

THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW ORLEANS

JUSTICE STUDIES

Program Handbook

Ph.D. in Justice Studies

Revised February 2024

Applicable to students who enrolled in 2021, 2022, and 2023

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Program Overview

Established in 2020, the Ph.D. program in Justice Studies fosters interdisciplinary, collaborative, community-engaged scholarship. The program's creation offers UNO faculty and students the chance to explore innovative and vital humanities research at the doctoral level, in the service of social justice in New Orleans. Ph.D. students engage in community-based participatory research projects that combine ethnography, archival research, oral history, textual analysis, critical program evaluation, activist research, survey research, and other humanities and social science approaches. They conduct this work in collaboration with a wide range of community organizations that provide expertise related to social, educational, environmental, and criminal justice issues (at a systemic level and broadly defined)—and benefit from our collaboration. Justice Studies currently enrolls a diverse group of 26 doctoral students distributed across three initial cohorts and brings together roughly 20 affiliated faculty members across the disciplines.

New Orleans has a long history of activism in the struggle for justice. Today, New Orleans is ground-zero for issues related to social, criminal, educational, and environmental justice. As the only public urban research university in the city, the University of New Orleans has a binding obligation to catalyze change. The Ph.D. in Justice Studies does just that. Our program contributes to the University of New Orleans' mission as an urban research university and commitment to collaboration, community engagement, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Ph.D. in Justice Studies prepares students to advance justice in their communities and beyond. The program consists of core courses in justice theory and research methods alongside an individualized plan of study related to one of four concentrations. In addition to coursework, students complete a comprehensive exam, prospectus, dissertation, and defense.

Program Goals

1. Create an academic setting to foster greater knowledge of and solutions regarding issues related to social, criminal, educational, and environmental (in)justice
2. Provide UNO students and faculty with opportunities to develop justice-focused scholarly relationships and partnerships within the greater New Orleans community, Gulf South, and beyond
3. Develop students' and faculty's knowledge and skills in areas and projects aimed at improving the region's and world's socio-cultural, educational, and environmental conditions

Learning Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of major **theoretical frameworks** around concepts of justice and injustice.
2. Students will demonstrate facility with diverse **methods of research**.
3. Students will demonstrate expertise in a selected **concentration area** of justice studies.
4. Students will demonstrate capacity for advanced-level (doctoral) research in Justice Studies.

Program Governance

The program is housed in the College of Liberal Arts, Education and Human Development (COLAEHD) and reports directly to the Dean of COLAEHD.

Program Director

The program is led by a faculty Director, who is appointed by the Dean and may be housed in any academic department or school in the college. The Director is effectively the department chair and thus is assigned the responsibilities, roles, and authority set forth in [AP-AA-23.6](#). The Director also serves alongside other department chairs and school and program directors in the COLAEHD Administrative Group. The Director receives a chair stipend in accordance with the formula in AP-AA-23.6 and one course release per semester.

The Director manages all aspects of the program, including but not limited to: coordinating the activities of the affiliated faculty and the Faculty Advisory Committee, planning program events, leading advertising and marketing campaigns, serving as the program's main liaison to campus and community representatives, fundraising, building the curriculum and course schedule, coordinating admissions, and supervising staff and student employees.

Graduate Coordinator

The Graduate Coordinator is the program's official liaison to the Graduate School and first point of contact for graduate students. The Director nominates an affiliated faculty member for this role, and the Dean makes the formal appointment. The Graduate Coordinator receives a stipend in accordance with applicable Graduate School policies. At present, Dr. Max Krochmal serves as both the Program Director and the Graduate Coordinator.

The Graduate Coordinator leads recruitment efforts for prospective students and serves as a temporary advisor for newly-enrolled students who have not been assigned to another member of the affiliated faculty. The Graduate Coordinator also meets individually with each incoming student upon their enrollment to discuss their academic interests, concentration, possible coursework, and plans for confirming their advisor and forming a committee. In partnership with the Director, the Graduate Coordinator monitors each student's progression through the program and consults as needed with students and their primary advisors. The Graduate Coordinator also assists students and their advisors in preparing requests for transfer credits.

