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.
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 written and oral skills in diverse formats
- Information management: prioritize, organize, and synthesize large amounts of information
- Time management: meet deadlines and manage responsibilities despite competing demands
- Project management: develop ideas, gather information, analyze, critically appraise, draw and act on conclusions
- Creativity and innovation
- Perseverance
- Independence and experience as a collaborative professional
- Awareness, an understanding of sound ethical practices, social responsibility, responsible research and cultural sensitivity

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
- Galleries
- Civil Service
- Publishing houses
- 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.
Graduate Studies FAQs

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 and Postdoctoral Affairs’ information on awards and scholarships.