

Spring 2026

Color Key: **Course detail and process for student** | **Faculty role information**

Doctor of Liberal Studies Curriculum and Timeline

Curriculum Components (36 credits + Doctoral Thesis Stages)

The goal of Georgetown's degree is to produce new knowledge that frames intellectual inquiry within interdisciplinary approaches in the context of human values; it is animated by the belief that bringing together different perspectives and fields of knowledge is valuable for addressing pressing issues. The academic results and professional outcomes of this program are distinct from those of traditional PhD programs; in fact, it is crucial that students recognize that they are not earning a PhD, nor, when done with the program, should students claim to have earned a PhD and thereby claim false credentials.

- **Coursework**

- 4 Foundational Courses | LSHV 8000-8003 (12 credits)
- 8 Elective Courses (24 credits)
 - Can include up to 3 Directed Readings (LSHV 911)
- *All coursework (foundational courses and electives of choice) is intended to prepare students for the creation of the doctoral thesis. Therefore, students should start thinking about their doctoral thesis topic and their committee members as early as the first semester.
- **See registration instructions for non-DLS coursework at the end of the doc.

- **DLS Qualifying Exam | LSHV 9997 – To be taken after coursework**

- The DLS Qualifying Exam consists of two parts - Written and Oral - and is the first of three stages in the DLS Thesis Process (Qual Exams, Thesis Proposal and Thesis Writing).
- Students must attend the virtual Qual Exam workshop: **Jan 6, 2026 6:30 PM**
- The student must connect with the Faculty Director (currently held by Dr. McNelis) to identify the Georgetown professor who will write one of the two questions for the written portion of the Qualifying Exam. This professor is usually the chair (or mentor, or advisor; the title is interchangeable) of the student's thesis committee. It is incumbent upon the student and not upon the program or the Faculty Director to find the additional examiner, who must be affiliated with

Georgetown. Failure to find an appropriate examiner is grounds for termination from the program.

- o The student will work with the and the other GU professor to set the dates for the written and oral portions. We require students to submit both qualifying exam dates by February 15 (spring) / September 15 (fall) via this [GOOGLE FORM](#).
- o Three dates are involved for the exam:
 - 1. one date will be established as the day on which the student will receive the two questions. The student will then have one week to produce two answers, each of which is about 12-15 pages (double spaced; bibliography does not count towards the page limit).
 - 2. the student will send the answers to the two examiners via email one week after receiving the two questions. Generally, the two examiners need one week to read and evaluate the answers,
 - 3. roughly one week after the submission of the exam will be the date of the oral exam. However, the answers must be thought sufficient to warrant an oral questioning.
- o **The oral exam must take place by April 17 (spring) / November 14 (fall).** Please note holidays when planning since faculty may not be available.
- o All times and dates are dependent upon faculty availability. Later in the semester, faculty availability will decrease, making it more difficult for you to complete your qualifying exams in your preferred time window.
- o **Written Exam - consists of two questions**
 - Faculty Director writes one question based on the foundational curriculum (LSHV 8000-8003)
 - The second question, written by the other GU professor, is based on the student's research interest.
 - Exams are 12-15 pages in length each (double spaced).
 - The student will have one full week to answer both written questions (7 days). The student must submit responses by midnight on the 7th day).
- o **Oral Exam - up to 2 weeks after turning in the written exam**
 - **The oral exam must take place by April 17 (spring) / November 14 (fall).**
 - During the one-hour oral exam, the student will respond to clarifying questions from Faculty Director and the other GU professor.
 - The student will receive a grade of fail, pass, high pass, or pass with distinction, which will be noted on the student's GU transcript.
- o See page 91 in Student Handbook for additional detail

● Faculty Role in Qualifying Exams

- o Responsible for designing one question that pertains to the student's field. The question should be able to be addressed in 12-15 pages (double spaced) and will hopefully allow the student to demonstrate control over the bibliography and

state of the question. The Faculty Director of DLS will submit a second question that is based more on the general contours of the program.

- The question will be sent to the Faculty Director 3-4 days prior to the exam
 - The exam will be sent to the student via email, and the student will have one week after receiving the two questions to submit the answers via email.
 - Once the student submits the answers, the faculty member and the Faculty Director of GLS will have one week to read/evaluate/grade the answers. Both faculty members will read each of the answers.
 - If the answers are deemed "passing", we will then proceed to an oral exam (conducted via Zoom). The exam lasts for one hour and there will be follow up for some more in-depth answers and clarifications.
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- **DLS Thesis Proposal | LSHV 9998**

