

STUDENT NAME:

COHORT:

Graduate Student Intake Form

Community Fellows (CFs) are not required to do a MA paper or thesis. CFs are required to do a poster presentation of their work to the community at the end of the spring semester. All other POLS graduate students must select either a MA paper or thesis. This form is designed to get you thinking about your paper or thesis topic and to get you started early in the program working with your paper or thesis advisor.

NOTE: The graduate director is the advisor for all graduate students. You are encouraged to seek advice from the graduate advisor at any time. You should select your MA thesis or paper advisor based on the alignment of faculty expertise with your thesis or paper topic.

The following are the guidelines for the MA paper and MA thesis options:

| MA paper option | MA thesis option |
|--|---|
| Enroll in Independent Study (IS) credits with MA paper advisor | Enroll in thesis credits with thesis advisor |
| Can be original research, a comprehensive survey of the literature, or a creative work (with prior approval of the committee) | Must be original research |
| Requires an advisor & a second reader | Requires a 3 member committee |
| MA paper advisor must be from the POLS department & chairs the committee | Thesis advisor must be from the POLS department & chairs the committee |
| MA paper advisor supervises design and early drafts | Thesis advisor supervises research design, data collection, analysis and early drafts |
| Student should not send drafts to the full committee until the thesis advisor indicates that a draft is ready for the full committee | Student should not send drafts to the full committee until the thesis advisor indicates that a draft is ready for the full committee |
| Students should give the second reader at least 10 days prior to the university deadline for grade submission | Students should give the full committee at least 10 days prior to the university deadline for thesis for the committee to review the drafted thesis |

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| The second reader on the committee should be a faculty member in the POLS department but can be outside the department in cases where expertise is relevant and prior approval of the graduate director is obtained | At least 2 of the 3 members of the committee must be POLS department faculty |
| Does not require a formal defense | Requires a formal defense |
| MA papers do not require uploading, and the chair only needs to notify the coordinator that the MA paper requirement has been fulfilled | Students should bring the MA thesis form to the defense so that the committee can sign off after a successful defense & must upload theses to ProQuest by the university deadline |

Select your preference:
Thesis

MA Paper

MA

Indicate your expected MA paper or thesis topic here. List a single subject area or provide a single sentence in the form of a thesis statement or research question.

[Here is a list of faculty expertise.](#) Indicate the faculty member with whom you plan to meet regarding your paper or thesis topic.

*All graduate students working on a MA thesis or paper must submit a proposal to the faculty expert you request as a thesis or paper advisor. You will not be given an override to enroll in thesis or independent study credits until your proposal has been approved by your advisor. **Proposals are due by the end of the first week of the spring semester.** Included on the next page is a template for a thesis proposal. Some faculty have additional or different proposal expectations, and all faculty have samples of good proposals to share with you. It is the student's responsibility to consult with the faculty in the fall semester as you are finalizing your thesis or paper proposal.*

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THESIS PROPOSAL TEMPLATE

Student Name

What's the BIG IDEA? State your thesis. Describe your data and analysis procedures. State your expected findings. Discuss the implications relative to your BIG IDEA.

THESIS PROPOSAL EXAMPLE

Student Name

Committee: Karen Beck-Pooley (chair); Holona Ochs; Allison Mickel

Community and economic development decisions affect every aspect of city life. Allentown, Pennsylvania is currently in the midst of redevelopment financed by one of the largest state subsidies in the commonwealth's history, the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) (Assad, 2017). The NIZ is an unprecedented state tax subsidy that most closely resembles locally-financed Tax Increment Financing (TIFs). Despite being the most utilized financing tool for urban redevelopment, the impact of TIFs are still largely unstudied. The burgeoning literature trying to assess the effectiveness of TIFs is often too small in scale, focusing just on the redevelopment zones isolated from their surrounding neighborhoods, and utilizes misguided metrics of community and economic development success. This paper employs more comprehensive metrics like poverty rates, housing stability, and incomes of residents. It looks to analyze the effect the NIZ development has had on high poverty neighborhoods adjacent to the NIZ against comparable neighborhoods throughout the state, and examine how the city has trended as a whole over the span of NIZ development in context with analogous cities throughout the state. The paper also assesses whether the benefits of downtown development have spread throughout the city or remained isolated to the development zone, while trying to understand some of the mechanisms of TIF that precipitate large sums of private investment that seldom benefit a city beyond the target area. Using census tract level data from the American

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Community Survey, I found that the lowest income neighborhoods in Allentown had higher rates of poverty than would be expected if those neighborhoods kept pace with similar high poverty neighborhoods in other cities. Additionally, these high poverty neighborhoods had no significant increase in incomes or employment compared to similar neighborhoods statewide. Furthermore, when compared to a cohort of comparable cities, Allentown's metrics of economic wellbeing have lagged. Lastly, I found that the economic benefit of the NIZ has not spread beyond the development zone. While the development is still very much in its infancy, these findings point to a need for a reassessment of the development strategies, and the creation of parallel mechanisms to ensure the subsidy more broadly benefits the City of Allentown.