



**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

**MA SOCIO-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY HANDBOOK**

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# INTRODUCTION

**Welcome to the program!**

## **Advising in the MA Program**

Students with general questions about the course of their study and various requirements are expected to consult the MA Program Director Dr. Ellen Marakowitz. The [GSAS Handbooks](#) may be helpful for general questions but for clear, correct information please consult with Dr. Marakowitz. Her email is [em8@columbia.edu](mailto:em8@columbia.edu)

Dr. Ellen Marakowitz is the MA Program Director and will be your general advisor.. She will meet with you individually at the start of the program to go over course selection, work with you regarding any administrative issues concerning your enrollment, and guide you with academic questions that may arise. During your course of study, you will meet with the director each semester to help you keep track of your courses and academic progress. These meetings are recommended.

As much as other students may be a valuable source of information, it is always best to check official policy and not rely on hearsay from your peers. If questions remain, please take them to Dr. Marakowitz so that they can be resolved.

Please note that it is the sole responsibility of students to make appointments with the director and their faculty when needed, keep track of deadlines for final papers, thesis, applying for degrees, applying for summer funding, etc.

It is also your responsibility to keep track of communications from GSAS. The Department will send updates and reminders, but this is no substitute for staying on top of your timelines. **The most important thing you can do to ensure you get all the updates is to activate your Columbia uni as soon as possible.** All departmental communication is sent to your official Columbia email.

# STRUCTURE OF THE MA PROGRAM

## University Requirements for MA Degree

### Program Requirements

- Total of 30 Credits (all graduate courses, 4000 or above)
- 2 Residence Units = 2 semesters of full-time study\*
- MA Thesis (2 readers, assigned grade of pass/fail)

### Overview of structure

Similar to open course selection, students in the MA Sociocultural Anthropology program may complete the program under different timetables. The MA program requires the completion of 2 Full Residence Units = 2 semesters of full-time study

### Residence Units and Financial Matters

#### 1. Residence Units and Courses:

A residence unit is an enrollment category. All students have to register for some form of a residence unit to sign up for classes.

- One Resident Unit = 1 semester of full-time study.
- One-half Residence Unit = 1 semester of ½ time study.
- One-quarter Residence Unit = 1 semester of ¼ time study.

*The requirement of 2 Residence Units may be met by a variety of enrollments, including full or part-time, **with the exception of international students who must always be registered full-time, with the requirement that international students must register for a Full Residence Unit each semester of the first year.** The important thing to keep in mind is that your total residence units must add up to 2 by the end of your course enrollment.*

**The number of courses you may take is connected to the Residence Unit you choose. The table below shows this.**

Courses offered in the MA program are either 3 credits or 4 credits per course.

1 Full Residence Unit ("RU")	Four or more courses (Max 20 credits, if it exceeds additional tuition fee will be charged)
Half Residence Unit ("0.5 RU")	Maximum three courses.

Quarter Residence Unit (“0.25 RU”)	Maximum two courses.
Extended Residence (ER)	Maximum 3 courses. This is considered a full-time enrollment and is suitable for international students who have already completed 2 Residence Units.

**For international students** - As noted above, you must always keep a full-time enrollment status which means enrolling for one Full Residence Unit each semester for 2 semesters if you plan to complete your coursework within one year. If you choose to enroll for additional semesters you would enroll under the Extended Residence category.

**For domestic students** - Part-time enrollment is possible. You can construct your program in any enrollment categories that add up to 2 RUs.

## 2. Tuition and fees

All students have the same tuition fees which will correspond to the Residence Unit you have registered. You can find the details of the fee structure on the cost of attendance page on the [GSAS website under All Other Master's Programs](#)

**Please note:** Full Residence Unit, the maximum number of credits you can take without additional tuition fee cost is 20 credits. Each additional course will be charged.