Affiliated Faculty

Upon the recommendation of the Director, the Dean of COLAEHD appoints regular, full-time UNO faculty as affiliated faculty members in Justice Studies. These individuals are listed on the program's website. Affiliated faculty members may serve as primary advisors for Justice Studies dissertation and comprehensive exam committees. Each faculty affiliate is expected to attend program meetings, teach and mentor Justice Studies graduate students, serve on graduate committees and program governance committees, and attend co-curricular events. Affiliated faculty members should be appointed to the Graduate Faculty by their home departments or schools, or, if needed, they can be appointed on an ad hoc basis on the recommendation of the Director of Justice Studies. Adjunct faculty members are a valued part of our scholarly

community and may serve on graduate committees and participate in program governance and events, but they are not permitted to chair dissertation or comprehensive exam committees. At least annually, the Director convenes and facilitates a meeting for affiliated faculty to discuss issues pertinent to the program, set priorities, maintain the handbook and policies, review curricula, review assessments, and coordinate recruitment.

Advisory Committees

Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC)

The FAC advises the Director on the administration of the program. Throughout the program's history and at present, the FAC is comprised of all affiliated faculty members. This structure may be revised as program needs evolve. In consultation with the FAC, the Director may also appoint sub-committees to complete specific tasks and/or to study and advise on complex questions related to the program.

Admissions & Awards

The Director appoints a representative group of affiliated faculty members to advise the Director on admissions and award decisions. The awards include scholarships for new students funded by the Graduate School as well as mini-grants for enrolled students, faculty, and community partners supported either by the program's general fund operating budget or external sources (when available). Guidelines for applying for internal grant programs will be published regularly.

Community Advisory Board

With support from affiliated faculty, the Director at least annually convenes an external Community Advisory Board. This group of regionally-based community members with particular interest and expertise in justice issues serves as a bridge between the program and the community. The Community Advisory Group helps identify opportunities for funding and community collaboration, recruit prospective students, create internships and career support for current and graduating students, and plan events. Members may also serve as collaborators for research projects or assist with dissemination and use of research products created by faculty and students involved in the program. The group may provide input regarding program structure in an advisory capacity.

Student Participation in Governance

Student liaison(s) may be invited to attend affiliated faculty, committee, and Community Advisory Board meetings and contribute to decisions at the discretion of the Director.

Admissions Requirements and Procedure (effective Fall 2024)

All new enrollment occurs in the fall semester, with applications for admission due the preceding spring, annually on **March 15**. Students may not enter the program at other times during the academic year.

In addition to meeting the minimum standards for admission to the Graduate School, applicants must provide a 1,000 to 1,500-word statement of purpose in which they clearly identify at least one potential primary advisor (from among the affiliated faculty), a resume or academic CV, and

three letters of recommendation. At least one of these letters should speak to an applicant's academic ability and experience. The GRE is not required.

The statement of purpose should clearly list the one (or more) specific faculty member(s) the applicant hopes to engage as a potential primary advisor and describe the applicant's relevant academic and professional experiences, intended program concentration, aptitude for conducting rigorous research, and passion for addressing issues of (in)justice. From reading the statement, faculty should have a clear sense of how a Ph.D. in Justice will enable the applicant to achieve their professional and educational goals.

Applications will be screened initially by the Director, who will send the files of qualified applicants to one or more affiliated faculty members who may be interested in advising each prospective student (including but not limited to the faculty member(s) identified in the applicants' statements of purpose). The designated affiliated faculty member(s) will then evaluate each application and notify the Director whether they wish to admit the prospective student (and to serve as the student's preliminary primary advisor). The Admissions & Awards Committee will then meet and rank the candidates that have been paired with faculty mentors and provide recommendations on each applicant and the composition of the cohort as a whole. The program strives to enroll students from groups that are underrepresented in graduate education.

The Primary Advisor (AKA Chair or Major Professor)

Each student's journey through the program will be guided by their primary advisor, sometimes known as the "chair" (of the student's future dissertation committee) or the "major professor."

Regardless of the nomenclature, this faculty member is the single most important person that shapes each student's educational experience in a Ph.D. program. The primary advisor plays a significant role in determining the appropriate research methods and relevant scholarly literature for each student's dissertation. Although Justice Studies is an interdisciplinary program, students will typically need to be conversant in their primary advisor's discipline, approaches, and subfields. Primary advisors must be full-time UNO faculty members, affiliated with the Justice Studies program, and a member of the Graduate Faculty at UNO.

Students should remain in close contact with their primary advisors at every phase of the program. Among other tasks, advisors should assist the students in selecting courses, identifying other members of their committees, developing expertise in their concentration and related fields, and developing relationships with potential collaborators in the community.

