

# Social and Personality Psychology

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## Major Course Requirements

### Course Requirements for the Major

All five core courses, including four semesters of 519, plus one elective.

### Core Courses

- PSCH 512 (3): Attitudes and Social Cognition
- PSCH 513 (3): Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes
- PSCH 516 (3): Research Methods in Social Psychology
- PSCH 519 (1): Social Psychology Brown Bag Seminar
- PSCH 570 (3): Personality Psychology

### Elective courses that can be taken to fulfill Major requirements

- PSCH 411 (3): Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Racism
- PSCH 417 (3): Psychology and Law

PSCH 518 (3): Seminar In Social Psychology (May be Repeated) \*

#### \* Examples of Recent Seminar Topics (PSCH 518)

- Children and the Law
- Self Regulation
- Political and Moral Psychology
- Distributive and Procedural Fairness

## **Preliminary Examination Requirements**

(revised March 29, 2022)

The Preliminary Examination (prelim) is the last major program requirement that students must complete before being advanced to candidacy and beginning work on their doctoral dissertation.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the prelim is to assess the student's readiness to undertake dissertation research.

### **Prerequisites and Timing of Proposing a Prelim**

Students must complete at least 3 of the program's 4-course requirements (PSCH 512, PSCH 513, PSCH 516, and PSCH 570) as well as four semesters of PSCH 519, have an average grade of B in all program courses taken so far, and must have successfully defended their M.A. thesis. Note: These prerequisites enable students to begin the prelim before completing all their course requirements, but students will not be advanced to candidacy until all course requirements are met.

A prelim proposal may be submitted at any time during the academic calendar year (summers are excluded). Feedback on proposals should be provided within two weeks of submission to the committee. The program chair will assign a prelim subcommittee consisting of two faculty members who are not the student's primary advisor. Prelim proposals are submitted to the program chair.

### **The Roles of the Faculty Advisor and Prelim Subcommittee**

The role of the faculty advisor is to provide constructive and hands-on feedback at the prelim proposal phase (e.g., line edits are permissible) but to take a more distant stance throughout the remainder of the prelim process. Students may consult with their advisor throughout the prelim process, but their input should be at arm's length. Students can discuss the general parameters of what they are working on with their advisors or issues they are confronting as they work on it after the prelim proposal has been approved. Faculty advisors can read and provide big picture feedback on up to (but not exceeding) two drafts of their advisees' prelim but cannot provide line edits or written comments—they can provide big picture reactions only, which can include suggestions of additional references. Faculty advisors can also take part in discussions or meetings of the subcommittee about their student's prelim and provide feedback on the subcommittee's initial draft of feedback to their advisee. The subcommittee members are nonetheless the sole decision makers and

responsible drafters of the final feedback to the student. The faculty advisor can also read the submitted product and attend the oral exam, but their participation in the oral exam process is expected to be limited and they will not chair the defense. Faculty advisors may attend the post-defense deliberations but must leave the room to allow the prelim subcommittee to confer and make their final decision.

The subcommittee is appointed by the program chair. Students and advisors may not request who serves on a given student's prelim committee. The subcommittee's role is to oversee the prelim process for the student in question. The subcommittee will read the student's proposal and inform the student about whether their proposal has been approved within 2-weeks of submission. The prelim subcommittee will also read and evaluate the final prelim product and will conduct the oral exam. The subcommittee may consult the faculty advisor or other program faculty at any time during the prelim process. However, the final decisions about prelim proposals and final prelim products are made only by the student's subcommittee. Should the subcommittee disagree about how to proceed, they may request the program chair or another faculty member designated by the program chair to provide a third perspective or vote. This third faculty member must not be the student's advisor.

### **Proposal**

Students can propose to do one of the following to fulfill the prelim requirement. That is, students can elect to write 1) a literature review, 2) a National Science Foundation (NSF) styled grant proposal, 3) a full draft of a journal article that reports on original research, or 4) a Stage 1 Registered Report. In each of these cases, the proposed prelim must be sufficiently distinct from the M.A. thesis that a prelim committee can identify it as a new work product, even if the prelim topic is in the same general area of interest as the M.A.

