

**M.S. in Liberal Studies Handbook**  
**Department of Humanities**  
**Texas A&M University—Central Texas**



**TEXAS A&M**  
UNIVERSITY  
**CENTRAL TEXAS**

2017-2018

This handbook provides students the information they need to enter and complete the Masters of Science in Liberal Studies. Questions about the information contained in this document should be directed to the Graduate Coordinator for Liberal Studies.

## **Welcome**

Welcome to the Masters of Science in Liberal Studies (MSLS) program, set within the College of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Humanities at Texas A&M University-Central Texas (TAMUCT). The MSLS program is an interdisciplinary program, which means it offers students the opportunity to work across disciplines and to bring those disciplines into conversation with one another. This work and the ultimate contribution these efforts make depend on something more than simply taking classes in more than one discipline. The most successful MSLS students familiarize themselves with the methods and priorities of interdisciplinary research and learn to utilize an interdisciplinary approach in each course they take. Their degree will culminate in the comprehensive exam, a project that requires a conference-ready, interdisciplinary paper that addresses some question or problem in an interdisciplinary manner.

## **Program Learning Outcomes**

Taken together, students' coursework and experience conducting interdisciplinary research will prepare students to...

- Locate scholarly arguments within the disciplinary concerns that define them
- Examine one's own scholarly interests from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies and priorities
- Develop habits of critical inquiry that include self-direction and self-reflection
- Evaluate intellectual questions against a set of contexts including, but not limited to, political, historical, material, cultural, racial, ethnic, national, and geographic contexts
- Demonstrate the ability to combine and, when appropriate, integrate the theories and methodologies from multiple disciplines into one project
- Author original research that exhibits the advanced critical thinking and communication skills necessary for effective professional and other social or cultural contexts

Equipped with this set of skills, MSLS students will be ready to enter any number of professional contexts and to address the challenges that arise within those contexts. Most succinctly, the interdisciplinary training the MSLS program allows students to develop a unique scholarly identity that can meet a variety of personal, educational, and professional goals.

## **Mutual Expectations and Responsibilities**

The MSLS program, the Department of Humanities, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Office of Graduate Studies all expect and demand your intellectual engagement and curiosity, academic integrity, and professionalism. Those who meet these expectations and demands can expect the faculty who contribute to this program to provide you a challenging and safe learning environment, to hold you to high academic standards, and to be professional in all their contact with you. Furthermore, you can expect TAMUCT to offer you the necessary academic resources and

ancillary services needed during your career here. Please contact the MSLS Graduate Coordinator should you have concerns about your ability to meet your expectations or requirements, or should you find a faculty member, a program, or our institution failing to deliver on our promise.

### **MSLS Directory**

The primary point of contact for the MSLS program is the Graduate Coordinator, Dr. Cadra P. McDaniel. You can reach Dr. McDaniel by email ([cadra.mcdaniel@tamuct.edu](mailto:cadra.mcdaniel@tamuct.edu)). Emails will normally be returned within one (1) business day. You can also email Dr. McDaniel directly to arrange a face-to-face meeting.

As the MSLS program is an interdisciplinary degree, you will also need to remain in meaningful contact with faculty members from chosen areas of study throughout your program. Most usually, this additional point of contact will develop naturally as you take coursework in a particular area. Should coursework not yield a meaningful and productive professional contact, it is the responsibility of the student to develop a working relationship with program-specific faculty. These relationships are important because the faculty in your areas of study can help you learn disciplinary expectations, develop disciplinary questions, and learn more about career opportunities that extend from that area of study. Also, the faculty can discuss course options with you and discuss the benefits of taking specific courses. Therefore, it would be beneficial to students to begin developing professional contacts with these faculty members. Program-specific faculty will not become your advisor, but will play a vital role in your professional development. The MSLS graduate coordinator will remain your primary point of contact on all program decisions, especially as they relate to your standing in the program, your course selection, and the completion of your comprehensive exam.

Students admitted into the MSLS are required to meet with the MSLS coordinator before registering for upcoming semester(s) to discuss course options. MSLS students should also be advised that not every course in an emphasis area is available to them or suitable for them. Each course must be discussed with the MSLS coordinator. MSLS students should check with the MSLS graduate coordinator before registering for a course to ensure each course taken counts toward the MSLS degree. MSLS students should not self-advise.

