take two core courses: HUM 6814 *Introduction to Graduate Study* and HUM 6815 *Research Seminar*. Students are also required to take any three of the Florida Studies Concentration courses from a menu of classes (discussed later). 12 credit hours of electives complete the coursework. Finally, all students will take at least 6 credit hours of *Thesis or Directed Research* (in which students work on a culminating research project; more on the difference between thesis and directed research later).

The practical significance of these requirements is that you may focus on a particular academic discipline, or you can pursue a more interdisciplinary program. The choice is yours.

Moreover, “consolidation” of the three campuses of USF means that it should be easier to take courses on other campuses. Courses on other campuses may still require pre-requisites, particular academic background, or permission of the instructor—but they might be options for you. Let us know if you want to take a class in Tampa.

Keep in mind that we offer several classes that focus entirely on, or contain significant content about, some aspect of the Florida experience—but we also offer many other classes that 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 rigorous scholarship.

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 weekly 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 and build an argument. Research is not just reading what everybody else has already written; it is discovering how things work or why things happened the 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 visited the state archives and capital in Tallahassee—and archives in Spain(!); traced the footsteps of civil rights activists from the 1960s; we have taken trips to the 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, jumped into some of the state's fabulous springs, 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. Perhaps our favorite place is Chinsegut Hill, a former plantation (with restored manor house and modern cabins for overnight stays) just north of Brooksville, Fla.

Academic Advising and Mentorship in Florida Studies

New students in the Florida Studies Program are initially provided academic and curricular guidance by the Program Director. Before each semester, the Program Director will distribute a list of graduate level courses (usually posted to the program web page) that can be counted toward your master's degree with 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. Although you can meet all degree requirements in St. Petersburg, now that USF is "consolidated," FSP students should have easier access to classes on the Tampa campus.

Sometime before you complete 12 credit hours, you should formally adopt a major professor who will provide you research and curricular guidance for the rest of your master's degree program. Your major professor can be *any* full-time, tenure-line, USF St. Petersburg faculty member with a Ph.D., although the most likely candidates are the professors that appear on the list of Florida Studies contributors listed below. 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!

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

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

Dr. Ray Arsenault (History): political, social and environmental history; Southern history; civil rights; regional culture; modern Florida history.

Dr. John Arthur (Anthropology): archaeology and coastal archaeology; beer production; Ethiopia; Weedon Island.

Dr. J. Michael Francis (History): early Florida history, Colonial Latin America; Spanish Paleography; Atlantic World.

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

Dr. Rebecca Johns (Geography): community organizing around economic or environmental issues; gender; labor; globalization.

Dr. Christopher Meindl (Geography): environmental historical geography; wetlands; springs; water management; geography of Florida.

Dr. Gary Mormino* (Professor of History Emeritus): modern Florida history; immigration history; World War II; food and history.

Dr. Brandon Shuler** (Courtesy Assistant Professor): environmental law; environmental lobbying; marine resource management; Florida literature.

** Dr. Gary Mormino has formally retired from USF. Although he still teaches on occasion, and he may serve on thesis committees, he is not required to sit on any committees and University policy prevents him from serving as committee chair.*

*** Dr. Brandon Shuler teaches part-time at USFSP. He can sit on thesis and non-thesis committees, perhaps serving as co-chair, but not committee chair.*

Continuous Enrollment and Time Limit to Degree Requirements

USF is committed to helping students graduate in a timely manner. To help ensure this happens, students are required to register for at least SIX 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 credit hours during the fall term, and zero credit hours during the subsequent spring term, they must take at least three credit hours during one of the summer terms in order to meet the university’s continuous enrollment requirement. If you violate this policy, the university will drop you from the FSP and you will have to re-apply to get back in. Better just to stay in.

Of course, life occasionally intrudes and forces students to back away from school for more than a few months. In these cases, it is best to contact the USF St. Pete Office of Graduate Studies and apply for a leave of absence. This can keep you in the program, even while not taking classes, for up to a year.

Also, graduate students must complete all degree requirements within FIVE years of admission into the 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.

Classes and Seminars at USFSP—and Transfer of Credit

The Florida Studies Program began in 2003 as an interdisciplinary program, and we still offer an interdisciplinary path. We view this as an intellectual strength. At the same time, some students may wish to concentrate on a particular academic discipline or field of inquiry. Our campus generally offers sufficient coursework to prepare students for doctoral level study in History, Geography, English, and Environmental Science and Policy; and we now offer limited coursework in Political Science and Anthropology, which can be combined with classes taken in Tampa to develop some specialization.

Keep in mind that most graduate level courses demand much time reading and writing outside of class, and that NINE credit hours (three classes) in any given semester is considered a full-time course load.

From time to time, USFSP faculty members not on the list above will offer courses that are appropriate for Florida Studies students. If you find an interesting graduate course in the USF class schedule, please ask the Program Director if it can be counted toward your master's degree with us in the Florida Studies Program. Remember, although classes need not be about Florida per se, 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. Better to check.