#### ***A Prelim Literature Review***

A prelim literature review can take one of two different forms. Both are problem-oriented, critical, and integrative rather than simply descriptive.

*Evidence synthesis.* An evidence synthesis summarizes past research by drawing conclusions from many separate investigations addressing related or identical hypotheses. A prelim exam that takes an evidence synthesis approach presents the author's assessments of 1) the state of knowledge concerning the relations of interest, 2) critical assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of past research on the relations of interest, and 3) identification of important issues that research has left unresolved, and 4) how theory should be updated in light of the current state of knowledge across the reviewed empirical work. Evidence synthesis can take either a narrative or quantitative (meta-analytic) form. A prelim proposal of this type should include the search terms and databases used to identify the relevant empirical literature, inclusion and exclusion criteria for including papers in

the review, and a reference list of articles that survive the review for inclusion/exclusion. Transparency for inclusion and completeness are essential components of a prelim that takes an evidence synthesis approach. Reviews may be constrained to a given period providing there is a good reason for doing so, for example, selecting a time period since the last major review on the topic.

*A theoretical paper.* A theoretical paper should be an integrative theoretical article that will form the basis for new lines of research and theory or should synthesize existing theory and fields of research toward the same end. A successful theoretical paper will describe novel theoretical insights that emerge from a deep understanding of previously published empirical research. Successful theoretical papers generally take one of two forms. The first is the “novel idea” or novel theory approach. The paper begins with a description of the novel idea or hypothesis (e.g., “Although it may seem counterintuitive, I posit that people prefer and make better decisions when presented with fewer rather than more choices because...”). After presenting an argument for the basic idea, the remainder of the paper reviews the empirical literature that supports the basic premises of the new idea. A theory paper that takes this form should include how the current idea is or is not consistent with existing theories that try to account for similar phenomena, acknowledgement of research and theory that is at odds with the proposed idea, and what new questions their approach suggests are most important for future inquiry.

Another approach is to present a systematic evaluation of alternative or competing theories that attempt to explain the same phenomena. For example, theories that describe the components of procedural fairness and its consequences, on the one hand, and participative decision making on the other, both posit important roles for the value of involved parties having a voice in decision making. That said, these programs of research are quite independent from each other—studies of procedural fairness almost never reference the literature on participative decision making, and vice versa. A comparison and contrast of these theories and the empirical literature that supports them could form the basis of a successful theoretical review that takes the integrative approach. Other possibilities include reviewing theories that are more explicit competitors for accounting for similar phenomena, reviewing the empirical literature that is consistent or inconsistent with these competing perspectives, and how these theories might be integrated given the state of evidence. Another possibility is to explore a paradox or puzzle in the literature, for example, two theories or programs of research that appear to be contradictory to each other and exploring how and why research based on them yield different conclusions (e.g., you might discover a possible hidden moderator).

A prelim proposal for a theoretical review should describe the new or core theoretical idea, the theoretical approaches that will be contrasted and compared, the paradox to be explored, etc. with an explanation of how or why the idea or the

contrast is interesting and important to explore. In addition, the proposal should include a proposed outline and a reference list of the key papers that will be included in the review. The proposal is limited to 2 single spaced pages, not counting references, tables, figures, or outline.

Note: Students should have already extensively read the literature they propose to review for the prelim before proposing; the prelim period should be primarily devoted to writing the paper, and not reading the literature.

Regardless of type, prelim papers must not only or primarily be a recitation of others' research and thinking on the prelim topic but instead, must include independent analysis and integration of the literature. The maximum length of the paper should be 10,000 words (~40 double spaced pages), excluding tables and references, and should use APA style. Students may adapt the organization of their paper as they go (in other words, the proposed outline is non-binding and can be revised as needed).

### ***A National Science Foundation Grant Application<sup>1</sup>***

Another way to fulfill the prelim requirement is to write the scientific portions of a National Science Foundation Grant Application, including the 1) project summary, 2) project description, and 3) references cited parts of an application.

