

Official Guide to Graduate Study in History At the University of Texas at Austin

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1. ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

The **Graduate Adviser** has primary responsibility for administering the graduate program. She chairs the Graduate Program Committee, the Graduate Admissions Committee, and the Graduate Studies Committee and is the department's principal contact with the Office of Graduate Studies. By tradition, the term of office is three years. In the third year, the **Assistant Graduate Adviser**—who will become the next Graduate Adviser—shadows their predecessor.

The **Graduate Program Committee (GPC)** sets policy for the graduate program in all matters except admissions. The GPC consists of the Graduate Adviser and four members of the faculty: one from each of the area committees. The co-chairs of the History Graduate Student Council (HGSC) serve as student advisors to the GPC. They may meet with the GPC on matters of policy but do not take part in decisions concerning individual students or applicants.

The **Graduate Admissions Committee (GAC)** has responsibility for admissions to the graduate program. It consists of the Graduate Adviser and one faculty member from each of the four area committees. Currently, the members of the GPC constitute the GAC. The HGSC does not send representatives to the GAC.

The **Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)** includes all tenured and tenure-track members of the History Department, as well as other designated members of the University faculty.

A full list of the current members of the GSC is available from the History Graduate Office. Only members of the GSC are authorized to supervise graduate degrees in History (though non-members may serve as co-supervisors). The GSC must approve any significant changes in the department's graduate program and may sit as a court of appeals for the decisions of the GPC regarding individual students.

Each of the faculty search committees organized to fill open faculty positions is required to include a **student representative**. These student representatives meet and vote with their committees and consider all submitted materials except those subject to confidentiality restrictions.

2. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

It is each student's responsibility to be familiar with the degree requirements set forth in the official publications of the Graduate School and the History Department.

Requirements for graduate degrees may be altered in successive University of Texas Graduate Catalogs, but a student is bound only by the requirements of the catalog in force when they were admitted to graduate study. A student who chooses to fulfill the requirements of a subsequent catalog must fulfill all of those requirements, not just part of them.

The department's Graduate Office maintains a permanent file for each student. Students may see all of the materials in their files except the confidential letters of recommendation submitted when they applied for admission to the program. Each semester, faculty members are asked to submit evaluations of the performance of each History student enrolled in their courses. These evaluations are the principal material the GPC uses in evaluating student progress and distributing awards. Students should regularly check their paper files to make sure their set of evaluations is complete and current.

Student taking organized classes (usually semesters 1-4) should meet with their supervisors and the Graduate Adviser late in each semester to discuss plans for the next semester's coursework.

3. COURSEWORK (years 1-2)

Most coursework should be done in organized seminars. Seminars are especially important for first-year students, and only in exceptional cases will they be given permission to take freestanding conference courses.

Seminars are classified as either research or reading in format. In reading seminars, students work mainly in secondary sources in order to gain knowledge of a broad area of inquiry and acquire experience in historical analysis. A historiography paper (literature review) is usually the culminating written assignment in reading courses. In research seminars, students work mainly in primary, often archival, sources, and use those sources to produce original contributions to the field. Some seminars may be taken for either

research or reading credit; in such cases, students should determine with the instructor what work they must do to qualify for each type of credit and should be sure that the Graduate Coordinator knows what type of credit should be assigned.

After their first semester, students may take a conference course (HIS 391C) in which the student pursues a topic of mutual interest to both the professor and the student. Such a course may be taken for either reading or research credit. The request form is available on the Graduate Program's forms page: <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/history/graduate/forms.php>. A maximum of two conference courses is allowed in the second year of coursework.

4. MAJOR FIELDS

Major fields for graduate study in History include: Africa; Atlantic; East Asia; Europe (medieval, early modern, modern); Science, Technology, and Medicine; Latin America; Middle East; South Asia; United States. Each student must select one of these fields in which to major and must complete the requirements specific to it.

A student seeking approval for a new *thematic* major field should first contact their major advisor. Together the student and advisor should settle on a thematic field; to be approved by the GPC, the thematic field should be comparable in scope to and sufficiently different from the department's pre-existing major fields. The student should write and the advisor should approve a description of the thematic field; the description must include any required classes and must specify the language requirements (at least one foreign language must be required). Together, the student and major advisor should identify and name at least three GSC members as a potential committee able to supervise the student in the field. The student, with the support of their advisor, should then petition the GPC for approval of the thematic field; include in the petition (a) the description and (b) requirements of the field and (c) the potential members of a Qualifying Exam committee.