If you have questions about a specific discipline before beginning the MSLS degree, contact the graduate coordinator for the program(s) that interests you. Potential MSLS students would do well to consult the faculty members of their desired areas of focus to learn the opportunities and limitations of an MSLS degree before declaring themselves an MSLS student. Table 1 provides the contact information for all of the programs that most usually participate in the MSLS program as emphasis areas during the 2017-2018 academic year.

*Table 1: Point of Contact for Common Disciplines Frequently Participating in the MSLS*

<b>Participating Program</b>	<b>Graduate Program Coordinator</b>	<b>Email</b>
English	Dr. Allen Redmon	allen.redmon@tamuct.edu
History	Dr. Luke Nichter	luke_nichter@tamuct.edu
Political Science	Dr. Jeffrey Dixon	jeffreydixon@tamuct.edu
Math	Dr. Geoff Diestel	gdiestel@tamuct.edu
Criminal Justice	Dr. Floyd Berry	fberry@tamuct.edu
Computer Information Systems	Dr. Anitha Chennamaneni	anitha.chennanmaneni@tamuct.edu
Human Resources	Dr. Lucas Loafman	loafman@tamuct.edu
Educational Psychology	Dr. Andria Schwegler	schwegler@tamuct.edu
School Psychology	Dr. Coady Lapierre	lapierre@tamuct.edu

### **Other Important Contact Information**

*Table 2: Contact Information for Additional Offices*

<i>Office</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Website</i>
College of Arts and Sciences	217 FH	(254) 519-5441	tamuct.edu/departments/artsandsciences/
Counseling Center	207 WH	(254) 501-5955	tamuct.edu/departments/counseling/
Information Technology Services	113 FH	(254) 519-5466	tamuct.edu/departments/informationtechnology
Office of Graduate Studies	424 FH	(254) 519-5468	tamuct.edu/departments/graduatestudies
Student Financial Assistance	108 FH	(254) 501-5854	tamuct.edu/departments/financialaid/
Student Government Association	105 WH	(254) 501-5909	tamuct.edu/departments/studentgovernment/
University Library	Warrior Hall	(254) 519-5798	tamuct.edu/departments/library/

### **MSLS Overview**

The MSLS degree at TAMUCT provides students an opportunity to consider questions or problems from an interdisciplinary perspective. The program allows TAMUCT students to approach scholarly interests from a broader academic perspective than any one program can provide, or to continue studies at a graduate level in areas of inquiry where a disciplinary program in that area does not currently exist.

All MSLS students are required to take LIBS 5300: Interdisciplinarity. This course is an introduction to interdisciplinary research. LIBS 5300 is offered each fall semester. MSLS students should take LIBS 5300 as soon as possible after being accepted into the MSLS program.

All MSLS students are also required to take LIBS 5310: Interdisciplinary Methods. This is a research course that allows students to begin researching and creating interdisciplinary projects. LIBS 5310 is offered each spring. MSLS students should take LIBS 5310 as soon as possible after being accepted into the MSLS program. Those who wait to take LIBS 5300 and LIBS 5310 may not be able to register for future semesters and should expect some trouble completing the comprehensive exam.

All MSLS students will have the opportunity to select nine (9) courses, twenty-seven (27) hours of coursework that should help them explore a specific topic of interest. Students will meet with the MSLS Coordinator before registering for each upcoming semester to discuss course options. This meeting is a requirement as students should be selecting coursework that refines their topic of interest and will help prepare them for the comprehensive exam. When meeting with the MSLS Coordinator, students should provide justification and a thorough explanation as to the reasons that they would enroll in specific courses. Failure to provide this justification may result in the MSLS Coordinator's refusal to allow students to register for specific courses. Students should work actively with the MSLS Coordinator to discuss course option. Failure to work the MSLS graduate coordinator may result in a delay in graduation.

Students should keep in mind that some courses are not open to MSLS students, and other courses do not inform a student's scholarly interest or an interdisciplinary approach in the way they must for a student to have success in the MSLS program. The only way to guarantee that a class will count toward the MSLS degree is to discuss that course with the MSLS graduate coordinator before registering for it. Classes taken without consultation may not be credited toward the degree. The MSLS graduate coordinator reserves the right to refuse to count any outside elective taken without prior permission.

