

# RUTGERS

Camden College of  
Arts and Sciences

Department of Childhood Studies

*Handbook for  
Graduate Study in Childhood Studies*

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<http://childhood-studies.camden.rutgers.edu>

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## *Handbook for Graduate Study in Childhood Studies*

Welcome to graduate study in Childhood Studies at Rutgers University! We look forward to working with you to develop a new approach to scholarship with children.

This handbook summarizes our policies for the programs in Childhood Studies. Like many such handbooks, this one has many rules and regulations pertaining to problems—but please bear in mind that these problems arise rarely. The handbook is a convenient way to share our regulations and expectations, and you should consult it when questions arise concerning these regulations and expectations. However, please remember that many important—perhaps the most important—questions need to be explored and answered in consultation with your advisor (more about your advisor in a later section). Please don't be a stranger! Make use of your advisor's office hours when the need arises.

So, let's begin with the official language!

This document summarizes the pertinent policies and policies for graduate study, M.A. and Ph.D, in the Department of Childhood Studies. For more detailed information, please consult the official campus/university versions of these policies as posted on official web sites. These can be accessed **here**:

<http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/cam-grad/index.html>

Please note that the catalogue is under revision, and a new one will be posted in late 2007. The regulations in the graduate catalogue take precedence over all other communications.

### **Curriculum of the Doctoral Program in Childhood Studies**

Students in the **Doctor of Philosophy in Childhood Studies degree program** enroll in a core set of courses in order to acquire the interdisciplinary, theoretical, and methodological knowledge that is at the heart of Childhood Studies. This interdisciplinary coursework is the foundation for a series of investigations culminating in the dissertation through which students develop their expertise as scholars in Childhood Studies.

Throughout their studies, students in the Ph.D. program work closely with their advisors and other members of the faculty. Prospective students are encouraged to discuss their plans for graduate study with members of the faculty.

The doctoral program prepares both scholars capable of innovative interdisciplinary research in Childhood Studies and leaders in child-related social practice and policy.

## General Overview

The minimum requirement for the Ph.D. degree is 60 credits, of which at least 12 credits must be devoted to research. Full-time study for a semester is represented by a minimum of 9 credits of coursework or research. Time limits for completion of degree can be found in the Graduate School Catalog (<http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/cam-grad/index.html>).

If a student enters the doctoral program with a Master's degree or other graduate credit, up to 20 credits may be put toward satisfying the course/credit requirements of the Department of Childhood Studies. Please consult the graduate school catalogue (<http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/cam-grad/index.html>) for details.

## General Course requirements (one course usually earns 3 credits)

Required courses in research methodology	9 credits
Required Proseminar sequence	6 credits
Course requirement for "children in context"	6 credits
Thesis/Research	12 credits (minimum)
Electives and focused coursework in childhood studies	27 credits

## General Time-line for Completion for Full-time Study

### **Year 1**

Satisfy Proseminar requirements  
Secure an Advisor by end of Spring Term

### **Year 2**

(September) Undergo 18-Hour Review (required to continue studies)  
End of second year, all required courses should be completed

### **Year 3**

Complete coursework  
Assemble Preliminary Examination/Dissertation Committee

### **Year 4**

Take Preliminary Examination (includes Dissertation Proposal discussion)

## General Description of Course Requirements

### **Proseminar**

Each entering doctoral student is required to take the two-semester Proseminar (6 credits) in his/her first year of study. The Proseminar introduces beginning doctoral students to the history, theories, research and controversies of Childhood Studies and to the Department's faculty and their research. While gaining an overview of the central issues and learning a common language, students in the Proseminar begin to locate their own interests more precisely within the field of Childhood Studies. The Proseminar must be taken as a sequence beginning in the Fall term; Spring term admissions are not allowed.

### **Research Methods**

Within the 48 hours of course work, students must complete at least three courses in research methods (9 credits). In order to provide a useful background for understanding constructively the field's wide-ranging literature, and to develop competency in a variety of research methods appropriate to the study of children and childhoods, one course will normally be quantitative, another qualitative and a third in literary methods. It is highly recommended that students take these courses with departmental faculty, when possible, but may take relevant courses in quantitative or non-quantitative methods elsewhere on campus. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) if in doubt whether a specific course will satisfy the research methods requirement or not.

### **Children in Context**

To provide for a solid footing for interdisciplinary research, all students are required to complete at least two courses that examine children in context (6 credits). Typically, students fulfill this requirement by enrolling in two or more of the following four classes: *Child Growth & Development*, *Children and Childhood in Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, *Growing Up in History or Literary and Cultural Constructions of Childhood*.

### **Focused Coursework in Childhood Studies**

By the beginning of the second year of study, and in consultation with her or his advisor, each student devises a plan for focused coursework in Childhood Studies. These courses will assist the student in developing the interdisciplinary skills and knowledge necessary as preparation for the doctoral dissertation.