Upon approval by the GPC, the new thematic field will remain active, and thus available to other students without petitioning the GPC, for seven years. Should an existing thematic field go seven years without attracting any new students, it will be removed from the list of approved major fields. Thereafter a student seeking to reactivate it will need to petition for approval.

5. GRADING

Graduate students can receive grades of A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, and F for their coursework. A grade of C denotes unsatisfactory academic performance; F indicates total failure in a course.

The reality of grade inflation means that a B or lower constitutes a serious warning to the student. In general, the professor's written evaluation, and not the letter grade, gives more detailed and useful information to students about their achievements in coursework.

6. MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

Students have **three options** when pursuing a master's degree:

The first option requires completion of a traditional **master's thesis**, a paper of up to 100 pages that grows out of research in primary sources and makes an original contribution to scholarship. The thesis must be approved by a faculty supervisor who is a member of the History GSC and by a second faculty reader.

The second option requires additional coursework and completion of a **master's report**, a paper about fifty pages long that is typically an expanded and revised version of a paper written for a research seminar. The report must be approved by a faculty supervisor who is a member of the History Department GSC and by a second faculty reader.

The third option requires that students complete all coursework necessary for the Ph.D., pass their required language and comprehensive exams, enter candidacy, and apply for the degree. The members of the GSC who serve on the student's dissertation committee must unanimously agree that one research paper written by the student during their tenure in the department is based on exceptional research in primary sources and is of outstanding quality.

The specific requirements for the three options are as follows:

M.A. with thesis (30 hours)

1. Eighteen hours of graduate history courses, including at least one research seminar (of three hours).
2. Six hours of graduate courses in a supporting field outside the major field of study.
3. Six hours credit (HIS 698A and 698B) for the master's thesis.

M.A. with report (33 hours)

1. Twenty-four hours of graduate history courses, including at least two research seminars (totaling six hours).
2. Six hours of graduate courses in a supporting field outside the major field of study.
3. Three hours credit (HIS 398R) for the master's report, typically an expanded and revised version of a seminar paper.

M.A. as ABD

1. Coursework required for the doctoral degree.
2. Fulfillment of foreign language requirements for the doctoral degree.
3. Admission to candidacy.
4. Dissertation committee approval.

Regulations for Coursework for the Master's Degree

1. **Required Courses.** All students must complete HIS 394H ("Introduction to

Historical Inquiry”); in addition, students majoring in United States history must take two semesters of History 397K (“Literature of United States History”).

2. Language Requirements. Master’s degree students in United States history are not required to demonstrate competence in a foreign language. Students in all other major fields must demonstrate competence in one foreign language, normally by passing one of the departmental examinations administered three times each year.
3. Grade Point Average. Students must maintain at least a 3.00 grade point average to continue in the graduate program. Maintaining a 3.00 grade point average, however, does not ensure a student’s eligibility to continue in the program.
4. Credit/No Credit. No more than 20% of the hours submitted for any master’s degree may be taken on a Credit/No Credit basis. Master’s thesis and master’s report courses are not included in calculating the 20%. See Graduate School rules.
5. Conference Courses. No more than three hours of freestanding conference courses (HIS 391C) may be submitted for any master’s degree. Master’s degree students in United States history may take no more than one such conference course in any semester, unless granted an exemption by the Graduate Adviser.
6. Incomplete Work. Any incomplete work, for which the student receives a grade of X, must be satisfactorily completed by the end of the student’s next long-session semester of enrollment, or within an overall limit of 24 months if the student is not enrolled in the interim. If this deadline is not met, the X converts to an I (permanent incomplete), which will have serious consequences for the student’s future eligibility for financial support.
7. Transfer Credit. No more than six credits can be transferred from another institution and applied toward the master’s degree.
8. Time Limit for Coursework. All coursework for the master’s degree must be completed within six years.
9. Registration. Students seeking a master’s degree with thesis must register sequentially for the two-semester thesis course (HIS 698A and 698B) for a minimum of two semesters. Students seeking a master’s degree with report must register for HIS 398R for at least one semester. The report and thesis options require that students be registered for the report or thesis course during the semester in which they receive the master’s degree; the M.A. as ABD option requires only that students be registered.
10. Courses Counted for Another Degree. No course counted toward a previous degree may be counted toward the master’s degree, either directly or by substitution.

