Certificate in Computational Social Science

Graduate Handbook

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Tucson, Arizona 2018-19

Version 2018.1
July 31, 2018

https://css.arizona.edu

The requirements set forth in this handbook apply to students entering the graduate certificate computational social science program in fall of 2018. Students are responsible for knowing and following these requirements. Minor revisions may be made throughout the year. Students will be notified of any further revisions.

In addition, the Graduate College (grad.arizona.edu) sets policies applying to all graduate programs across the university. Likewise, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (sbs.arizona.edu), in which this certificate program is housed, sets policies pertaining to its units. Students should consult the websites of these divisions to familiarize themselves with general requirements and regulations.
Table of Contents

I. Certificate Name and CIP Code .............................................................................................................3
II. Certificate Description and Purpose ..................................................................................................3
III. Learning Outcomes and Assessments ..............................................................................................4
IV. Administration ......................................................................................................................................4
V. Eligibility for the Program ..................................................................................................................5
VI. Requirements for the Certificate .......................................................................................................5
VII. Admissions ..........................................................................................................................................5
VIII. Certificate Outcomes .......................................................................................................................6
IX. Frequently Asked Questions ..............................................................................................................6
X. Model Program of Study ....................................................................................................................7
Appendix A Members of the Faculty Advisory Committee .................................................................8
Appendix B List of Courses ......................................................................................................................9
Certificate in Computational Social Science
Graduate Handbook

I. Certificate Name and CIP Code

Graduate Certificate in Computational Social Science

CIP Code: 45.0102 Research Methodology and Quantitative Methods

II. Certificate Description and Purpose

While there is no singular, consensual definition of computational social science (CSS), it can be broadly understood as using computational techniques to analyze social science data or create social simulations, whether that data be large scale data that requires high speed computing capacities (i.e., “big data”), data that is of more modest scale but requires computationally-intensive processes (i.e., analyzing sets of texts, sounds, impacts, social networks, sensors, or sensory touch data), data collected online through scraping or interaction (e.g., online experiments), and data that is amenable to tools from machine learning or similar modalities, among other kinds of data. Understanding, deploying, and advancing these methods requires more advanced skills in data retrieval and management and programming than is typically required in social science PhD programs. Distinct from engineering disciplines, analyzing these data from a social science perspective also requires attention to the social origins and meaning of these data, the samples or structured populations from which data may be drawn, the reasonableness of extrapolation from these data to larger populations or other social settings, research ethics, and epistemology among other concerns.

Big Data and computational methods are not only useful for Big Science, Big Government, and Big Business, but are an integral part of social scientific inquiry. They are sophisticated, novel, and very exciting.

The faculty supporting this certificate unite for a common goal: to create an environment for social science Ph.D. students to acquire theoretical knowledge and mastery of computational skills necessary for analyzing large and complex data. Numerous faculty members across multiple departments at the University of Arizona are now teaching themselves these methods and using them in their research; a few have even developed graduate level seminars to teach these techniques to their students. Social scientists have distinct questions and needs that warrant unique training. Our endeavor would involve connecting students to relevant research projects on campus, exploring with them the theoretical knowledge behind computational social science, helping them to begin independent projects requiring computational skills, and, perhaps in the future, connecting them with businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits that have an interest in and resources for computational social science.

The certificate will entail taking four graduate level courses (12 credits) related to the theory, ethics, and methods of computational social science from various units in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). The certificate will be noted on the student’s official U of AZ transcript and can be listed as an educational credential on their Vita. We also hope to connect students to faculty in different disciplinary traditions, host conferences and symposia, stimulate conversations among faculty, and build
a community of computational social scientists. Someday, this modest initiative may develop into a minor, a research center, or perhaps even an inter-disciplinary Ph.D. in cooperation with units in other UA colleges.

In summary, we see this certificate as furthering the strategic initiatives of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the University of Arizona. The SBS Strategic Plan lists advancing and understanding Technology as one of four focal areas of interest and computational social science is one of the topics. Related to the University’s mission, we are, first, providing a vehicle to ENGAGE students in a hands-on experience that will significantly enhance their human capital and expose them to the epistemological and ethical issues associated with CSS. Second, we are providing a means for our students to INNOVATE, create new methodologies, explore new problems, and find new answers. Third, this is an INTER-DISCIPLINARY initiative. Faculty and courses are drawn from across the social sciences. This is truly a collaborative effort. Finally, we eventually will PARTNER with others outside the university. Some of our students may find internships there; some may find employment. Our goals are to support meaningful research, innovation, and public service outcomes in the state and beyond.

III. Learning Outcomes and Assessment

First, students need mastery of a computer language which enables them to utilize the computational tools available. This would include Python, R, or some other recognized computer language appropriate for CSS research. They must demonstrate that they can use these tools to execute their research.