## Planning your program of study and timeline

The MA program allows you to structure your program flexibly. However, the flexibility of the structure is dependent on certain conditions:

- Full or part-time registration unit
- International or domestic student
- the number of courses you want to take per semester
- and the corresponding fees

*You are highly recommended to reach out to the program director Dr. Ellen Marakowitz via email or set up an office hours appointment at the earliest to ensure that you plan your timeline to complete the degree with no difficulties. The Program Director is the advisor to all MA students.*

Here are some possible structures-

<b>One-Year Timetable (2 FULL RU Semesters)</b>	
Fall Semester (One Residence Unit enrollment)	5 classes
Spring Semester (One Residence Unit enrollment)	5 classes
Summer Semester	Thesis work/writing
Graduation	October, February, and May

<b>Two-Year Timetable (4 HALF RU Semesters)</b>	
<b>Year 1</b>	
Fall Semester (1/2 Residence Unit)	3 classes
Spring Semester (1/2 Residence Unit)	3 classes
Summer Semester	No enrollment but fieldwork research
<b>Year 2</b>	
Fall Semester (1/2 Residence Unit)	3 classes
Spring Semester (1/2 Residence Unit)	3 classes

**For International Students:** If you are continuing your studies to the next fall semester through the ER you remain on F1 visa status. If not, please contact the [ISSO](#) to get further information on continuing to stay in the country.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Introduction**

Each student must take 30 credits, which typically equals 10 classes at 3 credits each. 18 of the credits must be in Anthropology.

All courses being offered will be visible in the course directory or SSOL/Vergil.

All students must take graduate-level courses marked GRXXXX

### **Course Requirement Breakdown**

18 credits (6 courses) must be Anthropology courses (Director may approve other courses such as Anthropology from other departments)

12 credits (4 courses) may be from any other department.

### **Grading Policy**

**Letter Grade:** The Graduate School's grading system is as follows: A, B, C, D; F. Plus and minus letter grades are also used. A letter grade is given to a student who has completed the required work in a course, including the final exam or paper, and it is expressed on a student's transcript by the letter grades A, B, C, D, or F.

**Reading Credit:** The mark of R is a non-evaluative grade that confers credit for registration without designating an A-F letter grade. It appears on SSOL and official transcripts. Students who elect to take a course for R credit must speak with the instructor to get permission to take the course for R credit. Instructors individually determine the requirements for R credit.

**Before electing to take a course for either R. They must confer with the instructor of the course to obtain permission to take the course for R credit.**

For more details: <https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/grading-system>

### **REQUIRED Core Courses**

ANTH GR 5201 Principles and Applications of Socio-Cultural Anthropology (Offered in the Fall)

ANTH GR 6227 Ethnographies at the End of the World (Offered in the Spring)

ANTH GR 6212 Principles and Applications of Socio-Cultural Anthropology II (Offered in the Spring)

### **RECOMMENDED Courses**

ANTH GR 6070 Making Ethnography: Method and Writing (Offered in the Fall)

ANTH GR 9101 Independent Research (Offered both semesters)

## Electives

Please refer to the [Columbia Course Directory](#) for the most current listings of courses available in the Fall and Spring semesters. If you are interested in a particular course or professor, reach out to Dr. Marakowitz at the earliest to get more information on the course offerings and teaching appointments of the professors for the particular academic year as some instructors may be on sabbatical.

## Recommend Courses

ANTH G6070. Making Ethnography: Method and Writing (Offered each Fall)  
ANTH 9101 Independent Research (Thesis research) (3-6 credits)

## Special Notes on Courses

For MA students with an undergraduate degree in Anthropology, it may be possible to waive some of the required courses after consultation with the director

If there is an undergraduate course of interest please speak with the director to see if it is possible to take it under a special arrangement that will offer graduate credits for the course. Please note that undergraduate credits **DO NOT** count toward the 30 required graduate credits.

## MA THESIS

### Requirements

- **Formatting:** No specific page requirement but typically about 70 double-spaced pages of original research.
- **Timeline:**
  - Students typically take about 1 to 2 semesters to write the thesis. You are required to meet with the Director and Readers to work on schedule.
  - It is critical that you work with your readers in advance to determine when readers will need the thesis to have time to read it and make comments.
- **Submission:** The thesis is submitted to both readers who email their approval to the Director. Once the thesis is approved, the student must submit 2 bound copies to Marilyn Astwood in the Anthropology Department. You cannot graduate until this step is completed.
- **Academic Thesis Advising:** In the middle of the first Fall semester you will be assigned a reader/advisor for your thesis by the program director.
- **Institutional Review Board (IRB):** All students go through IRB training to conduct fieldwork. Dr. Marakowitz is the liaison for students and the IRB which is necessary when conducting human subjects research.



## ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND FACILITIES

### Study Spaces

Apart from the many libraries at Columbia University, these are dedicated Anthropology Student Spaces -

- **Graduate study center:** Located in 301 Philosophy Hall, the Graduate Student Center provides a café and study and quiet meeting space for graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and faculty across disciplines and schools. You may access the Graduate Student Center using your Columbia ID card.
- **Anthropology Department Lounge:** Please make yourself at home and help maintain the Anthropology Department Lounge. Please consult with the Anthropology Offices, 452 Schermerhorn Extension to obtain access. It is open for use from 9 am-5 pm.

### Funding

- **Summer Research Funding:** Apply for summer research funding that is given by the department and matched with GSAS summer grants [here](#).
- **Conference presentation funding:** The department provides funding for travel to present papers or posters at national and international conferences. This funding is matched by GSAS, and you can find the application link [here](#).

### Anthropology Graduate Student Association (AGSA)

The department considers AGSA to be the representative student body that advances the concerns of anthropology graduate students to the Department—usually the DGS and/or Chair. Should situations arise that affect some (but not all) students these concerns can still be presented by AGSA. If issues arise that AGSA deems necessary to bring to the attention of the entire faculty (not just the Chair and DGS) they should appoint two students to represent these issues and consult with the Chair about presenting the concerns to faculty at a Department faculty meeting. Please do look out for emails that seek Student Representatives for your cohort.

## MA DEGREE PROCEDURE AND COMMENCEMENT

Columbia confers degrees three times per academic year: **October, February, and May**.

Please consult the Columbia academic schedule for the exact dates as they change every year. In the semester prior to your graduation, you will need to go online to the registrar (through Student Service On Line – SSOL) and apply for the MA degree. If you do not graduate when

you planned it is not a problem as your application automatically renews for graduation at the next conferral date.

MA students who complete their degree may participate in the MA Convocation and Commencement ceremonies, which take place each May.

You may walk in the MA Convocation ceremony if your degree is conferred in the October, February, or May conferral dates of the current academic year. In addition, if you will be completing your degree by the FOLLOWING October, you may participate in the Convocation and Commencement ceremonies of the preceding academic year, but you will NOT receive your degree until all requirements have been met.

## **OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: EVENTS & TALKS**

Please monitor your email for the upcoming announcements regarding the dates and times of events conducted by the department.

- **BOAS Seminar:**

The department regularly hosts the Boas seminar on Wednesday afternoons from 2 pm-4 pm occasionally followed by an informal meeting with the speaker and student group. MA students are not required to attend but are highly encouraged. This is a valuable opportunity to meet prominent scholars, and to build your network. Make sure to take advantage of it and respect the time and effort the speaker has made to come to campus to meet and talk with us about their research.

- **MA Talks:**

This is a series of engaging talks held throughout the academic year, covering a range of topics that are particularly relevant to MA students. These sessions provide an excellent opportunity to deepen your understanding of key subjects, engage with expert speakers, and connect with your peers in a stimulating environment.

- **PhD Application Workshop:**

This workshop is designed to assist students in crafting strong academic statements for their PhD applications. Led by the Director, the two-session workshop will guide you through the essential elements of a compelling statement, offering personalized feedback and strategies to enhance your application.

- **Anthro Writing Groups with Postdoc:**

Join a supportive weekly writing group led by the Postdoc in the department, where you can collaborate with fellow students to improve your writing skills. These sessions offer a structured environment to work on your academic writing, receive constructive feedback, and make consistent progress on your projects.

- **MA Thesis Presentation Day:**

This annual event is a highlight for MA students, providing a platform to present your thesis work to the department. It's an opportunity to showcase your research, gain valuable feedback, and practice your presentation skills in front of an academic audience.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **Readers:** Occasionally MA students are able to be readers for large undergraduate classes. More information will be available to the students at the start of the semester as needs vary.
- **Work Study and On-Campus Jobs:** [GSAS Compass](#) assists students in GSAS doctoral and master's programs in identifying, working toward, and achieving their post-graduation career goals. Ensure that you are subscribed to alerts through the [Compass Portal](#) to never miss an update.

## DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION

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