

## **Policies of the University at Buffalo History PhD Program**

Approved by vote of the faculty on October 6, 2017

The History PhD program conforms to the Graduate School Policies and Procedures Manual, available here: <http://grad.buffalo.edu/study/progress/policylibrary.html>

The following policies are specific to the UB History PhD Program.

### Graduate Committee

The Graduate Committee is a standing committee of the History Department, chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Its membership includes two doctoral students appointed by the DGS.

The Graduate Committee reviews applications to the program and makes decisions as to admission of students to the department's graduate programs. It makes recommendations about graduate program policies and procedures to the department. It nominates students for awards and fellowships, and approves petitions and requests from graduate students, including for conference travel funding.

As indicated in article 2.10 of the Departmental bylaws, "the graduate representatives shall be excluded from discussions and decisions regarding financial aid decisions and the academic progress of individual students."

History Department bylaws are available here: <http://history.buffalo.edu/about/departmental-bylaws/department-bylaws/>

### Program Requirements

#### **Course Work**

*Historical Inquiry* (History 501) is required of all Ph.D. students and generally taken during the fall semester of the first year of doctoral study. The course offers an introduction to the theory and philosophy of history and is intended to acquaint students with various problems in historical analysis and understanding.

*Core Seminars.* All doctoral students must take at least two of the following core seminars: History 502 "Core Seminar in American History I;" History 503 "Core Seminar in American History II;" History 504, "Core Seminar in Early Modern European History;" History 505, "Core Seminar in Modern European History;" History 506, "Core Seminar in North and South Atlantic History;" History 507, "Core Seminar in Asian History;" History 559 "Core Seminar in Latin American and Caribbean History I;" and History 560, "Core Seminar in Latin American and Caribbean History II."

Students whose major fields are in U.S., European, or Latin American/Caribbean history will normally take the two-semester sequence of core seminars in those areas.

*Research Seminars.* Students must take at least two 600-level research seminars.

*Independent work:* Up to three independent reading or research courses (HIS 552 and HIS 612) may be taken in the first two years of the program, with the permission of the primary adviser and faculty course supervisor(s). A form describing the work accomplished must be submitted to the Graduate School; blank forms can be obtained from departmental staff.

*Distribution requirement.* All Ph.D. students must fulfill a distribution requirement by taking at least one course that covers an area outside the U.S. and Europe. In the case of a trans-regional, thematic, or world history course, students shall consult with the instructor and DGS about whether it will fulfill the distribution requirement and, if so, ask to have a statement to that effect put in their file.

*Incomplete grading policy.* The Department requires that doctoral students complete all courses that have received grades of Incomplete (I) before advancing to candidacy or receiving departmental research travel funding.

## **Annual Reports**

All Ph.D. students shall complete an annual report (see Appendix A) by the end of every spring semester.

## **Credit-hour Requirement and Transfer of Credits from an MA Program**

*Credit-hour requirement.* The Graduate School requires Ph.D. students to complete 72 credits of coursework. Advanced reading courses (HIS 552) and general exam readings courses (HIS 600) count in this total, as do advanced research (HIS 612) and thesis guidance courses (HIS 700), taken by students who have passed their qualifying exams.

*Transfer of credits from an MA program.* Students who hold an MA degree when they enter the Ph.D. program may petition for the transfer of up to 36 credits. If their MA work was at a different institution, they must supply syllabi of the courses they believe equivalent to graduate courses offered by UB's History Department. In addition to helping to fulfill the credit-hour requirement, specific course requirements (research seminar, etc.) may be satisfied by coursework from the MA program, with the approval of the DGS and the student's major adviser.

## **Language Requirement**

All doctoral students must demonstrate a reading knowledge of at least one language other than English; depending on a student's proposed topic of research, proficiency in more than one language other than English may be required. Students are expected to take their major

language exams before their third semester. All language examinations must be passed before a student can take his or her Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations.

### **Qualifying Examinations**

Before being admitted to candidacy, all doctoral students must successfully complete a series of oral and written examinations that demonstrate their mastery of three fields: a major field, a field of specialization within the major field, and a minor field. These examinations are usually taken in the third year of study (students entering with an MA are encouraged to take them in the second year). The department expects students to complete the qualifying examinations no later than February of their third year.

Students select their fields in consultation with their major adviser and other faculty with whom they wish to work. The major field is the broadest level at which a student will carry out research and teach. The field of specialization normally reflects a choice as to the prospective area of dissertation research; it is, as the title suggests, more focused and specialized than the major field.

