Why GRADUATE STUDIES in CULTURAL STUDIES?

Cultural Studies is an emphatically interdisciplinary area of inquiry that intersects the humanities, science studies, social sciences, and the arts. Its researchers theorize the forces that shape the lived reality of people in the 21st century.

What distinguishes Cultural Studies from other approaches to the study of culture is its recognition that no single disciplinary approach can address the complexity of cultural and social forms and experiences. Cultural Studies researchers investigate values, beliefs and belongings, cultural processes and cultural objects, economic and social relations, institutions and identities. Cultural Studies therefore draws on a range of methods and critical theories and strives to do so self-reflexively. We aim to break down conventional divisions not only among academic disciplines but also between academia and activism, and between theoretical analysis and cultural production. It is our expectation that analyses of class, race, and gender, alongside other axes of social difference and inequality, will pervade all teaching and research conducted in our program. Our students produce work in a variety of media and formats, from the monograph thesis to visual arts and community-engaged projects.

Why QUEEN’S?

Comprising over 100 distinguished faculty from over 20 disciplines, and more than 100 students, Cultural Studies is the largest graduate program in Arts and Science at Queen’s. We are committed to a diversity of students and faculty and grateful for the experience, expertise, creativity, and commitment that they bring to our program. Our goal is to create an intellectual environment that combines a high level of academic scholarship and ongoing meaningful engagement with local and global communities. Cultural Studies students may write their thesis in French with the permission of their supervisor. Students and staff participate with faculty in program governance. In the first year, all students attend the Cultural Studies Colloquium and take the core course, Cultural Studies Past and Present; other courses are the choice of the student. Students have opportunities to work as research assistants on grant-funded faculty research, and to teach in departments across the university. Opportunities for practicums and volunteer work abound: many of our students are associated with local galleries and arts organizations, heritage projects, activist groups, and environmental and social justice projects.

RESEARCH Areas

Research topics and methods in Cultural Studies are only limited by student ambition and preparation, and the combination of faculty members they can put together to supervise their work. Geographical spaces engaged by our current PhD students include China, Turkey, Cape Breton Island, Toronto, Pakistan, Lebanon, Akwesasne Mohawk Territory, Mexico, and Ghana.

Research Areas our PhD students are currently working in include:

- Music and Critical Sound Studies
- Indigenous Arts and Politics
- Carceral Studies and Prison Abolitionism
- Curation, Museum, and Critical Heritage Studies
- Settler Colonial Studies
- Performance and Visual Art
- Diaspora and Migration Studies
- Animal Studies
- Environmental Humanities
- Film Studies and Documentary Film
- Critical Race Studies
- Queer Studies
- Popular Culture
- Radical and Independent Media
- Political and Social Theory
- Religious Studies
- Critical Education Studies
- Gender Studies
- Creative Writing
- Theatre and Theatre Studies

We encourage you to identify an area of research interest and contact a potential supervisor before applying.

Visit the Cultural Studies Program website to read faculty profiles and learn more about faculty members’ research areas. When you find a faculty member with similar research interests to yours, contact them and tell them about your interest in graduate work, area of research interest and related experience. Applicants are required to secure an agreement for supervision before being accepted into the program.

Program STRUCTURE

PhD (4 years): 4 full-term courses, qualifying exams, and thesis or project.
2021-2022
Cultural Studies PhD Map*

ACHIEVE YOUR ACADEMIC GOALS

YEAR I
- Complete 4 one-term courses, plus Cultural Studies Colloquium (CUST 802/902).
- Meet with your supervisor to discuss program requirements, resources, research/occupational goals, and timelines.
- Consider the format of your PhD work: monograph thesis or portfolio? What will best match your materials, methods, goals, and desired audience?
- In the summer, form your supervisory committee and prepare for your qualifying exams.

YEAR II
- Complete your qualifying exams in the fall. Write and defend your thesis or project proposal in the winter. Embark on your substantive research in the summer.
- Find your way through the academic process with the help of Expanding Horizons or Student Academic Success Services.
- Set up regular meetings with your supervisor to discuss progress, career pathways.
- If necessary, apply for ethics review (GREB); consult with others for support.
- Present your work through professional associations, topic conferences or at graduate conferences such as Undisciplined.
- Expand your research audience through social media or online presence.
- For application, see the Department of Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- If doing community-engaged or artistic research, look for opportunities to exhibit or develop public-facing projects.
- Begin discussion of potential external thesis examiners.
- Visit CAREER EXCELLENCE

YEAR III
- Complete thesis, portfolio, or project.
- Plan date of thesis submission and examination.
- Work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Archive your thesis or project on QSPACE.
- If necessary, apply for ethics review (GREB); consult with others for support.
- Present your work through professional associations, topic conferences or at graduate conferences such as Undisciplined.
- Expand your research audience through social media or online presence.
- For application, see the Department of Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- If doing community-engaged or artistic research, look for opportunities to exhibit or develop public-facing projects.
- Begin discussion of potential external thesis examiners.
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YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING
- Complete thesis, portfolio, or project.
- Plan date of thesis submission and examination.
- Work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
- Review submission and examination guidelines.
- Archive your thesis or project on QSPACE.
- Complete thesis, portfolio, or project.
- Plan date of thesis submission and examination.
- Work with supervisor to prepare for defence.
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MAXIMIZE RESEARCH IMPACT

YEAR I
- Complete CORE online module on research ethics if doing research with humans (interviews, community work).
- Apply to SSHRC, GGS, and other funding.
- Attend conferences in your field, even if you are not presenting.
- Investigate internships from MITACS and other sources.
- Find opportunities for extra training through CTL, Expanding Horizons, MITACS, etc.
- Prepare for work or studies in a multi-cultural environment by taking the Intercultural Awareness Training Certificate hosted by QUC and FDIC.