Application for Master's Graduation

During the term in which a student plans to graduate, they must file a **Master's Graduation Application** with the Graduate School. Information on this and other graduation materials is available on-line from the Graduate School.

7. MAINTAINING GOOD STANDING IN THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The History Department approves for continuation in the doctoral program only those students it deems to have demonstrated the ability to undertake historical research, analysis, and writing at a very high level.

Annual review. Doctoral students are reviewed annually by the GPC. Each student must submit the following to the Graduate Office as a *single PDF*:

1. A short, reflective narrative about their progress over the course of the year that has been *reviewed and signed* by their supervisor (c. 500 words);
2. A timetable for completion of program requirements;
3. A proposed chapter outline, if applicable;
4. A faculty evaluation.

After reviewing the evaluations, the GPC may interview students during the fall of each year. The GPC will respond to each student in one of four ways:

1. Certify that the student is making satisfactory progress.
2. Warn the student of perceived problems that could endanger their good standing in the graduate program.
3. Inform the student that they are in danger of losing good standing in the graduate program and recommend that they seek a terminal master's degree.
4. Inform the student of termination at the end of the current semester.

Entrance into candidacy constitutes final acceptance into the doctoral program.

Following a successful Comprehensive Qualifying Exam, and completion of foreign language requirements, students are eligible to apply for candidacy:

<https://gradschool.utexas.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/doctoral-candidacy>

8. THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The Doctor of Philosophy degree certifies that its holder (a) has demonstrated mastery of a substantial body of scholarship in both a major field of study and a supporting field; and (b) has prepared and defended a dissertation that demonstrates competence in research, historical analysis, and writing, and makes a significant and original contribution to the student's major field of study. Students seeking the Ph.D. must meet the following requirements:

I. Coursework: Major and Supporting Fields

A. Required Courses

1. Before admission to candidacy, each doctoral student must complete at least *thirty-six hours of graduate coursework*, including HIS 394H; at least twenty-four hours must be in History. In addition, students majoring in US history must take two semesters of 397K. At least six of the required twenty-four hours must be in research seminars (or at least three of the required twenty-four hours if the student has written a master's thesis at the University of Texas at Austin). Hours taken under the title "Qualifying Examination" (HIS 393L) do not count toward this requirement. HIS 698A, 698B, and 398R can each be counted once.
2. Each doctoral student must complete a *twelve-hour supporting field* made up of graduate level courses that complement the student's project.
 - a. Ideally, these courses should form a coherent whole that supports the proposed dissertation and/or prepares the student for a second teaching field.
 - b. The supporting field should be worked out early in the student's program of study in discussions among the student and the student's prospective faculty supervisor in consultation with the Graduate Adviser.
 - c. The supporting field will be completed by evidence of satisfactory performance in the coursework undertaken, not by examination.
 - d. Courses in the supporting field, whether in the History Department or in other departments, should be taken in organized classes, not conference courses.
 - e. Courses in the supporting field, whether in the History Department or in other departments, must be taken for a grade. No courses in the supporting field may be taken Credit/No Credit.
3. MA Credit. Courses taken at the University of Texas at Austin for a master's degree may be applied to any of the above requirements.
4. Transfer Credit. At the end of a student's first semester in the graduate program, they can apply to the graduate adviser to transfer of up to *twelve hours* of graduate credit from another institution to apply to any of the above requirements.
5. Grade Point Average. Students must maintain at least a 3.00 grade point average to continue in the graduate program.
6. Conference Courses. No more than six hours of freestanding conference courses (HIS 391C) may be counted toward the degree.
7. Credit/No Credit. No more than 20% of the courses included in the Program of Work submitted to the Graduate Adviser when applying for admission to candidacy may be taken Credit/No Credit. Master's thesis and master's report courses are not included in calculating the 20%.
8. Incomplete Work. Any incomplete work, for which the student receives a grade of X, must be satisfactorily completed by the end of the student's next long-session semester of enrollment, or within an overall limit of 24 months if the student is not

enrolled in the interim. If this deadline is not met, the X will be converted into an I (permanent incomplete), which will have serious consequences for the student's future eligibility for financial support.

9. Time Limit for Coursework. All coursework included in the Program of Work submitted to the Graduate Adviser when the student applies for admission to candidacy must have been completed within six years.
10. Individual Requirements. Students must complete such other requirements as the Graduate Program Committee, the Graduate Studies Committee, or the student's dissertation supervisory committee may require.