The minor field may be selected from among the major fields the department offers. For instance, a student whose major field is Early Modern Europe might prepare a minor field in Asian history, Modern Europe, or the Atlantic World. The minor field may also involve study in another discipline, such as English Literature, Art History, or Museum Studies. Or it may be chosen from among the methodological specializations available in the department, such as world history, the history of medicine, women's history, or urban history. However defined, the minor field should not substantially overlap with the major field or be an additional area of specialization within it. The minor field may add useful theoretical or methodological competencies or supplement the major field with knowledge of another geographical area or discipline. Students' examination fields are to be approved in advance by their major advisers and by the DGS, normally by the end of the student's third semester in the program. Approval is indicated on the department's Pre-Qualifying-Exam Checklist (see Appendix B).

Each field is supervised by a UB faculty member. Together, the faculty members supervising a student's fields constitute the student's Examination Committee. The chair of the committee is normally the student's primary adviser or the faculty member supervising the field of specialization. The format and timing of the qualifying examinations is determined by the committee. The oral exam is scheduled to occur at least three days after the end of the written exams, so that the examination committee has time to determine that a student is ready for the oral exam. Either before or after the oral exam, the committee may decide that the student has not demonstrated sufficient mastery of a field or fields and require that one or more of the written examinations be retaken. The committee chair will provide a letter to the student, with copy to the DGS, stating the outcome of the exams, explaining what part or parts must be retaken, and giving a deadline for the new exam(s), which should be within six weeks of the date of the original exams.

If a student's committee determines that a student has not demonstrated sufficient mastery of his/her fields after having had a chance to retake the exams, the DGS and primary adviser will meet with the student to determine whether he or she shall remain a student in good standing in the doctoral program. The expectation is that the student will leave the program, but if the student's adviser and/or the DGS believe there are extenuating circumstances, the student may be allowed to continue preparing for a new round of exams. In this case, the student will be considered on probation, and the DGS will write a letter stating the conditions the student must meet to regain good standing in the program.

## **Dissertation**

The culmination of the Ph.D. is the preparation and defense of the dissertation, a substantial work of original research. There are three stages to this process. First, a student must submit, normally by the end of the third year, a written prospectus to his or her Dissertation Committee, generally the committee that supervised the qualifying examinations, although changes may be made. The committee must approve the prospectus before further work on the dissertation may take place. The second stage involves researching and writing the dissertation. Finally, the completed dissertation must be read and approved by the student's committee. In consultation with his/her adviser, a student may invite an outside reader (who is not a member of the History Department) to read and comment on the dissertation. This outside reader may take part in the dissertation defense in person or via Skype, or may merely provide written comments on the dissertation before the defense. The dissertation defense consists of an oral examination conducted by the student's dissertation committee.

*Dissertation prospectus.* All doctoral students who satisfactorily complete their oral examinations must prepare and defend a dissertation prospectus of 15-25 pages describing their proposed research topic within an historiographic framework, the archives they plan to visit, and a rough timeline for the completing of the research (see Appendix C). The prospectus defense should be held by May 15 if the student wishes to receive a departmental fellowship for research beginning the following fall semester. All prospectus defenses should be held within six months of the completion of qualifying exams.

*Dissertation research and writing.* Students consult with their primary adviser and other members of the dissertation committee during this stage of the program. When a schedule for completion has been determined, students must fill out the Graduate School's Application to Candidacy (ATC) and M forms available from the departmental staff. If the expected graduation date changes, these forms must be revised and resubmitted.

*Dissertation defense.* With the approval of the dissertation committee, a defense date is scheduled. The format of the defense is determined by the primary adviser in consultation with the student and committee. At least part of the defense must be open to the public and advertised in advance within the department.

Graduate School policies on dissertation work are available here:  
<http://grad.buffalo.edu/study/progress/policylibrary.html#phdoverview>

**Department of History**  
**Annual Review Report for Graduate Students**  
**Year: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Admission Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Adviser:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Project Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Academic Progress**

Attach copy of current unofficial transcript

Date of admission to the current program: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected completion Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Current GPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Incomplete Grades: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Resigned Courses: \_\_\_\_\_

Remaining Coursework:

**Achievements and Plans**

1. Briefly comment on your academic/research progress during the past year. Note areas in which you are experiencing any difficulty.
  
2. Briefly comment on your progress toward your career goals during the past year.
  
3. What are your academic goals for the coming year?
  
4. Please attach the **following information where applicable**
  - a. **Academic Conference Activities.** Please list any conference papers you presented during this academic year including the date, location, title and name of the hosting institution.
  - b. **Honors/Awards/Grant or Fellowship applications:** Please list any fellowships, awards, or honors that you received in this academic year.
  - c. **Publications/Creative Activities.** Please list any publications that were submitted or appeared during this academic year, including book reviews, articles, and book chapters. Be sure to include the full citation information.
  - d. **Plan for next Academic Year.** (Coursework, Teaching Assistant, Qualifying Exams, Dissertation Research/Writing Year, etc.)

