

Graduate Advising Philosophy

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I would like to start this document by saying that I am very excited to work with graduate students, and it is one of the parts of my job I enjoy the most. There are many different types of graduate student, and each of them might benefit from a different type of advisor. In this document I hope to clarify what my general philosophy of graduate advising is so that students can make an informed decision about whether I would be an appropriate primary/secondary advisor or committee member for them.

I view graduate school as a self-directed apprenticeship in which the goal of becoming an independent scholar is ultimately and necessarily in the hands of the graduate student. As an advisor, I believe I would be doing a graduate student a disservice if I planned their time or dictated their research topics. Instead, I see my role as an advisor as three-fold. First, to provide ongoing research projects that students can become involved in, and that provide some structure and training on the journey to becoming an independent scholar. Second, to help foster independent scholarship in my students, by helping them develop their own ideas and the tools to test them by. Third, to be honest with a graduate student about the quality of their work and ways in which it can be improved.

As a result of these objectives I also have several complimentary requirements of my graduate students. First, I expect my students to stay in timely communication about: Their goals for research and teaching, the schedules they have set and the progress of their work, and questions that arise in the course of their work. In other words, I am happy to make myself available, but I am not going to hover or mother my students. Second, I expect my primary advisees to share both my theoretical and methodological interests, and I expect my secondary advisees or students who wish me to be on a committee to be compatible in at least one of the above regards. If a student seeks me out for one of these positions they should be prepared to tell me about their interests upfront so that I can evaluate whether or not we would be a good fit. Simply put, it would be hard for me to help students develop into independent thinkers or critique their work without first having expertise in the area they are wishing to grow into as scholars. Third, I expect my students to be open to new ideas and criticism. When I critique work or challenge ideas it is never to hurt my students, but to help them develop into better scholars and they should be able to keep this in mind.

Beyond research interests, I also wish to offer my advisees advice on teaching and handling life as an academic. Graduate school can be a challenge on many fronts, and it is easier to deal with when you share at least some personality compatibility with your advisor. I expect potential students to evaluate their fit with me over time, and if there is a lack of compatibility, I will not be offended if a student wishes to pursue a different advisory relationship with one of the other wonderful professors in the department.