### **Independent Study/Directed Reading**

It is sometimes advantageous for students to undertake an independent study under the supervision of an appropriate faculty member if a student's specific interest cannot be satisfied by regularly offered courses. After obtaining preliminary approval from the faculty member with whom the student desires to work independently, the student, in consultation with the faculty member, devises a plan for the course, including the number of meetings and a brief description of any written work or other activities that will take place (e.g., travel to a research site) over the course of the independent study. Doctoral students are allowed up to 2 independent study courses in their degree plans (6 credits).

In order to register for an independent study course, the student must fill out a form, obtainable from the Childhood Studies Department, website, that outlines the purpose of the course and is signed by the faculty supervisor. A relevant bibliography of potential readings should be attached.

### **Cross-listed Undergraduate Courses**

In rare instances, students may take a cross-listed undergraduate course for graduate credit. The written consent of the course instructor and approval by the DGS are required. Specific course requirements (e.g., research, papers) to satisfy graduate credit for the course are at the sole discretion of the instructor.

## Advising, Review and Satisfactory Progress

### **Advising**

Entering students will receive advising from the DGS. Within the first year of graduate study, students should choose an advisor from the faculty. Because the relationship between the student and advisor is of primary importance in the graduate program, students should choose their advisor carefully. The advisor is the faculty member with whom the student will be consulting most closely during several years of sustained work.

Although the responsibility for meeting deadlines and fulfilling requirements for graduate study ultimately rests with the student, the advisor will assist the student in these matters and will become familiar with the student's academic interests and progress. The advisor will notify the student of slow or unsatisfactory advancement. The advisor should not only share the student's critical interests but also regularly meet with the student to review the student's progress through the program, to insure that the student is fulfilling requirements, to suggest course completion and exam schedules, and to explain exam procedures and arrangements.

Normally, the advisor will serve as the head of the Dissertation Committee and will coordinate the student's Preliminary Exams. As head of the student's Dissertation Committee, the advisor's role is central. She or he monitors the progress of the dissertation, routinely reads and comments on dissertation drafts, and confers with the other committee members regarding the dissertation's progress.

If the advisor whom the student has selected does not carry out the responsibilities outlined above, the student should discuss the matter with the DGS and/or consider choosing an advisor who seems better able to perform all the necessary advising duties.

### **18-Hour Degree Review**

In the beginning of the student's second year, an evaluation of his or her progress will be made by the Childhood Studies faculty. This review represents the Department of Childhood Studies' qualifying mechanism and is meant to assess each student's progress toward the doctoral degree. Students will provide the DGS with the following documents as their 18-Hour Degree Review dossier:

- A list of courses taken, by semester, with grades, and any required courses highlighted.
- A one-page (double-spaced) statement of purpose in which the student reflects upon his/her progress in the program to date and his/her specific goals and interests for the completion of the PhD. Students should indicate at least a general dissertation topic and dissertation director (permission should be granted in advance). The statement of purpose may also reflect information not presented elsewhere in the dossier, such as grants, awards, conference presentations, internships, etc.
- A writing sample of 10+ pages that represents the student's best work. This paper must have been written for one of the CS courses the student had taken in the previous year and should reflect the student's ability to write well, to synthesize information, and to advance an argument.
- The CS faculty, or a subcommittee of the faculty, will meet as a whole and vote on the progress of each candidate. Faculty will be looking for evidence that students are making adequate progress toward the doctoral degree and are prepared to take on the sustained and independent work represented by the dissertation. In order to pass the 18-Hour Doctoral Degree Review, a majority of the faculty must vote in favor of the candidate. Students will be informed of the decision of the faculty in a timely fashion, and a follow-up meeting with the DGS will be scheduled with each candidate.
- In cases where the student receives an unsatisfactory review, the student will be given the option of completing the academic year in the Master of Arts Program and earning a Master's Degree, provided that the M.A. requirements are fulfilled.
- The due dates for the review dossiers, and the date of the 18-Hour PhD Degree Review faculty meeting will be made available to the candidates in advance. Typically, the dossiers will be due in late September and the faculty meeting will take place in October.

### **Grading**

For University policy on grading, including resolution of grade disputes, consult the Graduate School Catalog (<http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/cam-grad/index.html>).

## **Preliminary Examination and Dissertation**

### **Preliminary Examination**

After completing at least 45 hours of graduate credit in an approved program, the student takes the preliminary examination. This exam is intended to test the student's knowledge of the broad field of Childhood Studies and his or her specialization. The preliminary exam should take place at the end of the student's third year or beginning of the fourth year.

The preliminary exam entails providing a written response to questions posed by each of the student's four committee members. The questions reflect a specialized interest or area of inquiry of mutual interest to the student and respective committee member. In preparation for the written exam, students meet with each committee member to work out a mutually agreed upon set of readings which cover a substantive area of research, theory or methodology. The purpose and

focus of identifying these areas of study is to build a knowledge base relevant to the student's dissertation research.

Students will have one week to respond to each of the four questions. The exact timing of when each exam will be taken is up to the student; however, the schedule for completion of the exam must be approved by the dissertation director and all four questions should be answered within a single semester or over the summer break.

