

PSYCHOLOGY 9002: Doctoral Qualifying Seminar  
Thursdays, 3:30 – 5:00  
Melson 104

**Instructor:**

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**Course Prerequisites:**

Students must have completed all coursework (i.e., 54 credit hours including the required courses) prior to enrollment in PSYC 9002.

**Course Overview and Objectives:**

The purpose of our gathering is to serve as a catalyzing container for your work in preparing for and presenting the qualifying examination that is one of the requirements for the PhD in Consciousness and Society. I intend the course to be a gift to you.

The qualifying exam is intended to give students the opportunity to integrate thoughtfully and collaboratively their gleanings from coursework, independent readings, and focused curiosity, in the interest of manifesting academic outcomes and demonstrating readiness for admission to doctoral candidacy. Relatedly the exam is also intended to dovetail with the dissertation project, in that ideally the dissertation project is also a cumulatively and culminating experience, and may include some of the content areas addressed in the qualifying examination.

The structure of the qualifying examination is outlined below, including (a) format, (b) evaluators, (c) evaluation criteria, and (d) outcome expectations.

Format

1. Academic experience context. The purpose of this component of the qualifying examination is to give students the opportunity to retrace and revisit the shape and trajectory of their experience of learning in general and in the doctoral program specifically, and to outline an extension of this experience into the final phase of their work here (including the dissertation). This component of the qualifying examination has three sectors:

A. An intellectual autobiography. In this paper, of no more than eight pages (1.5 spacing 11-point font), students will outline their intellectual and experiential project in its origins and as it has been nurtured (or not) within the UWG doctoral program in Consciousness and Society. This narrative is important in setting the stage for the learning goals that will follow. We will read widely about intellectual autobiography and I will provide examples of this way of doing scholarship. Students will want to include key insights or turning points with respect to ideas, thinkers, and intellectual conceptualizations. In other words, students will thoughtfully

and carefully trace the development of their academic journey culminating in the doctoral program.

**B.** Outline of learning goals. Here students will document and punctuate their goals and objectives for learning. Much of this will be retrospective, as it shines a light on how desire and focus have influenced the academic journey. But some goals may also be in-transition or formation, and may speak to objectives students want to address in the examination, and (ideally) as they may flow into the dissertation project.

**C.** A reading list. Here students will list 10 books (with the option of substituting three journal articles for one book) that are correspondent with their intellectual autobiography, and that map on to their learning goals. These may be materials students have already read, or new readings that they intend to read during the semester. Each is intended to emerge from and speak to the academic narrative and goals. In fact, each book or article should be referenced to the academic experience or objective to which it relates.

Students will prepare this qualifying academic experience context and turn it in to the course instructor by the due date indicated in the schedule. Early classroom gatherings in the semester will emphasize collaborative and interactive discussion of the academic experience context, and work together around its development.

**2. Selection of an examination Chair, and Committee.** In consultation with other class members, with the course instructor, and with program faculty members (presently M-C. Bertau [Director], N. Gupta, T. Hart, C. Head, M. Kunkel, L. Osbeck, J. Roberts, C. Simmonds-Moore) students will provide to the course instructor a rank-ordered list of three departmental graduate faculty members whom they would like to serve as members of their qualifying examination committee, with one they designate as Chair. This will occur by the due date indicated in the schedule. The doctoral program faculty will identify (from among those faculty members if possible) a committee, with one person to serve as the Chair and two to serve as additional qualifying examination committee members.

The decision around committee composition will be made in consideration of faculty workload, and of members' compatibility with students' interests and areas of emphasis. The Director of the doctoral program will extend qualifying examination committee invitations to departmental graduate faculty members.

Once constituted, the role of the committee is to:

**A.** (a) Review each student's intellectual autobiography, (b) review and approve the learning goals, and (c) review and approve the reading list as correspondent to the goals and narrative, and

**B.** communicate approval of these components to the student and to the course instructor, and if not to work with the student to refine and improve the components until qualifying for the committee's approval. This process will involve communicating in writing to the student (from the Chair, on behalf of the committee) recommendations for revising and resubmitting the proposal. This approval will occur by the due date indicated in the course schedule.

C. After approving the academic context, the student's qualifying examination committee will draft three examination questions, forwarded to the course instructor by the due date in the schedule.

These examination questions will be written primarily to the intellectual autobiography, goals, and reading list. More broadly, the questions should address separately or in combination:

1. understanding of the philosophical foundations of psychology as a natural science and as a human science,
2. critical and reflexive engagement with psychological aspects of individual and cultural differences,
3. an emergent and conceptually anchored understanding of consciousness and society, and
4. understanding of human science method as correspondent to compassionate curiosity.