Each student should seek to complete at least one graduate seminar taught by their primary advisor. If unable to do so, students are encouraged to enroll in at least one independent study with their primary advisor prior to initiating Comprehensive Exams. The program also recommends that students enroll in courses taught by potential committee members as early as possible in their graduate careers.

Choosing a Primary Advisor

Students who entered the program before 2024 should identify a permanent primary advisor from among the program's affiliated faculty as soon as possible, after which the duo must notify the Graduate Coordinator of their plan to work together.

Beginning in 2024, each student will be assigned a preliminary primary advisor during the admissions process. New students should cement their relationship with a permanent primary advisor no later than the end of their first year in the program.

In all cases, students may elect to change their primary advisor, and faculty members may choose to drop a student who is not meeting their expectations. Students or faculty members must meet with the Graduate Coordinator prior to initiating such a change.

The Committee

In addition to working under the tutelage of a primary advisor, each student must identify additional faculty mentors, at least two of whom will serve in an official capacity on the student's comprehensive exam and/or dissertation committees. It is recommended that students identify potential committee members as early as possible in the program, in consultation with their primary advisors. To the extent possible, students should begin by taking a course (including, if needed, an independent study) taught by potential committee members in order to build a relationship that will undergird future committee service.

Dissertation committees must include a minimum of three members and may have as many as five members (including the primary advisor). All committee members must have terminal degrees in their field (or equivalent) and be appointed to the UNO Graduate Faculty. No more than two members may be external to the university. At minimum, the dissertation committee will meet as a group for each student's prospectus defense and final dissertation defense. The composition of the dissertation committee may vary from the student's comprehensive exam committee. Changes to the dissertation committee after the prospectus defense are permitted if authorized by the primary advisor and the Graduate Coordinator.

Overview of Degree Requirements

The PhD in Justice Studies requires a minimum of **57 credit hours** of graduate-level coursework:

- 12 credit hours of **core courses** with a grade of "B" or higher
- 33 credit hours of **elective** graduate coursework
 - A minimum of 6 elective hours must be directly related to a **concentration** (i.e., social, criminal, educational, or environmental justice)
- A non-credit **Comprehensive Examination** based on core courses and two designated concentration courses
 - Students may register for up to three hours of JUST 7050 Dissertation to maintain current enrollment and earn credits as they complete the Comprehensive Exam

- A minimum of 12 credit hours of supervised **dissertation** research
 - This includes one required course, JUST 7030 Justice Prospectus
 - At least six hours of JUST 7050 Dissertation must be taken once the student is ABD (after the student’s dissertation defense)
- Successful completion and **defense of the prospectus**
- Successful completion and **defense of the final dissertation**

At least half of the credits must be at the 6000 level or above. Up to 27 credit hours may be obtained via transfer credits from previous graduate programs. Please see the “Transfer Credits” section below for important details.

Core Courses

The three-credit courses listed below cover justice-related theories and research methods. All students in the Ph.D. in Justice Studies complete four courses at UNO. The two core theory courses must be taken sequentially, as must the two core research courses. Core theory and method courses can be taken concurrently or sequentially depending on the student’s prior experience with studying and conducting applied research at the graduate level upon enrolment.

Students without prior graduate-level research methods or statistics coursework should expect to complete at least three credits in methods or statistics, within any discipline, before enrolling in the two-course core methods sequence. These credits count towards elective requirements.

- JUST 6810 Theories of Justice

This survey course covers major theoretical approaches to justice from classical antiquity to the present. Students explore diverse visions for a just society and relations between the individual and collective. Students also consider foundational ways thinkers across disciplines have tried to understand justice and analytic approaches for pursuing this knowledge.

- JUST 6820 Justice and Law

This course connects theories of justice to jurisprudence and political decision-making procedures. Students consider complicated ways law intersects with notions of a just society. Students also gain practice applying ideas from legal theory to concrete issues of (in)justice.

- JUST 6830 Justice Research I

This methods course familiarizes students with conducting doctoral-level research on justice-related topics in the social sciences, humanities, and arts. Particular emphasis is placed on epistemological theories guiding empirical research across disciplines. Students gain practice formulating research questions, reviewing existing literature, and developing a research plan.

- JUST 6840 Justice Research II

This second methods course guides students through the process of identifying potential strategies to answer interdisciplinary research questions related to justice. The course reviews qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies and practical research strategies.