YEAR II
- None for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees, community organizations, etc.
- Get teaching tips from the Centre for Teaching and Learning.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- If necessary, apply for ethics review (GREB); consult with others for support.
- Present your work through professional associations, topic conferences or at graduate conferences such as Undisciplined.
- Expand your research audience through social media or online presence.
- For application, see the Department of Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
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BUILD SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

YEAR I
- Explore paid or volunteer media work with the Queen’s Journal, Kingston FM, CFRC, blogs, etc.
- Participate in the Cultural Studies Student Caucus or Queen’s spaces and initiatives such as Four Directions, Native News, etc.
- Check out professional development workshops from Expanding Horizons.
- Volunteer with a community organizations such as Learning Supportive, Joe Mills, etc, or involve yourself in activist, artistic, or professional projects outside the university.
- Serve on faculty or university committees.

YEAR II
- None for non-academic employment by continuing involvement on committees, community organizations, etc.
- Get teaching tips from the Centre for Teaching and Learning.
- Use a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- If necessary, apply for ethics review (GREB); consult with others for support.
- Present your work through professional associations, topic conferences or at graduate conferences such as Undisciplined.
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ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

YEAR I
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, or by organizing conferences.

YEAR II
- If necessary, apply for ethics review (GREB); consult with others for support.
- Present your work through professional associations, topic conferences or at graduate conferences such as Undisciplined.
- Expand your research audience through social media or online presence.
- For application, see the Department of Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant position to develop your skills and experience.
- If doing community-engaged or artistic research, look for opportunities to exhibit or develop public-facing projects.
- Begin discussion of potential external thesis examiners.
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YEAR III
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, or by organizing conferences.

YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING
- Participate in your graduate and professional community through activities such as graduate student outreach programs, or by organizing conferences.

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

YEAR I
- Finding a career that fits starts with knowing yourself. Get help by taking a Career Services workshop, or meeting with a career counselor. Check out books like So What Are You Going to Do With That? or The Academic Job Search from the Career Resource Area for advice on various career options.
- Browse University Affairs, Chronicle of Higher Education, and non-academic labor market websites.
- Stay on the lookout for special events like Graduate Student Career Week.

YEAR II
- Start building your teaching portfolio.
- Explore different careers of interest by using Queen’s Connects on LinkedIn to connect with Queen’s alumni. For more information check out Career Cruising.
- Investigate requirements for professional positions or other opportunities related to careers of interest.
- Attend CUST Alumni events to hear what our graduates are doing after Queen’s.

YEAR III
- Polish your academic resume and begin applying for academic jobs and post-docs.
- Don’t neglect non-academic possibilities. Research organizations of interest and start putting together an “industry” resume.
- If you are an international student interested in staying in Canada, consider speaking with an International Student Advisor.

YEAR IV & TRANSITIONING
- Build connections with faculty outside of your program. Pursue interviews for faculty positions and apply for post-doc fellowships and positions.
- Apply to jobs or make plans for other opportunities to develop skills. Get help from Career Services with job search, resumes, and interviews.
- If considering jobs abroad, research possible immigration regulations.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?
A graduate degree in Cultural Studies can equip you with valuable and versatile skills, such as:
- Knowledge and technical skills: Effective communication skills in multiple forms for diverse audiences
- Information management: prioritize, organize and synthesize large amounts of information
- Time management: meet deadliness and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
- Project management: develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise findings, draw and act on conclusions
- Creativity and innovation
- Perseverance
- Interdisciplinary and experience as a collaborative worker
- Awareness, an understanding of sound ethical practices, social responsibility, responsible research and cultural sensitivity
- Professionalism in all aspects of work, research, and interactions
- Leadership: initiative and vision leading people and discussion

WHERE CAN I GO?
A PhD in Cultural Studies can take your career in many directions. In Canada, less than 40% of all PhDs will work in post-secondary education. The majority will work in industry, government, or non-profits.
- Academia and teaching Non-profit agencies
- Media Museums
- Civil Service Publications
- Social policy agencies

Taking time to explore career options, build experience, and network can help you have a smooth transition to the world of work after graduation.

Visit careers.queensu.ca/gradmaps for the online version with links!

* This map is intended to provide suggestions for activities and careers, but everyone’s abilities, experiences, and constraints are different. Build your own Grad Map using our online My Grad Map tool.
Application FAQs

What do I need to know to APPLY?

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
- Master’s degree in Cultural Studies or a related discipline from a recognized university.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS
- Writing sample.
- Statement of Interest.
- Video documentation of relevant work (if applicable).
- C.V.
- Demonstrated proficiency in a language other than English (if needed).
- If English is not a native language, prospective students must meet the English language proficiency requirements in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. The School of Graduate Studies requires the following minimum scores: TOEFL (paper-based): 550, (2) TOEFL iBT: Writing (24/30); Speaking (22/30); Reading (22/30); Listening (20/30), for a total of 88/120 (applicants must have the minimum score in each test as well as the minimum overall score), or (3) IELTS: 7.0 (academic module overall band score), or (4) PTE Academics: 65.

KEY DATES & DEADLINES
- Application due: January 31st to qualify for funding.
- Notification of acceptance: March 31st.

Before you start your application, please review the Graduate studies application process.

What about FUNDING?

The minimum funding guarantee for Cultural Studies PhD students is $20,000 per year, throughout years 1-4. The funding package may be comprised of Queen’s Graduate Awards, Teaching Assistantships, and named internal Fellowships. We encourage all students to apply for external funding from OGS, SSHRC and other sources. Queen’s will automatically issue a one time $10,000 award to incoming PhD students who have won federal government tri-council awards. For more information, see the School of Graduate Studies’ information on awards and scholarships.