- After completing the DLS Qualifying Exams, students are required to register for DLS Thesis Proposal for the following semester..
- Students are permitted to register for a maximum of two semesters of Thesis Proposal. Students who do not successfully defend their thesis proposal by the end of the second semester of Thesis Proposal will be academically terminated from the program.
- A tuition charge of \$1,000 will be assessed for each semester of registration. This registration carries no credit but confers half-time student status.
- Students must attend the virtual proposal workshop: **Jan 8, 2026 6:30 PM**
 - During the workshop, the Faculty Director will review the contents of the thesis proposal and discuss the formation of the doctoral thesis committee.
 - Students must also complete the [DLS Thesis Proposal Information form](#) as soon as possible for planning purposes. *Please submit this Google form even if you have not completed the proposal draft.
- Doctoral thesis committee consists of:
 - One Committee Chair - must be a Georgetown professor
 - 2-3 committee "readers" - can include external professors. The Faculty Director counts as one reader of the thesis.
- It is incumbent upon the student and not upon the program or the Faculty Director to find the additional reader. The chair of the committee must be affiliated with Georgetown. Failure to find an appropriate examiner may result in termination from the program.
- [Thesis proposal format and outline here](#). *The final proposal must be submitted to all faculty members at least three weeks before your proposal defense.

- o Once the thesis committee chair approves the proposal as being ready to defend, the student schedules a date and time for the defense via Zoom. The program staff will schedule the defense and send the calendar invitation to the group.
- o Students must schedule their thesis proposal defense by March 15 (spring), October 15 (fall).
- o **Thesis proposal defenses must take place before April 17 (spring) and November 14 (fall).** If you do not defend your thesis proposal before this date, you will be required to defend in the following semester.
- o See page 92 in Student Handbook for additional detail

● Faculty Role as DLS Thesis Committee Member in Thesis Proposal Stage

- o The student needs to design the proposal according to the template used by the program
(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gmCZppTWGt6Ffn92MXIOQRNSSsIDTMDa/edit>)
 - o Feedback on the drafts should be provided roughly within one week of the student submitting the draft.
 - o The advisor's role is primarily to address issues of intellectual substance, and the faculty member, in conjunction with advice and input from the GLS Faculty Director, is free to ensure that academic and intellectual standards are met in whatever way they see fit.
 - o The faculty member should go through multiple drafts of the document with the student and have confidence in the proposal by the time of the scheduled defense; if the faculty member is not confident, then the defense should be postponed until a later semester
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● DLS Thesis Writing | LSHV 9999

- o To be taken after successful completion of DLS Thesis Proposal
- o Students must register for DLS Thesis Writing every fall and spring to be considered actively enrolled
- o A faculty member must be designated as the Chair of the committee; that name must be sent to ls-advising@georgetown.edu
- o Students will work with the chair of their thesis committee on the structure and substance of the doctoral thesis.
- o Students must use the [GSAS Style Guide](#) for citation, order, pagination
- o The defense needs to be scheduled by February 15th for spring semester defense; by October 15th for fall semester defense. If the defense needs to be postponed to another semester, that can happen without much difficulty.
- o The entire thesis should have the approval of the chair at least 30 days before the scheduled defense date. It is up to the chair and the student to determine

whether or not the entire thesis should be submitted at once or chapter by chapter. Students should not expect chairs to be able to read the entire document in fewer than 10 days, and it may take longer.

- Students can form their own agreements with committee members about whether or not to send each chapter or the entire thesis. Students should not expect readers to be able to assess the entire document in fewer than 10 days
- The entire thesis needs to be sent to each member of the committee (including the Faculty Director of Graduate Liberal Studies) at least 20 days before the scheduled submission date.
- **Thesis defenses must take place before April 17 (spring) and November 14 (fall).** If you do not defend your thesis before this date, you will be required to defend in the following semester.
- Once the student's defense date and time has been agreed upon by the entire committee and the GLS Faculty Director (Prof. McNelis), the student should send the date, time, and all member names of the thesis committee to the Liberal Studies Program Email at ls-advising@georgetown.edu.
- At the defense, students will begin with a brief (5-7 minutes) explication of the major argument of the thesis. The interdisciplinary nature of the project should be articulated.
 - Faculty will then follow up with questions about the thesis. Questions may be broad with a focus on larger theoretical or conceptual arguments or approaches that were employed in writing the thesis. The student may explain why a given intellectual framework was (or even was not) used for their specific project. Fields have completely different standards and approaches, so the questions will be relevant to the field in which the student has written. Alternatively, questions may be focused on specific pages or even paragraphs in the thesis. The student should be prepared to justify, to explain, to clarify, or even to discuss the passage identified in the question.
 - the defense is not a formality, and students may be required to make extensive corrections; the dates by which the defense must occur are designed to provide time for those corrections to be made
- After successfully defending the thesis, students must publish their electronic thesis in ProQuest. It is the student's responsibility to complete this process. Visit the [GU Library's ProQuest page](#) for step-by-step instructions and required links. MALS/DLS students are not required to upload "cover sheet / ETD release." Disregard this prompt on the Library's website.
- Students should email the Faculty Director and state that the thesis has been submitted
- Neither the program staff nor the Faculty Director are able to provide guidance about submitting the forms via Proquest.