Concentration Courses

With the approval of their primary advisor and the Graduate Coordinator, students select concentration coursework from courses available throughout the university. As noted above, at least six credit hours (two courses) must relate directly to the student's declared concentration and will form the basis for the tailored concentration section of the student's comprehensive exam, explained below. These courses must be taken at UNO, and it is recommended that both courses are housed within the program (listed under the JUST prefix rather than in another unit). Only one independent study (three hours of JUST 6980) may be applied to the six-credit minimum and for use in the Comprehensive Exam. Practicum hours do not qualify.

Courses may be chosen based on interest but should fit within one of four concentrations:

- Social Justice

Students pursuing this concentration focus their study on systemic disparities and structural inequities that disadvantage populations and underserve communities, including the distribution of and access to opportunity, privileges, and resources among people of different races, ethnicities, classes, genders, sexualities, ages, abilities, and belief systems.

Students might grapple with comparative and case studies of social justice issues, actors, and agendas worldwide. Studies of anti-colonial and anti-racist thought and activism are encouraged. Concentration coursework ideally affords students opportunities to learn from peers, practitioners, and the public, whose expertise and experiences offer diverse perspectives and pathways to social justice.

- Transformative Justice & Carceral Studies

Students pursuing this concentration focus on advanced critical research and practice related to transformation within the criminal legal system and/or the carceral state. These areas of justice are especially pressing in the state of Louisiana, which ranks among the world's incarceration capitals; students are thus encouraged to develop a local focus.

Students may address questions such as: What are the histories, motivations, operations, and effects of institutions making up the criminal justice system? How do effects differ across demographics? What is the (proper) scope of the criminal legal code? How should society enforce laws, treat persons who break them, and spend law enforcement resources? What does it mean for victims of crimes to be restored to justice? How might we enhance justice and equity in current institutions, policies, and processes?

- Educational Justice

Students pursuing this concentration develop and evaluate strategies to overcome inequities created and reproduced through educational policies and systems. Concentration coursework ideally guides students through policies and systems

at multiple levels to enhance the experiences of underrepresented and marginalized students.

Students consider urgent issues, such as the need for equal access to education and the importance of disability studies to such discussions, while working to generate innovative strategies to influence policy and facilitate meaningful change advancing an equitable educational system. Students are encouraged to address the mass incarceration crisis by examining the educational opportunities for currently or formerly incarcerated persons.

- **Environmental Justice**

Students pursuing this concentration connect social, cultural, economic, historic, and political inequalities to environmental, ecological, anthropogenic, and natural challenges. Concentration coursework may focus on access to resources, vulnerability to nature-induced and human-made disasters, sustainability of communities and infrastructures, and access to food and water. Students may also analyze and develop public policies that address questions of environmental justice.

Students ideally examine questions of environmental justice in global and domestic contexts and gain the capacity to understand and deploy research methods across natural and social science methods. Students should consider how questions of environmental justice are deeply entwined with other areas of justice, requiring a holistic approach combining social, cultural, economic, historic, and political perspectives.

Research Methods

Students who have not previously taken **graduate**-level courses on research methods are strongly encouraged to do so in their first year in the program, prior to enrolling in JUST 6830 - Justice Research I. Applicable courses include:

- ANTH 3301 - Doing Ethnography (must be taken with JUST 6900 independent study)
- ANTH 5070 - Qualitative Research
- ANTH 6052 - Adv Cultural Anthropology
- AADM 6507 - Research in the Arts
- EDCI 6060 - Action Research in Education
- EDFR 6700 - Educational Research
- EDFR 6705 - Quant & Qual Research Design
- EDFR 6710 - Descriptive Statistics
- EDFR 6715 - Intro to Qual Resrch Methods
- EDFR 6720 - Appl Regr & Analy Covariance
- EDFR 6721 - Qualitative Research Data Col
- EDFR 6725 - Multivariate Statistics
- EDFR 6731 - Qualitative Research Data Anlz
- GEOG 6801 - Advanced Quant Meth
- HIST 5008 - Public History Methods

- HIST 6002 - Methods & Research
- HIST 6603 - Research in New Orleans Hist
- MKT 6555 - Marketing Research Methods
- MUS 6200 - Music Research Methods & Mater
- POLI 6002 - Methods Political Research I
- POLI 6003 - Methods Political Research II
- PADM 6001 - Research Methods - Public Administration
- SOC 5788 - Social Statistics II
- SOC 6784 - Meth of Sociological Investign
- SOC 6785 - Sem Research Applications
- SOC 6788 - Qualitatv Methods in Sociology
- SPAN 6097 - Studies Spanish Linguistics
- EDSP 6060 - Action Research in Education
- MURP 6020 - Analytic Methods for Planners
- DURB 7020 - Research Design Seminar