### **Statement on the Comprehensive Exam**

**Important Note: The semester that the student is to sit for the comprehensive exam, he/she needs to enroll in the non-credit zero (0) hour course, LIBS 5090 AND the three (3) credit hour course, LIBS 5398 Interdisciplinary Capstone. Please contact the MSLS Coordinator prior to the semester in which you need to enroll in these courses. A student successfully completes the comprehensive exam when he/she earns an A or B in LIBS 5398 and then receives credit as a "pass" for the exam.**

In addition to the above set of course requirements, all MSLS students must also take and pass a comprehensive exam. The comprehensive exam tests a different set of skills than those tested throughout your coursework. Students can pass their coursework and fail the comprehensive exam if they do not demonstrate 1) the ability to form a study around a compelling question or problem, 2) proficiency in the disciplines (or naturally interdisciplinary area) they utilize, 3) a reason for their project to be interdisciplinary, or 4) produce a substandard written paper or

provide a deficient oral defense. The specifics of each exam will vary depending on the expectations of the emphasis and outside areas. Most generally, though, the comprehensive exam will involve the creation and presentation of a 12-15 page conference ready paper that would be accepted in each of the areas of research being utilized in the paper. Exams that incorporate data collection will be longer.

Those who demonstrate the ability to conduct an interdisciplinary project that honors the disciplines being utilized and that offers an advanced study of a focused question should earn a passing score. Those who do not meet this standard will earn less than a “B” in LIBS 5398 and not pass the exam. Should a student fail to earn a “B” or better on the exam, then that student will need to initiate the comprehensive exam process again in the next semester. Students can only sit for a comprehensive exam twice. A student who does not successfully complete the comprehensive exam twice will not be awarded an MSLS degree.

**Students should not expect to sit for the exam during the fall and spring semesters. Students who need to sit for the exam a second time will sit for the exam a second time in the fall semester or spring semester.**

### **Students Transferring into the MSLS Program**

Students that transfer into the MSLS program from another university or after starting another program at TAMUCT should expect to forfeit some if not all earlier course work. Students must petition the MSLS graduate coordinator at the time they are admitted into the MSLS program to have any previous coursework count toward their new program. The final determination of what will and will not count toward the MSLS degree resides with the MSLS graduate coordinator.

### **Guidelines and Procedures for MSLS Students**

The following guidelines and procedures provided here intend to acquaint students with the general operations of the program and to provide a succinct statement of certain degree requirements. Students are also urged to read carefully the requirements and regulations for the MSLS degree as listed in the Graduate Catalog.

1. Administration: The MSLS degree program is administered by the MSLS Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the Graduate Coordinators for participating programs and participating graduate faculty members.
2. General Policies and Requirements: the following policies and requirements apply to all students:
  - a. All students are required to take 1) LIBS 5300; LIBS 5310; LIBS 5090, zero (0) credit hour, non-credit course; and LIBS 5398, 2) nine (9) courses, twenty-seven (27) hours of approved coursework and 3) a comprehensive exam-LIBS 5090 and LIBS 5398.

- b. Students must submit a Degree Acknowledgment Form before beginning the program, and any time there is a change to their emphasis area of study. The Degree Acknowledgment Form should be completed in consultation with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator.
- c. Students must complete a Graduation Application by the deadlines set by the Office of Graduate Studies.
- d. Students with Incomplete grades must complete all course requirements by the deadlines stated in the contract with their instructor. Failure to do so will result in an automatic F grade for that course and the inability to graduate on time or at all.

These guidelines and procedures are not a replacement or correction for the expectations conveyed in the Graduate Catalog. MSLS students should familiarize and follow the guidelines described in that document.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

The MSLS program has limited openings for graduate assistantships each year. Most graduate assistants are assigned to Graduate Coordinators and to other faculty contributing to the MSLS program. Duties tend to relate to assisting faculty with responsibilities associated with college level instruction and research. Graduate assistantships are generally awarded to the strongest students in the program as a form of meritorious recognition. The College of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Humanities, and the MSLS graduate coordinator award graduate assistantships. Important factors in obtaining a graduate assistantship include: educational background, research interests, career ambitions, applicable skillsets, and academic merit. The Office of Graduate Studies determines eligibility and other rules and regulations pertaining to graduate assistantships.