- **Faculty Role as Thesis Chair (Director) in Thesis Writing**

- Students should submit chapters to the Chair as each chapter is completed. Feedback on the chapters should be provided roughly within 14 days of the student submitting the draft; however, at the busiest moments of a semester (i.e. the very beginning and end of term), students must expect that faculty will take longer
- The faculty member's role is primarily to address issues of intellectual substance, and the faculty member, in conjunction with advice and input from the GLS Faculty Director, is free to ensure that academic and intellectual standards are met in whatever way the Chair sees fit
- It is the student's responsibility to be the engine of the thesis; the Chair responds to the ideas as expressed, though the Chair is free to discuss the content and try to steer students towards more fruitful approaches or questions. Students are also responsible for compiling and incorporating the necessary bibliography, though once again the Chair may make specific recommendations that may help remediate, redirect, or enhance an argument
- Students are also responsible for following the template mandated by the graduate school (<https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/80drzyh3fg9u1egosw9il1wggkpdwinz>). It is not the job of the Chair to ensure that the guidelines are followed
- The Chair reads drafts of the document with the student to ensure confidence in the thesis by the time of the scheduled defense; if the Chair is not confident that the document is worthy of passing, then the defense will be postponed until a later semester

- **Faculty Role as a Reader (Committee Member) in Thesis Writing**

- A second faculty member who functions as a second reader should go through drafts of the document with the student. It is up to the faculty member to determine whether or not chapters should be submitted serially or all at once
- The faculty member primarily assesses the intellectual accuracy, integrity, and legitimacy of the thesis, and in that capacity may make recommendations or express reservations that the student needs to address
- The faculty member may correct mistakes, typos, bibliographic omissions and the like, but the responsibility for following guidelines and ensuring a clean typescript that follows the guidelines of the Graduate School (<https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/80drzyh3fg9u1egosw9il1wggkpdwinz>) falls upon the student
- The reader must have confidence that the thesis qualifies as passing by the time of the scheduled defense; if the reader is not confident, then the defense should be postponed until a later semester

Example Curriculum Timeline

Semester 1 – Fall

- DLS Foundational 1 (LSHV 8000)
- Optional elective 1

Semester 2 - Spring

- DLS Foundational 2 (LSHV 8001)
- Optional elective 2

****Summer semester optional**

- Students can take elective courses in the summer.
- No foundational courses offered in summer

Semester 3 – Fall

- DLS Foundational 3 (LSHV 8002)
- Optional elective 3

Semester 4 – Spring

- DLS Foundational 4 (LSHV 8003)
- Optional elective 4

****Summer semester optional**

- Students can take elective courses in the summer.
- No foundational courses offered in summer

Semester 5 – Fall

- Elective 5
- Elective 6

Semester 6 – Spring

- Elective 7
- Elective 8

Semester 7 – Fall/Spring

- DLS Qualifying Exam | LSHV 9997– To be taken after coursework

Semester 8 – Spring/Fall

- DLS Thesis Proposal and Writing | LSHV 9998
 - To be taken after successful completion of DLS Qualifying Exam

Semester 9 and following – Fall/Spring

- DLS Thesis Writing | LSHV 9999
 - To be taken after successful completion of DLS Thesis Proposal and Writing
 - Students must register for DLS Thesis Writing every fall and spring to be considered actively enrolled

Registering for non-MALS/DLS coursework (any course with a non-LSHV course code)

1. DLS students are allowed to register for graduate courses outside of the Liberal Studies department, however some graduate courses at Georgetown are restricted to the specific department. For example, most Security Studies courses (coded SEST) are restricted to Law/Security Studies students. Liberal Studies graduate students are not permitted to register for these courses. Conversely, graduate courses in other departments, like English - ENGL, have open registration.
2. How do you know if a course carries a restriction? When searching courses by department course list in the Registrar's [schedule of classes](#) (instructions link on the page), you must click on the blue hyperlinked course name, which takes you to the specific course page. This page includes any restrictions or prerequisites (on the bottom left side of the page).
3. If there are no prerequisites or restrictions, you should be able to add the course in MyAccess with the 5 digit CRN ([registration instructions page here](#)). If you are able to add the course on your own, congratulations! If you receive an error message, please email the professor (cc'ing the assistant dean (Trey-rfs37) directly to request permission. Please include all course information in that email (name, course number, and CRN). Once you receive faculty approval, the assistant dean will email the Registrar to request manual registration.
4. Periodically, you will need to request approval from the respective department's academic director. The registrar will give you that information in consultation with the assistant dean.
5. Please note: All elective courses should be directly related to your master's or doctoral thesis.