Additional Electives

Each student's coursework may include electives offered across UNO that are relevant to their research and professional interests. Beyond additional concentration coursework, electives may cover advanced methods, skills such as technical writing, pedagogy, and any others courses relevant to the student's interests and approved by their Primary Advisor and the Graduate Coordinator . Students interested in enrolling in an optional independent study or practicum should meet with the Graduate Coordinator as early as possible to plan details and gain approvals. Program-specific electives include:

- JUST 6900 Special Topics in Justice

This course is taught by a Justice Studies affiliated faculty member with a focus on particular topics related to justice and one or more concentration. Topics vary by semester.

- JUST 6980 Independent Study

Under the direction of faculty, the student(s) develops a course on a topic related to their area of specific interest. Requires approval of the affiliated faculty member, major advisor, and Graduate Coordinator. The program recommends that students enroll in at least one independent study with their primary advisor prior to initiating Comprehensive Exams.

- JUST 6990 Justice Practicum

This course supervises the research and practice of justice in applied settings. Requires approval of the Graduate Coordinator, faculty instructor, and partner organization representative.

Transfer Credits

Per Graduate School policy, up to half of required credits (27 credit hours maximum) may be transferred from a prior graduate program towards elective requirements.

Students must complete 9 credits in the Ph.D. program before they are eligible to request transfer credits. At that stage, they should first meet with their major professor to discuss their prior coursework. Then, using their transcripts, the UNO Catalog, and the Justice Studies Transfer Credit Worksheet, they should identify the specific equivalent courses at UNO for which they wish to receive credit. Next, the student and advisor must finalize the completed worksheet, forward it to the Graduate Coordinator, and complete the official Graduate School "Request for Transfer Credit" form. The student initiates this form, entering only basic information, after which it is routed to the Primary Advisor, who is then required to copy all details for all courses from the worksheet and then indicate approval. The form then goes to the Graduate Coordinator for signature, followed by the Dean and Graduate School.

If the course that is being requested to transfer was taken less than six years ago and has a clear corollary in the UNO catalog, the process is usually straightforward. If there is no clear equivalent course in the UNO catalog and/or the course was taken more than six years ago, the student will need to submit additional documentation, usually a syllabus for the original course. These materials should be sent to the primary advisor and, if approved, forwarded to the Graduate Coordinator, who will then seek approval from the appropriate department chair or school director. Students may also request to transfer courses (of any vintage) to UNO as JUST 6900 Special Topics, again with the approval of both the primary advisor and the Graduate Coordinator.

Comprehensive Examination

Upon completion of at least 18 credit hours at UNO, including the four required core courses and at least two concentration elective courses (both of which must be taken at UNO), students may initiate the comprehensive exam. Students are required to be enrolled during the semester of their exam and may take three credit hours of JUST 7050 Dissertation Research for this purpose.

The exam committee is composed of three faculty with expertise relevant to justice theory, justice-oriented research methods, and the student's designated concentration. In most cases, the student's primary advisor will serve as chair of the exam committee and will be responsible for the concentration field and question.

The committee collaboratively develops, administers, and scores a take-home exam consisting of three essay questions: (1) a justice theory question, (2) a question related to justice research methods (e.g., review of a relevant peer-reviewed research article and/or grey literature), and (3) a question tailored to a common theme across the student's two designated concentration courses completed at UNO. Each essay must not exceed 20 double-spaced pages or 5,000 words, excluding references.

The exam is due by the last day of classes of the initiated semester. Committee members score each essay as pass or fail. Students must pass all three essays to pass the exam. Students can resubmit each failed essay one time before the subsequent semester concludes.

After successful completion of the exam, the student must file the “Report on Qualifying Examination” form on the Graduate School website.

Prospectus

After initiating the comprehensive exam, students should enroll in the required three-credit Justice Prospectus course, which counts towards the 12 required dissertation credits. If needed, students must work with the Graduate Coordinator to finalize their dissertation committee at the beginning of this course.

- JUST 7030 Justice Prospectus

In this course, students learn about the dissertation process and expectations, plan their research, form the dissertation committee, and write the prospectus. Students also explore strategies for disseminating their research and navigating the post-graduation job market.

The prospectus serves as a dissertation proposal. The prospectus may take on different formats depending on the conventions of its disciplinary audiences, but in all cases, it must include an introduction outlining the research questions and their significance, a review of the literature related to the research questions, and a proposed methodology for addressing the questions.