The project summary is a one-page overview of the proposed project that includes brief statements on the intellectual merit of the proposed activity and its broader impacts. Summaries usually include 1-2 paragraphs devoted to a description of the research aims and product that would result if the proposal were funded, a statement of objectives, and methods to be employed. The statement on intellectual merit should describe the potential of the proposed research to advance knowledge. The statement on broader impacts should describe the potential of the proposed activity to benefit society and contribute to achieving specific, desired societal outcomes. The project summary should be written in general language that could be understood by a broad audience in the scientific domain.

The project description usually includes three major sections, that is, sections devoted to 1) scientific impact, 2) the proposed research, methods, and analysis, and 3) broader impacts. The scientific merit section provides the

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<sup>1</sup> A student can propose to write a grant proposal for an alternative agency or funding program, such as a NIH NRSA. Students should submit a request to write for an alternative program to the program chair before proceeding that briefly describes or links to the submission requirements, overall length, etc. before proceeding. Small grant submissions, such as TESS and SPSSI Grants-in-AID, are not appropriate for a prelim.

scientific/theoretical justification for the proposed work and what it will add to scientific knowledge, an explanation of the significance of the proposed work, and the relationship of the proposed work to the present state of knowledge in the field. The research and methods section provides a general plan of work, including a broad description of activities to be undertaken and a more specific description of the method, measures, and procedures of the proposed studies. This section aims to address what you propose to do, why you want to do it, how you plan to do it, how you will know whether you succeed, and what benefits will accrue if the project is successful, from a scientific perspective. Power analyses should be included to justify sample sizes, and an overview of how the student proposes to analyze the data should be provided. The proposed research may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case, must be well justified. The third section is “broader impacts.” Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities directly related to specific research projects, or through activities supported by but complementary to the project. “NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to the achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the U.S.; use of science and technology to inform public policy; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education. These examples of societally relevant outcomes should not be considered either comprehensive or prescriptive. Proposers may include appropriate outcomes not covered by these examples” (see pp. 22-23 of the NSF Proposal, Award Policies, and Procedures Guide). Students who elect to write an NSF proposal are encouraged to find and read others’ successful proposals, and to attend one or more workshops offered on campus on how to write a successful research proposal before proposing a prelim of this type<sup>2</sup>. NOTE: A budget and related other sections are not expected for the prelim.

To propose to do an NSF Grant proposal for the prelim, students should prepare a brief description of the research question they will propose to study and why it is important, a brief overview of the studies planned to be proposed (a proposal should include at least three related studies), and why they are important from the perspective of (a) how it will advance psychological theory and knowledge (i.e., scientific impact) and from the perspective of broader impacts, and (b) an

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<sup>2</sup> See R.J. Sternberg (2014). *Writing successful grant proposals from the top down and bottom up*. SAGE.

outline of the grant proposal. The proposal is limited to 2 single space pages, not counting references, tables, figures, or grant proposal outline.

Consistent with NSF guidelines, the final grant proposal used for the prelim must have 1" margins, use a 12 pt sans serif font, and not exceed 15 single-spaced pages (excluding the project summary and references; per NSF guidelines, tables and figures need to be included in the 15 p. limit). References should be in APA style.

### **Write a Journal Article**

Students can also propose to write an original journal article that reports on a study or studies to fulfill the prelim requirement. To complete the prelim requirement by writing a journal article, the student must independently write an APA-style empirical article's introduction, method, results, and discussion sections. The proposed project must already be approved by the IRB, and data must already be collected before proposing a journal article write-up as the student's prelim. Students may consult with statistical consultants but must do their own analyses. Analyses can be completed prior to proposing an empirical paper to serve as a prelim. Like the other prelim options, the prelim project must be distinct from the student's master's thesis research. Although the advisor can contribute to the idea guiding the research project, the research methods, and supervise the analyses, the student alone should conduct their analyses and then independently write the entire paper.