Give this section of the form to your adviser and ask him/her to complete the other section.

**University at Buffalo**  
**Annual Review Report for Ph.D. Students**  
**ACADEMIC ADVISER/DGS SECTION**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date last conferred with student: \_\_\_\_\_

Please comment on the student's overall academic performance including teaching experiences, any strategies for improving performance, specific timeframes for completing expected milestones, etc.:

**Major Professor/Director of Graduate Studies:** Your signature below indicates that this student is making acceptable progress in their degree program.

\*Major Professor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

DGS: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please submit this form along with all supplemental documents to the History Department staff by the last day of classes in the spring semester.**

Appendix B Pre-Qualifying Examination Checklist

PhD Program Requirements Checklist

Department of History. University at Buffalo, State University of New York

This form is to be completed and approved before students take the PhD qualifying examinations. Please indicate the specific course(s) taken to fulfill each requirement and the semester in which taken; and please give specifics concerning any courses taken at another institution and accepted as transfer credits.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

History 501, Historical Inquiry \_\_\_\_\_

Core courses (History 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 559, 560, at least two required),

\_\_\_\_\_

Research seminars (600-level courses, at least two required),

\_\_\_\_\_

Distribution requirement ("at least one course that covers an area outside the U.S. and Europe")

\_\_\_\_\_

Language requirement (please indicate the language(s), examiner(s), and date(s) of

examination(s)) \_\_\_\_\_

Major field: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser: \_\_\_\_\_

Specialization: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor field: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

Major adviser: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Director of Graduate Studies: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

### **Required Ph.D. Dissertation Prospectus Defense, Department of History**

#### **Goals**

The University at Buffalo's Department of History requires doctoral students to write and defend a formal dissertation prospectus in order to promote the following goals:

- to increase communication between ABD students and their dissertation committees
- to insure that students are able to formulate a significant and feasible dissertation topic
- to speed progress toward the degree
- to help identify appropriate archives; potential sources of outside funding; and possible subjects for generating conference papers and journal articles.

#### **Implementation**

1. A student will ordinarily be expected to defend his or her dissertation prospectus by May 15 of the third year, after successful completion of the Ph.D. qualifying examinations.
2. Before a date for the prospectus defense can be set, the student must circulate a draft of the prospectus to the dissertation committee. With the approval of the committee, a date for the defense will be set.
3. Once the prospectus has been approved through unanimous consent of the members of the dissertation committee (who must individually sign the appropriate form), both student and faculty agree to a plan for the dissertation as specified in the approved prospectus and recommended by committee members at the defense.
4. A student unable to complete a satisfactory prospectus within six months of the Ph.D. qualifying examinations shall meet with the Director of Graduate Studies and his or her adviser to determine whether he or she shall remain a student in good standing in the doctoral program.
5. These requirements shall be distributed to all incoming doctoral students.

#### **Suggested Template for the Dissertation Prospectus**

The exact form taken by the dissertation prospectus will vary according to the dictates of individual dissertation advisers and committees, in response to the scholarly canons and expectations of specific fields, and in recognition of the distinctive features of individual projects. Nonetheless, some commonalities and general guidelines are desirable. The following template suggests a number of standard—but not required—elements for the dissertation prospectus, subject to appropriate variations and further specification. All questions are merely suggestions and intended as examples.

1. **Dissertation Topic:** describe the subject of the dissertation; justify your choice of topic; summarize your argument at this stage of your research, and forecast its anticipated direction. Think of this section as offering a compelling project description for an external fellowship competition. What are the questions you are trying to answer in the dissertation? What is the research design? Why have alternate methodologies been ruled out?
2. **Historiographical Essay:** situate your topic within the relevant secondary literature. How will your dissertation be a contribution to the field? What broader theoretical and methodological models will inform your work?
3. **Organization and Description:** Dissertations grow and evolve in response to the very process of research and writing; yet, they must start somewhere. To the extent possible at this stage, identify, describe, and explain the organizational and conceptual frameworks guiding your research and writing practices. Will your organization be topical? chronological? something else? Why? What will make a reader want to continue reading?
4. **Primary Sources:** describe the nature and location of the major primary source collections you plan to consult. What types of sources (personal papers, newspapers, tax lists, legal depositions, etc.) do you expect to be most helpful? How will you narrow your search for relevant material? If the sources are located outside of Buffalo, specify a plan and timetable for completing your research. Can you identify sources of funding?
5. **Tentative Schedule:** outline a feasible plan for researching and writing your dissertation. Be realistic about the demands of activities such as teaching in developing your plan.
6. **Length:** Should be determined in consultation with your committee. The Department anticipates that the prospectus, for many students, will be approximately 15 to 25 pages.