When completed, the student submits the prospectus to their dissertation committee for review and submits a draft, gets feedback then schedules an oral defense. The committee must unanimously pass the prospectus before the student can proceed with dissertation research. If the committee does not unanimously agree to pass, the student may revise and resubmit, repeating the submission and defense process after completing revisions. Following a failed defense, students may only revise and resubmit a prospectus once. The second defense must occur within six months of the first attempt.

After successful defense of the prospectus, the student must file the “Program of Study” and the “Report on General Examination” forms on the Graduate School website. This form also includes the “Request for Candidacy.”

Candidacy

Once the student has defended the prospectus and filed all necessary paperwork, they advance to candidacy. At this stage—and only after this point—students may now be referred to as a “doctoral candidate” or “ABD” (all but dissertation).

Dissertation

The dissertation represents the culmination of the Ph.D. Each dissertation must make an original scholarly contribution to Justice Studies, and it must be methodologically rigorous and defensible in the discipline(s) and field(s) in which it intervenes. It should also make an impact on our society or culture beyond the academy and reflect ethical research practices by involving members of directly affected communities throughout the research and writing process.

The final product typically consists of a written product of at least 150 double-spaced pages or about 50,000 words, excluding citations. Formatting must adhere to UNO Graduate School requirements and use a citation style appropriate for the study.

Finally, the student enrolls in the remaining required dissertation credits (a minimum of six and as many as needed) as they research, write, complete, and defend the dissertation in close conversation with their primary advisor and dissertation committee.

Dissertation coursework is divided into three course numbers:

- JUST 7030 Justice Prospectus (see above)

- JUST 7050 Dissertation Research

In coordination with the primary advisor, the student conducts research and drafts their dissertation. May be repeated for credit. Students must take a minimum of nine credits of this course, including a minimum of six after the prospectus defense.

- JUST 7040 Exam or Report Only

This is the final step in the dissertation process. This non-credit course is open to students in their final semester who have completed all other requirements and (other than application for graduation) the final submission and acceptance by the Graduate School of their dissertation to complete graduation requirements. The current cost is \$10 for registration plus a \$16.50 course fee. Here is the relevant policy from the Graduate School:

Students must be enrolled in the University to receive credit in any examination (general, comprehensive, oral defense, etc.) or to satisfy other requirements for advanced degrees. A student may meet this requirement by registering for a one-credit-hour Examination or Report/Thesis Only course (course number 7040). **Registration for 7040 is allowed for one semester only.** However, in exceptional circumstances, a student may be allowed to enroll in 7040 more than once. The request should be initiated via email to nbiggio@uno.edu by a faculty member in the student's degree program and include information about the student's progress towards the degree. At a minimum, the student must submit a completed manuscript draft or (for non-thesis options) a comprehensive examination or project report. The decision regarding a second enrollment in 7040 will be made by the Graduate School.

After submitting a complete dissertation to the committee and gaining approval of all members, a student may schedule the dissertation defense. Upon completion of the defense, committee members must unanimously pass the dissertation before the student can apply to graduate.

If the committee does not unanimously agree to pass, the student may revise and resubmit the dissertation one time. In this case, the student must repeat the defense process. After successful defense and submission of the final dissertation, the student may apply to graduate.

Master's Option (M.A. in Justice Studies)

A master's option of 30 credits is available to students who wish to exit the Ph.D. program without completing the prospectus and dissertation.

The degree requirements for the master's option include:

- **Twelve (12) credit hours of core courses** with a grade of "B" (scale is 4.00 = "A") or higher, as follows:
 - JUST 6810: Theories of Justice
 - JUST 6820: Justice and Law
 - JUST 6830: Justice Research I
 - JUST 6840: Justice Research II
- **Eighteen (18) credit hours** of relevant **elective** graduate courses, from at least two different disciplines, as approved by the Graduate Coordinator
- The successful completion of a (non-credit) **comprehensive exam**.

Per Graduate School regulations, no more than ten credit hours may be obtained via transfer credits from previous graduate programs.

Expectation of Satisfactory Degree Progress

All students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. in each and every semester at UNO. Students should be enrolled continuously in a minimum of three credit hours. Students should demonstrate consistent mastery of all course content, growth as an emerging scholar, ethical conduct, appropriate levels of commitment and professionalism, and expanding potential to develop and execute an independent justice research project.