To propose this type of prelim, students should prepare (a) a brief description of the guiding question the research is designed to address and why it is important, (b) a clear statement of hypothesis or hypotheses in both conceptual and operational forms, (c) a brief overview of the study or studies that will be included in the write-up, (d) the source of the data that will form the basis of the paper, (e) power analyses to justify the choice of sample sizes (must be detailed and thorough), and (f) an up to 10-slide PowerPoint file that provides an overview/summary of analyses (e.g., graphs and tables, and brief explanatory prose). Parts a through c cannot exceed 2 single space pages; part f should be incorporated into the slide deck. Students should not write a paper with a short-reports format in mind (e.g., *Psychological Science*) but instead should aim for a paper with introductions the length and quality of those we usually observe in *Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin* or the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (or similar full report journals; these usually range in length from 11-15 pages).

The maximum length of a journal article prelim is 10,000 words (~40 double spaced pages) written in APA style, excluding figures, tables, and references. Analysis scripts/syntax and data should be included in an Appendix (these do not

have to be publication-ready versions but should include sufficient annotations and so on to allow the subcommittee to follow the script/syntax).

### ***Write a Stage 1 Registered Report***

Another option for meeting the prelim requirement is to write a Stage 1 Registered Report. A registered report is a publishing format that emphasizes the importance of the research question and the quality of the methodology by conducting peer review prior to data collection. The format is designed to reward best practices in adhering to the hypothetico-deductive model of the scientific method by judging the quality of the premise or argument for doing the research, the proposed methods, and proposed analyses independently of the results achieved.

Like the other prelim options, a Stage 1 Registered Report prelim must be distinct from the student's master's thesis research, even if the registered report is in the same general topic area. Although the advisor can contribute to the idea guiding the research project, the student must independently come up with the method, develop their own analysis plan, and write the Stage 1 Registered Report. Students should write an initial draft of proposed analyses on their own (including power analyses) but may ask departmental statistical consultants to review and to provide verbal feedback on their first pass drafts of proposed analyses.

A Stage 1 Registered Report prelim will be judged on how well it conveys the importance of the research question; the soundness of the logic, rationale and plausibility of the proposed hypotheses; the rigor and feasibility of the methodology and analysis; whether the clarity and degree of methodological detail is sufficient to exactly replicate the proposed procedures; and whether the student has included a theoretical and methodological basis that ensures that more than one possible outcome can be interpreted meaningfully (e.g., non-tautological arguments; testing competing hypotheses; tests of the validity of the procedures, including manipulations; adequate statistical power).

To propose a Stage 1 Registered Report prelim, students should prepare (a) a brief description of the guiding research question or questions the research is designed to address and why it is important, (b) a clear statement of hypothesis or hypotheses in both conceptual and operational forms, and (c) a brief overview of the study or studies that will be proposed (up to 2 single space pages).

The maximum length of a prelim that takes the form of a Stage 1 Registered Report should be 5,000 words (~20 pages), excluding figures, tables, and references. Analysis scripts/syntax of proposed analyses should be included in an Appendix (these do not have to be publication-ready versions but should include



sufficient annotations and so on to allow the subcommittee to follow the script/syntax).

### **Proposal Review and Approval**

Pass decisions for prelim project proposals can be of two types: An unqualified pass (i.e., the project is good to go, even if the subcommittee provides some feedback and suggestions), or a qualified pass (i.e., the subcommittee believes the proposal has most of the elements to lead to a successful prelim project, but sees some area or areas that give the committee enough pause to justify asking for a revision). Revisions are due within 2-weeks of notification<sup>3</sup> of the qualified pass.

Any prelim proposal that the subcommittee believes requires substantial revisions to achieve an unqualified pass will be considered a failed proposal. Students who fail their first prelim proposal will have the choice to revise their initial proposal for further reconsideration (taking whatever length of time they need to make these revisions) or to propose something else. Students who fail two prelim proposals of the same project will also fail the prelim exam.