The Chair of the qualifying examination committee will present these three questions to the student and to the course instructor by the due date indicated in the syllabus schedule.

Students will review the questions on their own, and will select two to answer in writing (1.5 spacing, 11-point font) with a length of no more than 10 pages per question, and with direct quotations kept to a minimum. These essays are to be formatted in accordance with the APA style manual. Work in preparing answers to questions should be exclusively independent, the students' own, and such as to reflect students' thinking and process.

Students will turn in their responses to the course instructor and to the committee Chair no later than two weeks after receiving the questions (see the course schedule).

Committee members (under the direction of the committee Chair) will grade students' answers, and will turn in their evaluation of the answers to the student and to the course instructor no later than the due date indicated in the syllabus schedule.

Committee members will grade students' answers using the following

Evaluative criteria:

- a. question answered as posed
- b. accuracy of characterizations
- c. depth of comprehension
- d. clarity of presentation
- e. adherence to APA format

All members of the student's qualifying evaluation committee will review each answer. They will prepare written feedback, including but not limited to the extent to which students have addressed satisfactorily or not each of the five evaluative criteria, for each question, and turn this feedback in to the Chair.

Students will receive an overall grade of Pass (satisfactory or better response to both questions

along the five evaluative criteria) or Fail (less than satisfactory response to one or both questions along the five evaluative criteria), based on unanimous judgment of committee members. Designations of “exceptional” or “with distinction” may be assigned to students’ response at the discretion of the qualifying examination committee.

Results of the qualifying examination evaluation will be communicated individually to each student in person by the Chair and the course instructor, with written feedback as well.

A student who does not pass the qualifying examination will be permitted to retake the examination only once, in the semester following the original course enrollment as part of an Independent Study with the director of the doctoral program under identical procedure to the original exam. A student who does not pass the second attempt will not be allowed to continue in the program.

The remaining meetings of the semester in which the Qualifying Examination is taken will be devoted to collaborative discussion of students’ work, and consideration of the dissertation proposal.

On successful completion of the qualifying examination the student is admitted to doctoral candidacy and will continue with dissertation work.

### **Readings:**

As assigned and agreed on collaboratively in the course of our work

### **Expectations and Grading:**

Participants in the course will be expected to (a) attend all class meetings, (b) read all assigned readings, and (c) participate fully in all course activities. Successful completion of the qualifying examination will be acknowledged by an A grade in the course.

Please see this common language for course syllabi, considered part of the syllabus for this course:

<https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/common-language-course-syllabi.php>

## Course Schedule:

- 1-10 **Introduction**, review of syllabus, following which we will:
- *Read CourseDen materials on Intellectual Autobiography*
  - *Read sample intellectual autobiographies on CourseDen or elsewhere interesting to us*
  - *Begin preparation of intellectual autobiography*
- 1-17 no meeting; individual work and work with me as needed
- 1-24 **Intellectual autobiography workshop**, in preparation for which we will
- *Complete the activities above*
  - *Prepare a draft of the intellectual autobiography*
  - *Meet together, with individual student-instructor meetings as well as needed*
- 1-31 no meeting; individual work and work with me as needed
- *Preparation of **Learning Goals***
  - *Preparation of **Reading List***
  - *Turn in **ranked Committee Member list** to me (via e-mail, by 3:30, 1-31)*
  - *Qualifying Exam **Committee** constituted by PhD Program Committee*
  - *PhD director will extend **committee invitations** to Chair and members*
- 2-7 Meet to **present/discuss Academic Experience Contexts**  
*Turn in **Academic Experience Context** to me (via e-mail, by 3:30 2-7)*  
*Qualifying Exam Committee begins **consideration** of Academic Context documen*
- 2-14 No class meeting
- 2-21 No class meeting
- *Qualifying Exam Committee communicates to me (a) approval, or (b) recommendations for revising and resubmitting academic context*
  - *I'll communicate approval or need for revision to you*
- 2-28 Individual meetings with me
- *Qualifying Exam Committee prepares **exam questions** and gives them to me*
  - *I'll **distribute the questions** to you personally*
  - *You will **prepare your answers** according to the exam format guidelines*
- 3-7 No class meeting
- 3-14 *Qualifying Exam answers **due** to me and to Committee Chair (in writing, and as word processing files) by class time*
- 3-21 Spring Break
- 3-28 No class meeting
- 4-4 *Communication of Qualifying Exam **results** to students by committee Chair, and me*

The remaining meetings (4-11, 4-18, 4-25) of the semester will be devoted to collaborative discussion of your dissertation work, and collaborative and individual work on the dissertation proposal.

