

Thoughts on the Qualification Exam Process: ASPECT

11.2.04

Given current resource and staff levels in AY 04-05, the ASPECT doctoral degree will need to begin, as the first ASPECT faculty general meeting of 10.29.04 suggested, as a small-core, mentor-driven Ph.D. program. This operational model permits each student the flexibility to develop a strong disciplinary foundation in social analysis, political theory, ethics, or cultural studies at the M.A. level. Many ASPECT students will have upon entry to Virginia Tech, or will earn during their initial years of residency here, an M.A. degree in one of these more disciplinary fields. This fact is an asset for ASPECT when it comes to placing students in the national academic job market as well as with regard to developing a portfolio of “courses taught” for each ASPECT Ph.D. when they begin to market themselves upon graduation.

Once admitted into the ASPECT program, then, each doctoral student must find a mentor in their chosen area of major concentration and form an advisory committee to direct their subsequent work in what will be an individually tailored and research-intensive doctoral degree. The proposed 15 core hours and 24 dissertation hours in the 90 hour ASPECT Ph.D. degree will allow for another 13 courses, or 39 hours, of concentrated study to match each student’s intellectual interests and advanced studies more closely to their research concentrations. The materials for prelim examination will be drawn from recommended lists of key readings in each concentration, and these exams ordinarily will occur no later than by the end of the third year of study. After completing their prelims, and demonstrating a level of proficiency in a foreign language and an appropriate set of research methods, students will also present and defend a written dissertation prospectus.