### **Independence**

The prelim project is in most ways an exam. The prelim product is therefore expected to reflect the student's independent work. The writing of the prelim literature review, grant proposal, journal article, or Stage 1 Registered Report must therefore be entirely independent. The prelim paper cannot receive line edits or written comments from faculty advisors, peers, or anyone else. There is one exception to this very hard rule: Students may solicit assistance from the UIC [Writing Center](#).

Students may, however, *discuss* their prelim projects and their ideas with their advisors, peers, and so on. However, these discussions must stay at the level of generalities rather than anything that resembles explicit writing advice.

The primary rule is that the written prelim product **MUST** be the student's independent work. Breaking this rule will mean failing the prelim.

### **Prelim Timeline and Deadlines**

All prelim projects are to be completed within 10-weeks of the prelim proposal approval. Rare exceptions to the 10-week deadline will be made for religious holidays (1

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<sup>3</sup> The two-week limit on revisions is meant to represent the amount of work required to accomplish the revision. The exact time subcommittees give to students to complete the revisions can exceed this time-limit under extenuating conditions, e.g., when there are conflicts with religious holidays or conference travel, if the student has major exams or papers due at the same time, and so on. Under no circumstances, however, should the time-limit exceed 4-weeks.

week) or significant extenuating circumstances. Students should carefully plan when to propose their prelim to make sure that they have time to complete the prelim on time and avoid conflicts, such as travel, during the preliminary exam period. The subcommittee must schedule the oral defense within 2-weeks of receiving the prelim project excluding summer months, religious holidays (1 week), or significant extenuating circumstances (the latter must be approved by the program chair).

### **Oral Defense**

All prelim exams—regardless of type—will include an oral defense scheduled for one hour. The oral defense will begin with a brief student presentation of the student’s prelim that must **not exceed 15 minutes**. The subcommittee will then ask the student to clarify aspects or defend various claims they make in their prelim work. Students should expect the kinds of questions candidates receive after a job talk. After one hour, the prelim subcommittee will ask the student to leave. The faculty advisor can stay for an initial period to consult with the prelim subcommittee but will then also be asked to leave to allow the subcommittee to confer. The subcommittee should call the student back to announce their decision after their conference. If the student is asked to do revisions (very rare), the subcommittee will provide written instructions within two business days of the defense. The two-week revision timeline will begin when the student receives their written feedback/instructions.

### **Pass/Fail Decisions and Revisions**

Prelim subcommittees decide whether a prelim exam passes based on the quality of the work product and its oral defense. Decisions are pass/fail with the possibility of a high pass. High passes are given to those prelims we want future students to use as examples of a good prelim product. The bar for a pass decision is higher than it is for most graduate course assignments but does not need to meet the bar of being “submission ready” for a journal publication. It should, however, meet the bar of being a work product that the subcommittee thinks would be worth further refining for publication. Revise decisions at this stage are extremely rare and only used when the committee (a) believes it is possible that two more weeks could move a paper from a fail to pass, and (b) the committee can provide the student with an actionable list of things they can concretely do to achieve a pass decision.

### **Advancement to Candidacy**

After passing their prelim exam, students will send a copy of their CV and courses taken, and grades received to the program chair. The program chair will distribute these materials and convene a meeting of the program faculty to review the candidate’s overall performance in the program (including but not limited to their prelim exam) and vote on whether to advance the student to candidacy.

## Requirement Checklist

### I. General Departmental Requirements

- Advisor-approved MA Proposal
- Approval of Proposed Minor
- Committee-approved MA Proposal
- Committee-approved MA Thesis
- Graduate College--Approved MA Degree
- Preliminary Examination Proposal
- Committee-approved Preliminary Examination
- Graduate College--Admission to Candidacy
- Committee-approved Ph.D. Proposal
- Committee-approved Ph.D. Dissertation
- Major Program Requirements
- Minor Area Requirements
- Two semesters 50% TA (or equivalent) and TA orientation class
- Graduate College--Approved Ph.D. Degree

### II. Department Course Requirements

- PSCH 507 Emerging Research Issues (1 hour fall, 1 hour spring)
- PSCH 508 Colloquium on Teaching Psychology (1 hour, fall)
- PSCH 543 Research Design and Analysis I (4 hours, fall)
- PSCH 545 Research Design and Analysis II (4 hours, spring)
- PSCH 591 Research Apprenticeship (2 hours-fall)
- PSCH 591 Research Apprenticeship (2 hours-spring)
- PSCH 598 Thesis Research (3 hours-fall)
- PSCH 598 Thesis Research (3 hours-spring)
- PSCH 599 Dissertation Research (12 hours)
- Students must complete 32 semester hours of course work for the MA
- Students must complete 96 semester hours of course work for the Ph.D.