Justice Studies expects all students to earn all "A" grades in every course, every semester. We recognize that sometimes life or other circumstances intervene, resulting in a "B" grade. In a doctoral program, this is cause for some concern. A single "C" grade represents near failure and is cause for very serious concern. Two "C" grades may result in removal from the program.

The Graduate School also requires students to maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA and will place students who fall below that threshold on academic probation. A student who is on probation and earns a single semester GPA below 3.0 will be dismissed from the university.

Disposition Review, Improvement Plan, and Potential Sanctions

The Graduate Coordinator regularly solicits feedback from Affiliated Faculty members on the degree progress of Justice Studies doctoral students. In the event that faculty members raise concerns about an individual student, the Graduate Coordinator will first consult with the student's primary advisor and committee members. If necessary, the Graduate Coordinator may call a special, formal meeting—known as a "Disposition Review"—in which the relevant faculty and student review their degree progress and review areas of concern. Students who require an intervention may be placed on a written "Improvement Plan" to guide and measure their performance in the subsequent semester. A student who does not satisfy the conditions listed in

their Improvement Plan may be offered the opportunity to complete a second, revised Improvement Plan, or they may be removed from the program immediately.

Checklists for Satisfactory Progress

Additionally, students should take time to meet with their advisors to collaboratively ask and answer the following questions at each milestone:

End of First (Fall) Semester

- Have you selected a permanent primary advisor and notified the Graduate Coordinator? Do you have a sense of the other faculty members whom you would like to invite to serve on your committee?
- Are you enrolled in at least one elective course in the upcoming spring semester that speaks directly to your future area of concentration?
- Did you earn an “A” grade in each of your classes?

End of Year 1

- Have you completed both required courses for year one, preferably with an “A” grade in each class?
- What is your formal area of concentration? Have the UNO elective courses that you have taken so far helped you become an expert in that area? What other courses do you need to complete to be able to demonstrate competence in your concentration?
- What methodologies do you anticipate using for your dissertation? Have you taken sufficient graduate-level coursework or other training in these methods, or do you need additional preparation to make your approach more rigorous and defensible to scholarly audiences?
- Have you built relationships with members of directly-affected communities and practitioners in the subject areas you wish to research? If not, how can you do so over the summer and your next school year?
- Have you determined the composition of your Comprehensive Exam and Dissertation committees?

End of Year 2

- Have you completed both required Justice Research courses, preferably with “A” grades?
- Do you wish to apply for transfer credits? If so—and assuming you’ve taken a minimum of 9 credit hours at UNO—now is the time!
- Have you identified the scholarly fields and literatures in which you wish to situate your own research? Have you identified the leading journals, scholarly associations, and conferences related to your areas of interest? Have you identified the deadlines for proposing a paper or presentation at a scholarly meeting?
- Do you have a plan to read more scholarly literature and/or conduct preliminary research related to your future dissertation over the upcoming summer? Do you have a plan to engage more community members who have a stake in your research?
- Are you eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam in the subsequent long semester (fall of year 3)? If not, what other courses and requirements do you need to complete?

- Have you finalized the composition of your Dissertation Committee? If not, work with your Primary Advisor to do so ASAP.

Beginning of Year 3

- Are you eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam? If so, submit your “Intent to Complete Comprehensive Exam Form” prior to the beginning of classes. If not, be sure to enroll in any remaining coursework that is needed.
- Do you have a plan for taking the Prospectus course (usually in the spring) and to work with your advisor and committee on its completion and defense?
- Have you submitted a proposal for a presentation at a scholarly conference, an external grant, or a publication? If not, make a plan to do so this year.

Beginning of Year 4 / Newly ABD

- Have you completed both the Comprehensive Exam and your Prospectus Defense? If so, congratulations, you are now a doctoral candidate and “ABD” (all but dissertation).
- Do you have a plan to complete your research this year?
- Do you expect to begin analysis and writing too?
- Do you know how each of your committee members wish to be engaged throughout your research and writing process? In other words, do they want to stay in touch and/or read drafts, or are they content to read the whole dissertation as it is nearing completion?

Beginning of Year 5

- Have you completed your research and substantial portions of your dissertation? If so, do you (and your advisor) have a plan to finish it?
- Are you aware of the relevant defense and graduation deadlines published by the Graduate School? Are you consulting with the Graduate School’s “Dissertation Checklist”?
- Have you engaged with other members of your committee recently? If not, do so now.

Research and Conference Travel Grants

With support from external grants and/or the general fund, the program offers a limited number of research and travel grants for graduate students and affiliated faculty. Guidelines for these opportunities will be announced regularly.