Second, students need to develop and demonstrate proficiency in at least one method of computationally-intensive data collection, extraction, or analysis. This would include mastery of machine learning, computational linguistics, network analysis, visualization data management, web scraping, agent based modeling, and advanced statistical modeling among other techniques.

Third, students need to understand CSS as a broad epistemology or approach to establishing credible knowledge, its history, and the ethical issues associated with CSS. They also need to be able to explain to non-experts the computational approaches they have learned and used in their research.

The achievement of these outcomes will be assessed by students’ performance in the required course and three electives they must complete for the certificate.

IV. Administration

The certificate is housed in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences with courses provided by the Department of Communication, Department of Linguistics, School of Anthropology, School of Government and Public Policy, School of Information, and School of Sociology.

The Director of the Certificate Program (DCP) reports directly to the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. S/he is responsible for developing and interpreting graduate program requirements and administering academic affairs including advising, monitoring curriculum, and evaluation of student progress. Currently the DCP is Professor Joseph Galaskiewicz, School of Sociology (galaskie@email.arizona.edu).
The DCP works in consultation with the school’s Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC). At the behest of the dean of SBS, decision-making regarding curriculum, admittance, and student petitions will be delegated to the faculty advisory committee made up of tenured and tenure eligible faculty in SBS who are currently doing research and/or teaching computational social science courses to graduate students. Appointments will be approved by the dean of SBS. Members of the FAC are listed in Appendix A.

Any exceptions to program requirements must be approved in writing by the DCP and, where warranted, the Dean of SBS and/or the Dean of the Graduate College.

a. The graduate coordinator is the main point of contact for routine administrative aspects of the graduate program (Ms. Stephanie Amado, samado@email.arizona.edu)

b. Appeals process: Students may appeal any decision made by the DCP and/or the CSS Advisory Committee by requesting a review within 30 days of the decision. Requests and supporting documentation should be submitted in writing to the DCP and copied to the dean’s office and the graduate coordinator.

c. Most of the “paperwork” related to graduate program requirements and progress is administered electronically via the GradPath system. A couple of forms are internal and are available from staff. For further details on GradPath forms and procedures, see the “Tips for New Grads” handout (also available on the school’s website) and the Graduate College’s GradPath website (http://grad.arizona.edu/GradPath).

V. Eligibility for the program

The student must be enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Arizona and in good standing (this includes students currently enrolled in MA/MS programs that are prerequisite components of Ph.D. programs and who are expected to formally advance to Ph.D. programs). The student should have a 3.5 or higher graduate GPA at the University of Arizona. Exceptions will be reviewed by the faculty advisory committee.

VI. Requirements for the certificate

To successfully complete the certificate the student must complete 4 courses for a total of 12 credits, with a grade of ‘B’ or better: one required three-credit course, plus three three-credit graduate level electives (5XX, 6XX) drawn from a list of courses approved by the certificate’s faculty advisory committee (see Appendix B for listing of options). One of the three electives could be an independent study where the student would work on a project under the guidance of a faculty member from the advisory committee. At least two of the four courses must be outside the student’s home unit to ensure breadth of exposure to different approaches. The required course will give an overview of CSS research, introduce relevant computing skills, discuss the theory and epistemology behind CSS, and explore ethical issues particular to CSS research.

VII. Admissions

Students should go to the University of Arizona Graduate Admissions Application (GradApp) to submit
their application (https://apply.grad.arizona.edu/users/login). The student also has to submit a letter of intent describing what they want from the certificate. They also have to list the classes they tentatively plan on taking. The student’s adviser or the DGS in his/her program needs to write a letter of recommendation to the faculty advisory committee attesting to their graduate status and listing any special qualifications. No course prerequisites or standardized tests are required for admission.

VIII. Certificate outcomes

In the first three years of the certificate program each student successfully completing the coursework will be surveyed by the Director of the program about their satisfaction with the program and how it might be improved. We will also follow their career paths, being particularly interested in how the certificate in CSS gives them a competitive advantage in the academic and non-academic marketplaces. Data on career pathways will be gathered from SBS’s ongoing Ph.D. placement tracking study (directed by Jane Zavisca, Associate Dean in SBS).

IX. Frequently Asked Questions

a. Will students be allowed to substitute required and/or elective courses at the advisor’s discretion?

The student will be allowed to substitute one required or one elective course with the approval of the faculty advisory committee.

a. What are the prerequisites or standardized tests required for admission?

The student should have a 3.5 or higher graduate GPA at the University of Arizona. Exceptions will be reviewed by the faculty advisory committee. The student’s adviser or the DGS in his/her program needs to write a letter of recommendation to the faculty advisory committee for admittance. No course prerequisites or standardized tests are required.

b. Is concurrent enrollment in a degree program allowed or required.

The student must be enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the University of Arizona and in good standing. This includes students currently enrolled in MA/MS programs that are prerequisite components of Ph.D. programs and who are expected to formally advance to Ph.D. programs.

c. Can students be enrolled full-time (9 units) in the certificate in their first semester? What is the standard length of time to finish the certificate if students are enrolled full-time the first semester?

