

A TWO-YEAR INTERDISCIPLINARY  
MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE PROGRAM IN:



Environment  
&  
Community

PROGRAM HANDBOOK

*Adopted November 2004*

(most recent revision March 2009)

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## Summary of Policies, Procedures & Opportunities:

I. Please note that the official *Humboldt State University Handbook for Master's Students* and other relevant forms for all HSU graduate students are available online at: [http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/current\\_student.php](http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/current_student.php). Information may also be obtained by contacting the Office of Research and Graduate Studies in Siemens Hall 130, (707) 826-3949.

The information included below offers specific expectations and policies for students in this program, some of which exceed the minimum university requirements detailed in the *University Handbook*. It is important to note, however, that nothing printed here should be interpreted as contradicting or requirements, as described in the *University Handbook*, the University Catalog, or Statewide Title V requirements for graduate education.

II. The E&C program is a two-year, **full-time** (39 units) program. A cohort refers to a group of students all beginning the program and completing the course work at the same time.

Students must be **enrolled on a continuous basis** from the time they begin the program until receipt of their M.A. degree. Students who have not completed their M.A. degree by the end of the two-year cohort program must enroll for 1-3 units of continuing enrollment in the department of their committee chair. Students may enroll for these units through Extended Education.

Although we expect and encourage students to finish the program within two years, all students are required to finish the degree within **seven years**.

Students receiving financial aid should also note that this aid is capped at 150% of program unit requirements (39). This includes all enrolled courses, including additional units of thesis or research credit, p.e. credits, and any courses dropped after the deadline in the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the semester.

III. Graduate seminars for the E&C program are offered sequentially; all students are required to enroll in two of these seminars per semester for their first three semesters in the program. The course numbers for these seminars are listed in the home department of the course instructor(s).

The E&C graduate seminar on research methods is required for all students.

Students are also required to take a minimum of **nine units of approved elective coursework** at the graduate or upper-division undergraduate level for their degree. Typically, students will take one of these courses during each of their first three semesters in the program. The graduate coordinator will provide a list of courses pre-approved for elective credit, each semester. Other courses may be approved for elective credit on an individual basis.

A college-level course in **statistics is a pre-requisite or a co-requisite** for all students enrolled in the E&C program. However, this course does not count toward the M.A. degree requirements. Some statistics courses are Soc 282, Stat 106, Stat 108, Psyc 241.

Students are encouraged to consider participating in the **College Faculty Preparation Program** (<http://www.humboldt.edu/~cfpp/>), concurrent with their work in the E&C Program. However, all requirements for this or other programs are separate from, and in addition to, degree requirements for the M.A.

**IV.** The graduate coordinator will serve as official academic **advisor** for all entering students in the E&C program. In this role, s/he will be able to provide registration access codes, etc. During the course of the program, each student will be expected to select a chair for her or his thesis or project committee. At that time, the chair will become the student's academic advisor.

**V.** All E&C students are to advance to candidacy by the end of the summer of their first year. To advance to candidacy, a student must:

1. Select a committee of three faculty members who will supervise their thesis or project. Committee selection should be completed by the middle of the second semester. The committee, with the chair taking a lead role, will guide the student in preparing the proposal.
2. Prepare and obtain committee approval of their thesis or project proposal. The proposal includes an abstract, literature review, and an overview of methodology.
3. Complete three forms and submit them to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. These forms are: the "advancement to candidacy" form, the "approved graduate course list," and the "abstract form." All three are available online at:  
<http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/forms.php>.

**VI.** All students who will be gathering personal information about living humans in the course of research for their thesis or project are required to complete the approval process for using **human subjects in research** prior to *advancement to candidacy*. The complete University policy can be reviewed here:

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**VII.** The E&C program **office** is located in Founders Hall Room 180. Phone: 707-826-4494; Fax: 707-826-4496. This office is also shared by the Departments of *Government and Politics* and *History*.

Founders Hall 143 is the Government and Politics **colloquium room** available to all E&C students. Each student has a mailbox in this room. The room is also available for study, reserve readings, and meetings. It is typically unlocked from 8am- 5pm, but if it isn't, the office staff can open it. Copies of past student theses and projects are also on reserve in this room. You might want to examine recent ones to get an idea of what the program accepts as a culminating experience.

**VIII.** Your **thesis or project committee** consists of three people. These should ordinarily be E&C faculty. One member of your committee may be a faculty person who is not a member of the E&C faculty (i.e., someone who has particular expertise in your thesis or project topic). Committee members may be full-time or part-time faculty members who have a terminal degree in their field (typically, Ph.D.), though the chair is expected to be a full-time faculty member affiliated with the E&C program. You may have *additional* committee members who are not affiliated with the university.