### **Graduate Student Awards**

Each year the Office of Graduate Studies and Research sponsors a series of awards for graduate students. Awards granted that apply to the MSLS degree program include awards for 1) Scholarship, 2) Professionalism, and 3) Community Service. The Office of Graduate Studies and Research extends a call for nominations for each of these awards during each spring semester. The MSLS program will forward a nominee for any student it deems deserving of one of these awards, with the goal being to nominate one student for each award. If you have questions about these awards or the process of nomination, ask the MSLS Graduate Coordinator.

### **How to Register for Classes**

Online registration through Warrior Web may be the easiest way to register for class. Detailed instructions on how to register through Warrior Web may be found at the following link: <http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/registrar/registrationinstructions.php>. A Registration FAQs is available here: <http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/registrar/registrationfaq.php>. If you have any trouble, you should contact the Office of the Registrar at (254) 519-5452.

## **How to Track Degree Progress**

Students are encouraged to track their progress toward their degree during their career at TAMUCT. You should check your degree progress at least once a semester to ensure that the information is accurate. You can use DegreeWorks as a way to see the courses you have taken and to know what is left to take. Should you find a discrepancy in your record, your first point of contact should be the Officer of the Registrar. If that office is unable to rectify your record, you should consult the MSLS Graduate Coordinator. Please keep in mind that a course must be taken within six years of your graduation date to count on your degree. No course more than six years old at the time you graduate will count toward your degree.

NOTE: Tracking your progress is no substitute for academic advisement. MSLS students are expected to work with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator before registering for any course taken to satisfy the MSLS degree. Not every graduate course will count toward the MSLS degree. Students who “self-advise” (take courses without consulting with the MSLS Graduate Coordinator) may find that the course they have selected will not satisfy the expectations of the MSLS degree.

## **Questions about Graduate Study at TAMUCT**

This handbook may leave unanswered or even raise some questions about graduate study at TAMUCT. Should this document fail to answer one of your questions, you might check the website for the Office of Graduate Studies. If you still cannot find your answer, you should contact the MSLS Graduate Coordinator. Another good point of contact is the administrative assistant for the College of Arts and Sciences. This person can be reached by phone at (254) 519-5449. Students should contact the Student Government Association at TAMUCT for matters affecting graduate students most generally.

## **Your Degree, Your Responsibility**

You are ultimately responsible for your education. The MSLS program, the Department of Humanities, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Graduate Studies, and TAMUCT will do all they can to allow you to meet program requirements in a timely fashion. However, it is your responsibility to remain aware of all deadlines, to fill out all required forms, and to make sure you are fulfilling educational and administrative requirements. You also need to remain in contact with the MSLS graduate coordinator to ensure that you are taking courses in the right sequence. In other words, you are responsible for making sure that you fulfill all academic and financial obligations associated with being a graduate student in the MSLS program.

**Texas A&M University-Central Texas**  
**Advisement Plan**  
**Master of Science**  
**Liberal Studies**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ UIN: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Catalog Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (hm) \_\_\_\_\_ (wk) \_\_\_\_\_

**Core Requirements**

Required Courses	Anticipated Semester	Advising Date	Approval Date	Student Signature	Coordinator Signature	Next Meeting
LIBS 5300 Interdisciplinarity						
LIBS 5310 Interdisciplinary Methods (Research)						
LIBS 5398 Interdisciplinary Capstone						
LIBS 5090						
Approved Courses*						

\*Students must meet with the MSLS Coordinator to receive approval for all courses in the Approved Courses Section. Departments may require some prerequisite courses so students are encouraged to consult the course descriptions in the TAMUCT catalog at <http://catalog.tamuct.edu/course-information/tamuct/> Some courses may not be available for this degree for reasons of licensure or certification.

Students should inform the MSLS Coordinator the semester before they plan to take the Comprehensive Exam. Students must enroll in LIBS 5398 and LIBS 5090 when they are ready to take the Comprehensive Exam. In order to earn degree conferral, a student pursuing the Master of Science in Liberal Studies must successfully complete the comprehensive exam. All approved courses should aid students in creating a foundation for this exam. NOTE: This is a tentative guide to be used for advisement of students. It is not considered an official degree plan by Texas A&M University-Central Texas, and it is subject to review and change by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.