Programs Events & Intellectual Community

Justice Studies doctoral students and professors form a shared intellectual community that must be nourished through regular interaction and discussion, including the sharing of research-in-progress and engagement with visiting scholars and community partners. Accordingly, students are expected to attend as many program-sponsored events as possible. This includes evening lectures, daytime colloquia, and various collaborations on- and off-campus. Students who work during the day and are unable to attend midday events are especially encouraged to attend evening programs.

Additional UNO Policies

The Justice Studies Ph.D. follows the general regulations and procedures governing UNO programs for obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy. Please consult the UNO Catalog and the website of the Graduate School for additional information and requirements, including in such areas as:

- Tuition and fees
- Satisfactory academic progress (minimum 3.0 GPA)
- Time to degree (six calendar years after completing the comprehensive exam)
- Academic grievances & Code of Conduct
- Advancing to candidacy
- Graduation

Additionally, students are encouraged to consult the Graduate School for scholarships and other funding opportunities. Program-specific opportunities for funding or assistantships are shared with current and prospective students as they become available.

Residency Requirement

Note that UNO Graduate School policy requires PhD students to enroll for at least 9 credits for two consecutive semesters, or 6 credits for three non-consecutive semesters, to meet the residency requirement.

Time to Degree

UNO Graduate School policy states that “The degree must be completed within six calendar years following admission to candidacy (upon completion of General Examination), or less, if specified by the individual college or program. Prior work applied to the degree (including transfer and locally-earned credits) must have been completed within nine calendar years immediately preceding the date on which the degree is conferred. An extension may be granted if approved by the Graduate School.”

Sample Plan of Study

Here is a sample sequence of coursework for part-time students (i.e., 3-6 credits per semester) in the Ph.D. in Justice Studies. In the first two years, the student takes core courses with their cohort, classes focused on research methods, concentration courses, and other electives (6 credits per semester). After completing a minimum of 9 hours at UNO, the student is eligible to apply for transfer credits; this sample plan assumes the student will transfer 15 credits. In the third year, the student completes Comprehensive Exams (in the fall, while enrolled in 3 credits of Dissertation) and drafts the dissertation prospectus course (in the spring, while enrolled in the Prospectus seminar), while also taking two electives. In the fourth year, the student works on their dissertation, defending the prospectus in the fall and researching and writing while enrolled in 3 credits per semester. In the fall of year five, the student enrolls in the non-credit JUST 7040 course, defends the dissertation, and graduates.

As seen below, students who follow this plan of 6 credits per semester with 15 transfer credits can earn a Ph.D. in Justice Studies after 4.5 years of study. Students must enroll during the semesters of the comprehensive exam, prospectus and dissertation defenses, and graduation.

Academic Year 1	
Fall	Spring
<input type="checkbox"/> JUST 6810 Theories of Justice (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Concentration course or Research Methods elective (3 credits)	<input type="checkbox"/> JUST 6820 Justice and Law (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Concentration course or Research Methods elective (3 credits)
Academic Year 2	
Fall	Spring
<input type="checkbox"/> JUST 6830 Justice Research I (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Concentration or Elective (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Request for Transfer Credits	<input type="checkbox"/> JUST 6840 Justice Research II (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Concentration or Elective (3 credits)
Academic Year 3	
Fall	Spring
<input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Exam (non-credit) <input type="checkbox"/> JUST 7050 Dissertation (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Elective (3 credits)	<input type="checkbox"/> JUST 7030 Justice Prospectus (3 credits) <input type="checkbox"/> Elective (3 credits)
Academic Year 4	
Fall	Spring
<input type="checkbox"/> Defend Prospectus (non-credit) <input type="checkbox"/> JUST 7050 Dissertation (3 credits)	<input type="checkbox"/> JUST 7050 Dissertation (3 credits)
Academic Year 5	
Fall	Spring
<input type="checkbox"/> Defend Dissertation (non-credit) <input type="checkbox"/> JUST 7040 Exam (non-credit enrollment) <input type="checkbox"/> Graduation	N/A

Many students will not follow this exact sequence. Students who enroll in only one class will need more time. Some students may opt to attend full-time (9 credits per semester) and/or to earn credit during summer sessions. Those who transfer fewer than 15 credits would need to take additional electives. Et cetera—individual circumstances will vary.

Note again that UNO Graduate School policy requires PhD students to enroll for at least 9 credits for two consecutive semesters, or in 6 credits for any three semesters, to meet the residency requirement.