### III. Major Area Course Requirements

- PSCH 512 Attitudes and Social Cognition (3 hours)
- PSCH 513 Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes (3 hours)
- PSCH 516 Research Methods in Social Psychology (3 hours)
- PSCH 519 Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag--4 semesters)
- PSCH 570 Personality Psychology

Plus one additional course from the following list:

- \_\_\_ PSCH 411 Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Racism (3 hours)
- \_\_\_ PSCH 417 Psychology and Law (3 hours)
- \_\_\_ PSCH 518 Seminar in Social and Personality Psychology

IV. Minor Requirements (Specify area, course #, and course work if electing to complete)

\_\_\_ Area: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Course #1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Course #2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Course #3: \_\_\_\_\_

or \_\_\_ Brown Bag (2 semester): \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample 4-year Course Schedule

### Year 1--Fall Semester

Department	507	Emerging Research Issues	1
	508	Colloquium on Teaching in Psychology	1
	543	Research Design and Analysis I	4
	591	Research Apprenticeship	2
Major	512	Attitudes and Social Cognition	3
	519	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
		TOTAL	13

### Year 1--Spring Semester

Department	507	Emerging Research Issues	1
	545	Research Design and Analysis II	4
	591	Research Apprenticeship	2
Major	516	Research Methods in Social Psychology	3
	LST**	Elective Social Course	3
	519	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
		TOTAL	13

Notes on Year 1:

1. Psychology 512, 513 and 516 are usually offered every other year. Thus, with respect to these three courses, the sequencing for Years 1 and 2 is reversed in alternating academic years.

### Year 2--Fall Semester

Department	598	Thesis Research	5
Major	513	Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes	3
	519	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
Minor	LST**	Minor Course (If completing)	3
		TOTAL	12

### Year 2--Spring Semester

Department	598	Thesis Research	5
Major	570	Personality Psychology	3
	LST**	Elective Social Course	3
	519	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
Minor	LST**	Minor Course (If completing)	3
		TOTAL	15

Notes on Year 2:

1. Most or all required Social Program course work should be completed by the end of Year 2.
2. Students are expected to complete their Master's Thesis research by the end of Year 2.
3. Students are encouraged to consider writing their Social and Personality Psychology Preliminary Exam during the summer between Years 2 and 3.

**Year 3--Fall Semester**

Department	596	Independent Study (Prelim)	7
	599	Dissertation Research	1
	519	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
Minor	LST**	Minor Course (If completing)	3
		TOTAL	12

**Year 3--Spring Semester**

Department	599	Dissertation Research	9
Major	519*	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
		TOTAL	10

## Notes on Year 3:

1. Departmental regulations require that the Preliminary Exam be completed by the end of Year 3. Social Program students are encouraged to complete it either during the summer before Year 3, or in the fall of Year 3. The Teaching Practicum (587) elective cannot be taken before completion of the Prelim.
2. Students are strongly encouraged to propose their Dissertation Research by end of Year 3.

**Year 4--Fall Semester**

	599	Dissertation Research	9
Major	519*	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
		TOTAL	10

**Year 4--Spring Semester**

Department	599	Dissertation Research	9
Major	519*	Current Topics in Social Psychology (Brown Bag)	1
		TOTAL	10

## Notes on Year 4:

1. Students may wish to consider taking the teaching practicum during Year 4.
2. Most or all requirements for the Ph.D. should be completed by the end of Year 4.

\* Course is recommended but not required and may be substituted.

\*\* Course is from a list of elective courses from which the student may choose.