II. Doctoral Foreign Language Requirements

The requirement for competence in a foreign language for the Ph.D. is ordinarily fulfilled by satisfactory performance on the departmental examinations in Spanish, French, German, Latin, Portuguese, and other major languages that are given three times each year, usually in *September, January and April*. All students needing to be examined in these languages will be examined on the three stipulated days.

The departmental examination in each language will be prepared and graded by faculty competent in that language. Each examination will consist of approximately a page and a half from a secondary work to be translated into English in an hour and a half. Students who fail an examination may not take it again until the next time the examination is normally given.

Students in all major fields must demonstrate competence in one or two foreign languages, as specified below, upon being admitted to the doctoral program.

Asia/Africa/Middle East: Doctoral students in East Asian or South Asian history must demonstrate competence in the primary Asian language most relevant to their research and in a secondary language, also appropriate to their research.

Students in Middle Eastern history must demonstrate competence in two foreign languages, including one Middle Eastern language, appropriate to their research. Students in African history must demonstrate competence in two foreign languages appropriate to their research.

Atlantic History: Doctoral students specializing in Atlantic history must demonstrate competence in at least two foreign languages. Normally those languages will be chosen from among those most important for the study of Atlantic history (Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and French). Substitutions can be made with the approval of the doctoral supervisor. The doctoral supervisor may also require that the student demonstrate competence in an additional language relevant to their unique focus.

Europe: Doctoral students in early modern or modern European history must demonstrate competence in two European languages. Doctoral students in medieval history must also demonstrate competence in Latin or Greek.

Latin America: Doctoral students in Latin American history must demonstrate

reasonable competence in speaking either Spanish or Portuguese and in reading both. An oral examination to establish reasonable speaking competence in the primary language (either Spanish or Portuguese) will be conducted by the Spanish Department. Reading ability in both the primary and secondary languages will be tested by the departmental translation examination. Native speakers will not be exempted from the written translation examination unless they can document having passed a formal translation examination at a previous academic institution. When appropriate and with the consent of the Graduate Adviser and a majority of the faculty of the Latin America Area Committee, another language (e.g., Latin or an Amerindian language relevant to a student's primary research) may be substituted for either Spanish or Portuguese.

Science, Technology, and Medicine: Doctoral students in History of Science, Technology, and Medicine must demonstrate competence in at least one foreign language. The doctoral supervisor may also require that the student demonstrate competence in an additional language relevant to his or her unique focus.

United States: Doctoral students in United States history must demonstrate competence in one foreign language.

III. Doctoral Comprehensive Qualifying Examination

Admission to candidacy in the doctoral program of the History Department is contingent upon satisfactory performance on both the written and oral components of a comprehensive qualifying examination. *The comprehensive qualifying examination is intended to establish the student's competence in a broad field of history, such as might be required to teach core courses in the subject, as well as to test the student's command of material more closely related to their dissertation area.* More information on the examination can be found in the "Guide to the Comprehensive Qualifying Examination," available online.

Soon after entering the graduate program, each student should meet with their prospective supervisor to discuss future plans, including preliminary preparations for the qualifying examination. By the fourth semester, each student should, in consultation with their prospective supervisor, assemble an examination committee. The committee is chaired by their prospective supervisor and includes two other members of the History Department GSC. The full committee should meet with the student and work together to settle on a reading list for the examination, which will consist of at least 150 books.

The three faculty members who form each student's examining committee construct a *written examination* appropriate to the student's individual interests. The comprehensive qualifying examination consists of two parts: a portfolio of written materials, and an oral examination. The portfolio must include: (1) A reading list for each of the three components of the student's major field, created under the guidance of each of the examiners. (2) A set of historiographical essays or equivalent written work (e.g., a series of short papers, lectures, etc.) on topics agreed on in consultation with each examiner. All such work should be written expressly for inclusion in the portfolio. (3) A curriculum vitae (c.v.). The portfolio may also include additional material reflecting a student's particular interests, such as a preliminary dissertation prospectus, a representative

seminar paper chosen by the student, or copies of publications, syllabuses, or conference papers.

The *oral examination* follows submission of the portfolio by a period of time agreed upon by the examining committee (usually two weeks). *It is intended to allow the committee to probe the student's command of the major field*; it is not restricted by the specific contents of the essays in the portfolio, but may range over any of the topics covered in the reading lists. Ordinarily, all three members of the committee should be present for the oral examination; however, if one member is unavoidably absent (and cannot participate by Skype or the equivalent), the examination may be conducted by the other two, who should consult closely with the absent member both before and after the oral examination. The length of the oral examination will be determined by each examining committee; ordinarily it will run about two hours.