The examination consists of two parts: a written examination covering the general field and the student's particular interest, and an oral examination usually given shortly after the written examination. The preliminary exam is meant to reveal the student's breadth and depth of knowledge on a chosen set of topics. The responses should demonstrate the student's ability to think critically, apply research knowledge, argue persuasively and in an organized manner, and to write well.

Discussion of the proposed dissertation forms part of the oral examination. During the oral segment of the preliminary exam, committee members ask the student to explain or elaborate on the responses to the exam questions, to provide a fuller account of the proposed dissertation thesis, and to explain in some detail the research necessary to undertake this project.

If the student is judged to have passed the preliminary exam, the student begins work on the dissertation. If the committee determines that the candidate has not performed adequately on either the written or oral portion of the preliminary examination, the student shall be informed orally and in writing. A student who fails any part of the preliminary exam will be allowed the option to retake that portion of the exam under the supervision of the committee chair. If a student fails the preliminary exam a second time, he or she must leave the program the following semester.

### **Dissertation**

Because the Doctor of Philosophy degree is primarily a research degree, candidates are required to demonstrate a capacity for independent research by producing an original dissertation on a topic connected with the special area of study. In Childhood Studies, the dissertation is expected to be of sufficient quality to form the first draft of a monograph suitable for publication or as the basis for several journal articles.

For a dissertation to be accepted for the Ph.D. degree, it must be presented and defended in a public dissertation defense before the dissertation committee. The dissertation must be in substantially final form, and all committee members given adequate time in which to read and judge whether or not it is ready to be defended, before a defense date can be scheduled. The committee chair must notify the DGS of the date and time of the defense at least two weeks in advance of the proposed defense date.

The defense is two hours long and should be scheduled early enough so that any revisions in the dissertation requested by the committee can be made prior to deadlines for graduation.

It is the student's responsibility to format the dissertation in accordance with University

guidelines and to deposit it in a timely manner.

## **Curriculum of the Master of Arts Program in Childhood Studies**

The Master of Arts in Childhood Studies equips practitioners and beginning scholars with the skills and knowledge to understand and to address the challenges which confront children throughout the world. The program prepares its graduates to conduct research with and about children, formulate social policy on behalf of children and their families, and work effectively with the diverse populations of children found throughout the world.

### **General Overview**

A student must devote a minimum of one-and-a-half years of full-time study beyond the bachelor's degree for the MA (30 credits). Full-time study for one semester is represented by a minimum of 9 credits of coursework or research. Successful completion of the degree program requires both fulfilling the credit requirement and the submission and defense of a major paper (the latter is described below).

### **General Course Requirements** (one course usually earns 3 credits)

The program is designed to accommodate the diverse interests of its students. With the advice of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), and after the first semester with that of their advisors, students design plans for interdisciplinary study appropriate for their intellectual and professional goals.

Typically students complete:

- 1) Six credits of work that present the intellectual tools necessary to engage in interdisciplinary research focusing on children (e.g., Interpretative Methods, Introduction to Graduate Literary Studies, Program Evaluation, Graduate Statistics);  
  
and
- 2) Six credits in courses that examine children in context (e.g, Philosophical and Religious Perspectives on Children and Childhood, Childhood in Cross-Cultural Perspective).

After nine credits of work, and in consultation with the advisors, each student should prepare a one page plan of study for the remainder of his/her coursework. This plan should identify the

classes in which the student intends to enroll and to outline why these courses are appropriate for the student's intellectual and professional goals. Upon completion, this plan must be submitted to the DGS.

### General Time-line for Completion for Full-time Study

#### **Year 1**

Take a variety of Childhood Studies courses

Fall semester, meet regularly with assigned advisor

By spring semester, choose an advisor who will be supervise the M.A. paper

#### **Year 2**

End of third semester, all required courses should be completed

Beginning of third or fourth semester (depending when graduation is anticipated), indicate intention to submit a final M.A. paper and take the oral exam (one day each semester TBA)

### Advising

By the end of the Fall semester or early in the Spring of the first year, students should identify a faculty member who will serve as her or his advisor and will consult concerning the major paper.

### M.A. Paper and Defense

The M.A. paper and its defense serve as the final requirements that must be satisfied prior to graduation. Ordinarily, the M.A. paper has its origins in a paper submitted for a graduate course in Childhood Studies. A student revises and enlarges this paper, and then submits it to his or her advisor for preliminary approval. Once a version acceptable to the advisor is completed, the student is approved for the oral examination. Oral examination dates are ordinarily scheduled in early May and late December of each year. The oral exam will be one hour in length and will be attended by the Childhood Studies faculty. The exam will consist of questions from the faculty about the student's coursework and the submitted paper. At the conclusion of the exam, the faculty will determine if the oral exam and paper have satisfactorily met the standards of competence in Childhood Studies and will inform the student immediately of its decision. If a majority of the faculty decide that the M. A. candidate has not met these standards, the student will be able to revise the paper and take another oral exam the following semester. No student may retake the exam more than once. Upon passing the M. A. paper and oral exam, the student will be admitted to candidacy for the M. A. degree.