Many graduate level classes are offered only once every two years, so students should not assume that courses they like will be available the following term or even the following year. This is often not the case!

Most of our classes and seminars are available at night (beginning at 6:00 pm), so it is possible to work during the day and complete degree requirements in the evening.

The FSP offers a small number of classes in *hybrid* and on-line formats. Hybrid classes usually feature a limited number of longer class meetings, sometimes on Fridays and often on the road (field trips), combined with on-line work lectures, reading and research. It is not yet possible to earn a master's degree with us by taking only hybrid and on-line courses.

Finally, students may occasionally take classes elsewhere and apply to have such classes counted toward their master's degree in the Florida Studies Program. In general, no more than TWO approved courses, passed with a grade of at least B at institutions outside the USF System, can be transferred to any graduate program at USF St. Petersburg, including Florida Studies. FSP students may be authorized to transfer as many as 12 credit hours from USF Tampa into their master's degree program at USF St. Pete. Do not assume anything: ask your major professor or the Program Director before you take any coursework outside the USF system.

Academic Program

ALL graduate students in the Florida Studies Program shall complete a total of *at least 33 credit hours* of coursework. Graduate students are NOT permitted count any classes below the 5000 level toward the minimum of 33 credit hours required for the master's degree. Moreover, at least 20 credit hours must be in regularly scheduled classes. On-line and hybrid classes are considered "regularly scheduled" for the purposes of this requirement—BUT independent study, directed research or thesis credits do **not** count toward the 20 credit hours of "regularly scheduled" coursework rule. The Fla. Studies academic program has *four* parts:

1) Beginning in Summer 2020, ALL Florida Studies students are required to take the following **CORE** courses (*6 credit hours*):

HUM 6814 Introduction to Graduate Study
HUM 6815 Research Seminar

2) Beginning in Summer 2020, ALL Florida Studies students are required to meet a Fla. Studies **CONCENTRATION** requirement by taking *9 credit hours* from the following menu of courses:

HIS 6925 Colloquium in History (may be repeated with different content)
HIS 6939 Seminar in History (may be repeated with different content)
HIS 5114 Spanish Paleography I
HIS 5116 Spanish Paleography II
EVR 6072 Florida Springs
GEA 6195 Seminar in Advanced Regional Geography: Florida
BSC 6932 Selected Topics in Biology
LIT 6934 Selected Topics in English Studies
AML 6017 Studies in American Literature to 1860

3) Beginning in Summer 2020, ALL Florida Studies students are required to take at least *12 credit hours* of **ELECTIVE** classes. Students are often granted wide latitude to pursue courses that interest them. Keep in

mind, however, that we cannot offer every course, every semester! Recent elective courses include, but are not limited to:

History of the Modern South
The Long Civil Rights Movement
American Culture in the 1960s
Environmental History
Food and History
Finding Soto: Understanding the Hernando de Soto Expedition
Spanish Florida: Myth and History in Early America
African American Literature
Nature Writing
Florida Ecosystems
Seminar in Advanced Human Geography: Human-Animal Relations
Perspectives on Environmental Thought
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
GIS for non-majors
Qualitative Research Methods
Wetlands, People and Public Policy
Water Quality Policy and Management.

4) Beginning in Summer 2020, ALL Florida Studies students are required to take at least 6 credit hours of **Thesis*** or **Directed Research***

*Note: the specific prefix and course number may vary depending upon the academic discipline of the supervising professor. For example, students working with a history professor shall take thesis credits using HIS 6971; those working with a geography professor may take thesis credits using either GEO 6971 or EVR 6971, and so on and so forth.

Thesis or Non-Thesis Option

All Florida Studies Program students are expected to engage in research using primary sources or data before they graduate. The FSP offers two options for completing the required capstone research: a *thesis* option and a *non-thesis* option.

Graduate students must take at least SIX credit hours of *thesis* or *directed research*. You can take more than 6 credits of thesis or directed research, but only 6 credits will count toward your total of 33 credits required for the master's degree. Both thesis and directed research are essentially supervised independent studies. Writing a thesis, usually a 75 to 120-page study, is recommended for strong writers who think they might ultimately pursue doctoral level study, or who might want to write a book in the future. The non-thesis option is a shorter (25-40 pages) but

no less rigorous study that that is often pursued by working professionals or those aiming to join the work force upon graduation. Students who pursue the non-thesis option take directed research credits (which require a detailed contract specifying the work to be accomplished) rather than thesis credits.

Graduate students may take small numbers of thesis or directed research credits spread over more than one term—but ALL graduate students must be registered for at least TWO credit hours of *thesis* or *directed research* in the term they intend to gain final approval for their capstone work. Indeed, the University requires that students must register for at least TWO credit hours (of anything at the graduate level) in the semester they intend to graduate. In most cases, students register for two or more credits of *thesis* or *directed research* because this is their last requirement; however, if students complete and submit their thesis in a term before they intend to graduate (which is rare), they still have to register for at least TWO credit hours of coursework/independent study in the term they intend to graduate.