It is the student's responsibility to identify which faculty members he/she wishes to serve on the thesis or project committee. When approaching faculty, you should have at least a general idea of your thesis or project topic. Don't be offended if faculty decline to participate on your committee. Some of the E&C faculty are also involved in other master's programs and need to balance their committee workload. The E&C graduate coordinator maintains a list of which E&C faculty are serving on which committees. Feel free to ask the coordinator for names of E&C faculty who have relatively light committee responsibilities.

Students should form their committees in the second semester of the program, and absolutely no later than the third semester. Remember, it is the committee members who sign the advancement to candidacy papers (see V. above), so you should develop a thesis proposal, including preliminary literature review and methodology. Before you embark on extensive work directly related to your thesis or project idea, you should have a meeting with your committee as a whole to discuss your proposal and to get any direction and suggestions from them. By having this meeting, you and your committee will have reached some consensus on what you need to do to complete a satisfactory thesis or project.

If you are doing an internship or project, it is your responsibility to locate a site that is appropriate

for your topic or questions. Of course the E&C graduate coordinator and your committee members can be of assistance in helping you find an appropriate location for your work.

During the fourth semester, you should sign up for 6 units of theses (690) or project (692) units AND 3 units of fieldwork or research (695 or 699) for a total of 9 units. These units should be distributed among your committee members, and the specific course numbers you will enroll in depend on the home departments of your committee members. Your committee chair or the graduate coordinator will help you allocate these 9 units among your committee members.

**IX.** A **thesis** is original research or theoretical development that advances knowledge. The research or theoretical question(s) of interest is developed by the student. A **project** is a demonstration of professional skill and is based upon research or internship activity that seeks to address the question(s) posed by a community group or organization. For example, if you wish to interview business leaders in Humboldt County, addressing the relationship between their beliefs and opinions about environmental and economic values, you would be conducting a *thesis*. If you are working with a community organization that asks you to interview business leaders in Humboldt County addressing the relationship between their beliefs and opinions about environmental and economic values so the organization can plan educational activities, you would be conducting a *project*. In both cases, you would be expected to frame your research with a thorough literature review, describe your methodology, report the results of your data analysis, and discuss the implications of your research findings.

Theses and projects must be rigorous, but concise. An appropriate model for a thesis would be a publishable manuscript for a peer-review journal, plus supporting data included as appendices. If your thesis may exceed 75 pages, you must first discuss this with your committee chair.

Projects may be **bound** or **unbound**. Very simply, a bound project is one that can be formatted as a manuscript in accordance with the requirements of the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. An unbound project is one that can't be so formatted. The project example in the previous paragraph would result in a *bound* project. If you were interning with a community organization that asked you to develop an educational multi-media presentation demonstrating how environmental protection and economic prosperity are not incompatible, the multi-media presentation would result in an *unbound* project.

The faculty expects theses, bound, and unbound projects to demonstrate **equivalent quality**. Students absolutely should not think that one culminating experience is more or less rigorous than another.

The E&C faculty expects each student to provide an **oral presentation and defense** of her/his thesis or project. All E&C faculty and students are welcome to attend this event. Please follow these guidelines when planning and preparing for your oral presentation and defense.

1. An oral defense will be scheduled when, in the judgment of the thesis or project committee members, a candidate has successfully completed an approved draft of the thesis or project.
2. It is the responsibility of the candidate to coordinate with committee members to identify a mutually workable time to meet; whenever possible, oral defenses will be scheduled on Thursdays from 5:30 to 7:30.
3. Candidates will provide the program coordinator with an abstract and full thesis or project draft two weeks in advance of the oral defense.
4. After scheduling the oral defense, the program coordinator will circulate an announcement of the defense and abstract to E&C faculty and students. The full thesis or project will be made available electronically or in the colloquium room (Founders Hall 143).
5. The defense typically will be structured in the following manner (modifications should be agreed upon by the candidate, committee, and coordinator in advance):
  - a. Brief introduction by the committee chair
  - b. Student presentation of culminating experience (1/2 hour maximum)
  - c. Questions from the audience (1/2 hour maximum)
  - d. Questions and discussion with committee members (1 hour maximum)
  - e. Brief conference among committee members without student present.
  - f. Brief conversation between committee members and student. At this time, additional corrections or adjustments to the thesis or project may be requested and/or the committee members may simply sign all official copies of the signature page.

