Tips

Give extra attention to a seminar paper so you can submit it for publication during the summer.

Hold one service position at a time, but hold several throughout the program. This will diversify your C.V.

Volunteer in the community. Thinking of and helping others will help you keep things in perspective. (Just don't spend too much time volunteering.)

Use one (or both) of your two independent studies to prepare for a field exam.

Remember that you are in control of your dissertation process. If necessary, you can change topics (and even committees).

Break up your dissertation into small, manageable sections (10-20 pages). Write one section at a time, and don't get distracted by the big (intimidating) picture.

Don't let yourself become isolated. Study and work with friends.

Take breaks, and do not feel guilty for doing so. You will do better work when you regularly have something to look forward to.

Read for pleasure. Make time for it. (You are at risk of losing interest in your topic and even in reading itself.)

Mental health problems are normal and treatable. If you feel too anxious and/or depressed to work, seek help.

Resources

CFPs, Awards, Fellowships, & Certificates:

NIU.edu/grad/academics/certificates/index.shtml
NIU.edu/grad/funding/fellowships.shtml
Newberry.org/fellowships
call-for-papers.sas.UPenn.edu
MLA.org/Resources/Career/Conferences-Fellowships-and-Announcements
grad.UCLA.edu/funding

Dissertation:

Thesis and Dissertation Office · thesis@niu.edu
Adams Hall 104, Mon.-Thurs. 10:00-2:00

When you need help:

Our graduate director, Jessica Reyman
*We have a caring and understanding faculty. Let them help you.*

NIU Counseling and Consultation Services

When you need help NOW:

NIU Crisis Services · (815) 753-1206
Kishwaukee Behavioral Health Crisis Line · (866) 242-0111

You can find our living document, a continually updated reference for “What I Wish I’d Known…” via the URL below or by requesting the link from Justin at justinjjness@gmail.com.https://docs.google.com/document/d/19wYnvoGFtSDRwK7KWYUZbHJQdqWtMdshtjIDg86Qv7h8/edit?usp=sharing
The first two (or three) years might seem like an extension of the M.A.; the only thing you’re required to do is take classes. But if you use this time to build your C.V., you’ll be glad in year 5 that you did. (You’ll never have this much time on your hands again.)

**Ph.D. Timeline**
(approximate schedule for graduation in five years)

1. **YEAR 1**
   - FALL: Great time to refine a term paper and submit it for publication!
   - SPRING: Great time to refine a term paper and submit it for publication!
   - SUMMER: Great time to refine a term paper and submit it for publication!

2. **YEAR 2**
   - FALL: Keep submitting papers for publication.
   - SPRING: Keep submitting papers for publication.
   - SUMMER: Keep submitting papers for publication.

3. **YEAR 3**
   - FALL: Study for your (2) field exams. (There is no avoiding this. If you have extreme test anxiety, seek help.)
   - SPRING: Study for your (2) field exams. (There is no avoiding this. If you have extreme test anxiety, seek help.)
   - SUMMER: Study for your (2) field exams. (There is no avoiding this. If you have extreme test anxiety, seek help.)

4. **YEAR 4**
   - FALL: Select your diss topic, ask a professor to be your director, and find at least two extra committee members. Write your diss proposal (your “prospectus”) and formally defend it.
   - SPRING: Wrap up your diss. (You won’t have much time in the spring.)

5. **YEAR 5**
   - FALL: Enter the job market. (You now have much less time to work on your dissertation.)
   - SPRING: Sometimes it takes a sixth year… or a seventh… and that’s OK. You’re not alone. Shoot for five years, but have a plan B.

6. **6**
    - SPRING: Defend & submit your diss. (It’s a whole thing.)

7. **7**
    - SUMMER: Defend & submit your diss. (It’s a whole thing.)

...  

GRADUATE.