Research Proposal

Before beginning serious primary research on a thesis or non-thesis final project, you are required to prepare a research proposal and seek approval for the proposed work from your supervisory committee. The supervisory committee for thesis students shall consist of at least three faculty members; the chair shall be the student's major professor. A non-thesis student's committee shall consist of at least two faculty members.

A research proposal should include an *introduction* to the topic (including context and problem/thesis statement); a *literature review* (including research question); proposed *research methods* and analysis of *primary sources/data*, and complete bibliographic information for all *references cited* (format depends on academic discipline). It is expected that virtually all of the proposal can be used in the thesis or non-thesis final paper. A proposal serves as the first draft of the front half of one's thesis or non-thesis option final paper.

Research Proposal Defense and Comprehensive Exam

Faculty committee members must receive a copy of the research proposal at least TEN days before the defense. After students agree with their committee members on a date and time for the proposal defense, they should notify the Program Director who will advertise the defense to the FSP faculty and student cadre. A research proposal defense begins with a brief presentation of a student's proposed research project. This presentation is open to other students and faculty in the Florida Studies Program. After the presentation, degree candidates may field questions

from those not on the committee. After responding to these questions, the audience is excused and the student's committee continues the questioning. Since this defense exercise also serves as a comprehensive exam, committee members will ask broad-ranging questions related to research methods and literature related to the student's work, in addition to detailed questions about the proposed research.

A research proposal defense must occur no later than during the term before a student intends to graduate. You cannot defend your research proposal in the same term you plan to graduate! In any case, your research proposal is not considered approved until they are successfully defended and the Program Director receives affirmative confirmation from the student's major professor.

Thesis

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. Students pursuing the thesis option should submit to their major professor a complete draft of their thesis not more than one month into the term in which they plan to graduate. This ensures that major professors can help students revise their draft before sending it to the rest of the committee.

Thesis Defense and Final Approval

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 their work and answer questions about ("defend") their study 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 SEVEN days in advance—but in any case, at least TEN 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 Office of Graduate Studies maintains strict deadlines each term for the electronic submission of faculty-approved theses (usually one full month *before* the end of each term). The Electronic Thesis and Dissertation staff will engage in a format check to ensure that your thesis meets 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. IF YOU MISS DEADLINES, YOU WILL HAVE TO REGISTER AND TRY AGAIN THE FOLLOWING SEMESTER! Check out the following web page for deadlines and format guidance: <https://www.usf.edu/graduate-studies/students/electronic-thesis-dissertation/current-etd-deadlines.aspx>.

Non-Thesis Option

Graduate students pursuing the non-thesis option will also have to successfully defend their research proposals and ultimately register for at least 6 credit hours of directed research. For most non-thesis students, your work 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, and the final product need not be defended, 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. Although students need not follow the strict deadlines for thesis submission, non-thesis students should work closely with their major professors to prevent unpleasant surprises before the end of the term. Submission of your paper is not the same thing as faculty approval of your final paper!

Florida Studies students pursuing the non-thesis option need not feel shackled by the format outlined above. We welcome creative research projects (production and analysis of maps, novels, poetry, film, photography, and so forth), but these should include a critical introduction (20-30 pages) that situates the work within the appropriate geographic, artistic, historical and/or cultural context. Note: students pursuing non-traditional research projects should have a demonstrated background, or have completed courses, that prepare them to work in that medium.

Non-thesis final papers should be submitted to the committee no less than TEN days before the beginning of final exam week. Mere submission by the deadline is NO guarantee of approval. Like a thesis, non-thesis papers often require revision before final acceptance. Your non-thesis project is not approved until your major professor provides affirmative communication with the Program Director. If you turn in an unacceptable final paper right before the end of the term, and there is insufficient time for professors to read—and for you to revise—you work, you will NOT be certified to graduate that term and will have to register for two credits of directed research the following term.

Funding for Graduate Students

Graduate Assistantships: Early each spring semester, the College of Arts and Science will offer a small number of exceptionally well-prepared students (3.7 to 4.0 GPA) a graduate assistantship (GA). Most graduate assistants work 20 hours per week teaching science lab classes, and only those students qualified to teach science lab classes will be considered. On occasion, the College will award a graduate assistantship to a student to work on a funded research project or to serve as an editorial assistant with a couple of the academic journals edited by St. Pete campus faculty. Such assistantships call for enrollment in at least nine (9) credit hours of coursework (which can include thesis credits), with the exception that students in their last semester may register for as few as two (2) credit hours. The assistantship usually pays nearly \$12,000 per academic year (but not during summer) AND covers a GA's tuition (but not fees).

Gary R. Mormino Endowed Fellowship: Thanks to friends of the Florida Studies Program and the efforts of Dr. Gary Mormino, one of the founding co-directors of the FSP, we are now able to make modest funds available to selected students to help them complete the Florida Studies Program. A limited number of modest awards can be made on a competitive basis to thesis and non-thesis students who are in their final year of study and who are registered for at least FIVE credit hours. The FSP will announce procedures for this award at least one month before application materials are due.