The student may enroll in classes during their first semester of graduate school. If they have not been accepted in a Ph.D. program at the time of taking an approved course, they may petition the faculty advisory committee to have the course count toward the certificate once they have been admitted to the Ph.D. program. It is possible that students can finish the requirements for the certificate in twelve months, however, eighteen months may be more realistic. Students who have not completed the certificate program within four years of beginning their coursework will be dropped from the program.
d. What is the maximum number of transfer units (courses taken at institutions other than the UA) that may be applied to the certificate?

The student may transfer one three-credit course from an institution other than the UA. The course will be reviewed by the faculty advisory committee.

e. What provisions are included for student advising?

The Director of the certificate program will have primary responsibility for advising students with regards to the CSS certificate, however, because this is an inter-disciplinary certificate, other faculty can act as the adviser as well. We hope to match students with faculty from their home Ph.D. program.

f. If there are affiliated graduate programs, may the units earned for the certificate be applied to the degree program? If so, how many?

Yes, all twelve credits may be applied toward the student’s Ph.D. program.

g. May a student use any units taken in Graduate non-degree status (GNDS)? If so, how many?

In general, no. However, exceptional cases will be evaluated by the faculty advisory committee.

X. Model Program of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First semester</th>
<th>Second semester</th>
<th>Third semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INFO 514 (required)</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>Elective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix A  Members of the Faculty Advisory Committee

School of Sociology
Ronald Breiger, Professor, Ph.D.
Jennifer Earl, Professor, Ph.D.
Joseph Galaskiewicz, Professor, Ph.D. (Director)

Department of Communication
Steve Rains, Professor, Ph.D.

Department of Linguistics
Michael Hammond, Professor, Ph.D.
Robert Henderson, Ph.D.

School of Anthropology
Evan MacLean, Assistant Professor, Ph.D.

School of Government and Public Policy
Adam Douglas Henry, Associate Professor, Ph.D.
Yotam Shmargad, Assistant Professor, Ph.D.
Appendix II  Courses

School of Information

Required course:
INFO 514 Computational Social Science (3 credits) (Y. Shmargad)

Elective courses:
INFO 510 Bayesian Modeling and Inference (3 credits) (C. Morrison)
INFO 516 Introduction to Human Computer Interaction (3 credits) (L. Bozgeyikli)
INFO 521 Introduction to Machine Learning (3 credits) (C. Morrison)
INFO 522 Applied Cyberinfrastructure Concepts (3 credits) (N. Merchant and E. Lyons)
INFO 550 Artificial Intelligence (3 credits) (C. Morrison)
INFO 555 Applied Natural Language Processing (3 credits) (S. Bethard)
INFO 557 Neural Networks (3 credits) (S. Bethard)
INFO 575 User Interface and Website Design (3 credits) (M. Fricke)

School of Sociology

Elective courses:
SOC 511 Formal Models for Cultural Analysis (3 credits) (R. Breiger)
SOC 526 Methods for Social Network Analysis (3 credits) (R. Breiger)
SOC 527 Social Networks (J. Galaskiewicz)
SOC 552 Advanced Topics in Stratification (3 credits) (R. Breiger)
SOC 561 Programming for the Social Sciences (3 credits) (J. Earl)
SOC 596a Advanced Topics in Research: BD Big Data Techniques for Social Scientists (3 credits) (Unstaffed)
SOC 596a Advanced Topics in Research: RM Advanced Topics in Research Methodology (3 credits) (E. Leahey)

Department of Linguistics

Elective courses:
LING 508 Computational techniques for linguists (3 credits) (M. Hammond)
LING 538 Computational linguistics (3 credits) (S. Fong) [pending approval]
LING 539 Statistical natural language processing (3 credits) (M. Surdeanu)
LING 578 Speech technology (3 credits) (M. Hammond)
LING 581 Advanced computational linguistics (3 credits) (S. Fong) [pending approval]
LING 583 Text retrieval and web search (3 credits) (M. Surdeanu)
LING 696b Seminar in phonology: “neural nets and machine learning in phonology and morphology” (3 credits) (M. Hammond)
LING 696g Topics in computational linguistics (3 credits) (S. Fong)

Department of Communication

Elective courses:
COMM 640: Research Methodologies III (3 credits) (J. Bonito)
COMM 696R: Advanced Communication Research Methods (Structural equation modeling) (3 credits) (J. Bonito)

**School of Anthropology**

**Elective courses:**
ANTH 595D: Special Topics in Biological Anthropology: R programming for data analysis and visualization (3 credits) (E. MacLean)

**School of Government and Public Policy**

**Elective courses:**
POL 610: Theory and Methods for the Analysis of Political Networks (3 credits) (A. D. Henry)
POL 684: Causal Inference (3 credits) (L. Bakkensen)