**X.** We encourage all students who have completed their M.A. degree to participate in the spring **commencement** ceremony! If you are very close to completion, and if you have the approval of your committee, we encourage you to participate.

All students participating in commencement must have completed the **Master's Degree Application for Graduation**, available in the Office of Research and Graduate Studies in Siemens Hall 130. The deadline for Spring graduation is in early February. A late fee is charged after this date, but only students who apply before the deadline are assured of being included in the Commencement program.

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If you will need additional time to finish your thesis or project beyond the graduation date you applied for, you should file another application for graduation *before* the original graduation date to avoid additional graduation application fees.

**XI. Formatting requirements** for a bound thesis or project are detailed in *The Culminating Experience for Master's Students*. Information about binding fees is available here: [http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/pdfsdocs/Format\\_handbook\\_2006\\_2007.pdf](http://www.humboldt.edu/~gradst/pdfsdocs/Format_handbook_2006_2007.pdf)

**XII.** Each Spring graduate programs at Humboldt State University are invited to forward the very best theses and projects that have been completed in that year as the nominees for the Patricia McConkey Award. Those students whose thesis or project has been nominated for this award will **graduate “with distinction.”** A committee of Humboldt’s graduate coordinators will select the best thesis among those nominated as the recipient of the Pat McConkey award and will forward this thesis to the Western Association of Graduate Schools for its annual competition for best master’s thesis in the western region.

**XIII.** If you cannot complete your culminating experience by the end of the second year of the program, the faculty *strongly* encourages you to remain here until you have finished your project or thesis. Once students leave the area, communication with faculty becomes more difficult and the thesis or project seems to become less of a priority. If you want to finish your degree in a timely way with as little mental anguish as possible, **stay here** until you are done!

**XIV.** The E&C faculty recognizes and fully supports all of the **rights** granted to students by Federal law, State law, CSU administrative regulations, HSU campus policies, Graduate School policies, and program faculty resolutions. Students should familiarize themselves with these rights and responsibilities as documented in the HSU *Handbook for Master's Students* and the HSU *Catalog*.

In addition, each course syllabus is a contract that specifies and limits the requirements and expectations that will be placed on students in a particular course. Students who are troubled with a specific instructor or course requirements should first see that instructor and then the E&C Graduate Coordinator before seeking redress in a wider arena.

The California Education Code makes it clear that students may not cause a negative climate to develop in the classroom or interfere with the learning of other students. This Code entails refraining from sexist, racist, homophobic or other derogatory language, not interrupting or showing a lack of respect for classmates, and limiting class participation so as not to interfere with the participation of others. Professional conduct and respectful language usage are expected at all times.

**XV.** The **College Faculty Preparation Program** is a certificate offered to all master's students at HSU. Students who are interested in a Community College teaching career are strongly encouraged to pursue this certificate in conjunction with their master's program. The requirements for this certificate can be found at <http://www.humboldt.edu/~cfpp/>.

If you plan to pursue this certificate, you should arrange a teaching assistant relationship with a faculty member in the discipline of your *undergraduate* degree. The E&C Graduate Coordinator can help identify faculty who would be willing to work with you in this capacity. When seeking a student internship placement at *College of the Redwoods*, you should indicate placement possibilities in your undergraduate field as well as in disciplines in which you have taken a number of courses as part of the E&C program.

A number of E&C students have completed the CFPP certificate. But you should know that the interdisciplinary nature of our program creates real difficulties and barriers for community college teaching positions. There are some either very small or very large community colleges that welcome an interdisciplinary social science degree, but not many.

## Appendix I

### Expectations for Faculty Membership in the Environment and Community Program

Faculty members' participation in the E&C Program provides opportunities for faculty to engage with colleagues across the campus who share interests in graduate level teaching and research within the environment and community arena. Faculty participation in the program takes a variety of forms. These include participating as a secondary reader on thesis or project committees, chairing such committees, and teaching graduate seminars. While serving as a secondary reader on thesis or project committees does not require formal participation in the E&C Program, chairing such committees and teaching graduate seminars does. Formal participation in the E&C Program entails contributing to the program in the following ways:

1. Participating in biannual faculty retreats
2. Participating in meetings during the academic year
3. Advising incoming graduate students with shared interests
4. Serving on thesis and project committees

Faculty membership will be recognized in the University catalog and on the E&C program website. Contributions can also be recognized through the RTP process.

It is by our collective engagement with the program through the above mentioned retreats and meetings that we can successfully manage the program, guide our graduate students to completion in a timely fashion, and plan for the future.

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