After the oral examination, the members of the examining committee will jointly decide whether the student has or has not passed both parts of the qualifying examination. A decision to pass the student must be unanimous. The examining committee will then prepare and sign an evaluation of the student's performance on the examination, which will be placed in the student's file.

A student who fails the comprehensive qualifying examination may, at the discretion of the examining committee, be allowed to add materials to their portfolio and take the oral examination *one additional time*, at a time to be designated by the examining committee.

Students are expected to pass the comprehensive qualifying examination by the end of their sixth semester in the graduate program. Those who do may lose eligibility for departmental funding, or they may be terminated. The GPC may grant exemptions from this requirement in light of students' individual or programmatic circumstances.

In alphabetical order, the examination fields of History in each of the areas are:

Asia/Africa/Middle East: East Asia, South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Each student in Asia/Africa/Middle East must choose one of these areas in which to major.

Atlantic: The qualifying exam will cover the Atlantic field from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. In addition to the Atlantic major field, students will be required to have two supporting fields in different geographic areas, two thematic transnational fields, or a combination thereof. Students are encouraged to have at least one geographic field.

Europe: Medieval (c. 200-1500), Early Modern (1450–1715) and Modern (1715 to present). Each student in European history must choose one of these periods in which to major.

History of Science, Technology, and Medicine: The exam will cover the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine from early times to the present, with a focus on the student's planned dissertation area. The reading list will be determined in cooperation with the student's examining committee.

Latin America: All of Latin American history. Ordinarily, one examiner will cover the colonial period; another, the national period; and the prospective doctoral supervisor will cover the dissertation field. An alternative structure may be followed if approved by the examining committee, the Graduate Adviser, and the chair of the Latin America Area Committee.

United States: All of United States history. Ordinarily, one examiner will cover the period before the Civil War and Reconstruction; another, the period from the Civil War and Reconstruction to the present; and the prospective doctoral supervisor will cover the dissertation field. An alternative structure may be followed if approved by the examining committee, the Graduate Adviser, and the chair of the United States Area Committee.

IV. Admission to Candidacy for the Ph.D.

Upon passing the comprehensive qualifying examination and meeting any other requirements that may have been imposed, the student should apply for admission to doctoral candidacy *within six months*.

Before applying for candidacy, the student assembles a dissertation committee, chaired by the doctoral supervisor and including at least three additional members (for a committee of four members). The doctoral supervisor (or at least one of the co-supervisors) and at least two other members of the committee must be members of the History Department GSC. The committee must include at least one member from outside the History Department, that is, from another UT Austin department or from outside the University of Texas.

V. Completion of the Ph.D.

Doctoral students must *register continuously* in the long sessions of the University from the time they enter candidacy until they receive their degrees. Students are not normally allowed to take a leave of absence after entering candidacy.

To earn a Ph.D., a student must write a dissertation that constitutes a substantial piece of original research and successfully defend it before the student's dissertation committee. Currently the American Historical Association advises that dissertations be four chapters long, plus introduction and conclusion.

The defense is an oral examination on the completed dissertation and on such other fields of learning as the supervisory committee may require. A dissertation committee consists of at least four professors, one of whom must be from outside the department's Graduate Studies Committee (GSC).

It is the student's responsibility to schedule the defense, that is, to select the date and time (a three-hour slot) as well as to reserve the room. *The student must consult with all members of the committee, and receive their approval of date, time, and room, before the process of scheduling can be completed.*

The dissertation committee is expected to be physically present for the defense. If circumstances prohibit that, then at least the student and supervisor must be physically present, while other committee members may participate by Skype or the equivalent.

The dissertation defense is a public event. The GPC can, in special circumstances, limit public participation (as, for example, during the pandemic when Zoom security is essential).

VI. Dissertation Embargo

At the defense, the committee advises the student on whether or not to request a dissertation embargo, which blocks public access to the dissertation for 0-7 years. See the Graduate School's website for embargo procedures.

VII. Final Submission of Dissertation

Students must meet the formal requirements for submission as set out by the Graduate School and enforced by the Graduate School degree evaluators. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with those formal requirements: see the Graduate School's website.