



University at Buffalo
Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences



PhD Program

Handbook

PhD Program Handbook

Core Faculty and Staff

Department Chair is responsible for administering all aspects of the Department, including overseeing all faculty, staff, and students.

Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for the overall management of the MA/PhD in History. In consultation with the department's Graduate Committee and the Chair, the DGS has the authority to make exceptions to departmental regulations. The DGS does not, however, have the authority to make exceptions to Graduate School rules and policies. The DGS can petition on behalf of the student, but such exceptions, including extensions of time to degree, late completion of incompletes, or missing any other deadline of the Graduate School, are in the prerogative of the Dean of the Graduate School and the Graduate School staff.

Department Administrator (DA): The day-to-day administration of the department is the responsibility of the Department Administrator. Questions a student may have about rules, deadlines, grant opportunities, or minor bureaucratic problems should be directed to the DA. If the issue or problem requires faculty advice or approval, the Administrator will advise the student to talk either with her or his advisor or the DGS. The DA is also the communications center for the department.

Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Coordinator is responsible for the practical aspects of registration and all student services including paperwork: providing registration materials and the permission codes by which students officially register. The Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Coordinator helps maintain student records and information for the Graduate Program Office, including rosters, listservs and keeping the website up to date. Make sure that Coordinator has your current mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses. The Coordinator can also direct students to funding opportunities, job notices, and the like. The Coordinator will be your primary contact person for the graduate program.

[Please visit the Department of History's website to know who to contact.](#)

Welcome

Welcome to graduate study in history at the University at Buffalo! The Department of History is a community of scholars and students committed to the values and ethics of rigorous education in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. The Department is dedicated to research, teaching, and public outreach regarding humanity's vast and diverse past. The Department's interests span the globe and cover every epoch of human history. Its faculty members are equally acclaimed for their path breaking research, writing, and dedication to teaching and advising.

Program Overview

This manual is intended to help doctoral students in the Department of History proceed through the PhD program. It describes what a typical full-time student will do from year to year. The guidelines assume that the student has entered with a BA degree or an MA in a different discipline; those entering with an MA in History (or having already taken some graduate coursework in History) should read the section about how to transfer in credits, etc., which may be found at the end of the section on the first two years.

Courses

Be sure to review the course schedules for every semester, as the listed course descriptions encompass all HIS courses and may vary in terms of availability each term. For comprehensive schedules, consult the [Public Course Schedule](#) on HUB. See also the Department of History's course offerings webpage.

Diversity Statement

Historians study the diversity of human experiences over time. We recognize that many aspects of these experiences—race, class, gender, religion, and disability, among others—have particular historical significance because they have served as vehicles for the expression of, and resistance to, power, profoundly affecting people's daily lives and struggles for equality and justice. As a result, historians study not history but histories: the differences, congruences, and dynamic interplay between a diversity of human lives.

The Department of History acknowledges that these histories have not ended; we are still living them today. Any legitimate attempt to explore and understand the past thus requires the full, engaged participation of a diversity of perspectives and voices. We are committed to building an inclusive department by supporting members of our community across our rich differences of race and ethnicity, economic status, religion, politics, ability and disability, gender, sexuality, age, and citizenship status. Respect for and engagement with these differences is a shared and essential intellectual and community value.

We also acknowledge the many obstacles that challenge efforts to build such an inclusive and supportive community and believe that overcoming such obstacles through purposeful action is an urgent need, especially in a public university dedicated to serving a diverse public. For this reason, we are committed to recruiting faculty, students, and staff of varied life experiences; providing a full range of courses and pedagogical approaches that engage with a diversity of topics and learners; and cultivating an environment in which all feel that they belong, that they are valued, and that they can teach, work, and learn free from exclusions and inequities that inhibit the exchange of ideas. Through these and other actions history can realize its potential to bridge differences and contribute to a more just society.

The Department encourages students to explore the following diversity-related resources:

- Department of History [Awards and Scholarships](#)
- Student Life's [Intercultural and Diversity Center](#)
- [Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Department Communications

The Department maintains a listserv that is for graduate students only with the exception of the DGS, Department Chair and the Department Administrator. All graduate students may post to this list: historygraduates-list@listserv.buffalo.edu. Admitted students are automatically added to the list via their UB email addresses.

It is the expectation of the department that you will meet regularly with your advisor to ensure you are meeting the requirements of your degree. You should establish a schedule with your advisor as soon as you are able to do so.

The Graduate Lounge

There is a graduate lounge located in room 551 on the fourth floor of Park Hall. Graduate mailboxes are located there. In addition, there is a refrigerator, microwave, and kettle. If locked, you can ask any staff member to open the door. This is a space exclusively for graduate students. Please keep the place tidy, and if you're the last one to leave, please make sure the lounge is closed!

The Graduate Student Association

The [Graduate Student Association \(GSA\)](#) is the representative body for graduate students at the University at Buffalo. Its two key purposes can be divided into representation and services. Its funds are derived from the Mandatory Student Fee and are used to pay GSA staff and fund numerous programs and services offered to GSA members.

- [GSA By-Laws](#)

Graduate Student Employees Union

The [Graduate Student Employees Union](#) is an organization, independent of the GSA, that represents the interests of graduate student employees (TAs and GAs) of the university.

Graduate History Association

The [Graduate History Association \(GHA\)](#) is dedicated to maintaining, supporting, and strengthening the intellectual and social lives of our members. As such, the mission of the GHA is to foster inter-and intradepartmental interactions at UB that further critical historical and interdisciplinary engagement. We are continually striving to create a context through which students in our department can achieve success during their tenure at UB. In supporting such goals, the GHA wishes to build a graduate student presence in the department that creates a beneficial learning and teaching environment for all. Leadership is elected at the beginning of the school year. The GHA recommends graduate students to serve on departmental committees, including the Graduate Committee, the Speakers Committee, and the Diversity Committee. A student representative also attends monthly departmental meetings.

Phi Alpha Theta

[Phi Alpha Theta](#) is the national honor society for students in the field of history, with 860 chapters on college and university campuses across the nation. Membership is a mark of intellectual accomplishment and commitment. Phi Alpha Theta students also have the opportunity to present their research at an annual regional conference.

All graduate students who maintain a 3.5 GPA are eligible for membership after the completion of their first semester. Membership is not just prestigious. At UB Phi Alpha Theta hosts events such as game nights and field trips and more. For more information, contact the Phi Alpha Theta Advisor, Dr. Cari Casteel.

Annual Milton Plesur Graduate History Conference

The [Annual Milton Plesur conference](#) was named in honor of Dr. Milton Plesur. Plesur was a former professor in the Department of History between 1955 and 1987. During this time he had a profound effect on the students, faculty, and Department of History. The Annual Milton Plesur Conference is an opportunity for graduate students from UB and beyond to showcase and share their research.

Guide for History Doctoral Students

Most entering PhD students receive a support package of five years that includes a tuition scholarship, health insurance, and a stipend, which the Department augments via a Milton Plesur scholarship. Effective Fall 2021, the university will also cover the Comprehensive Fee, Academic Excellence and Success Fee (ACES), Student Activity Fee, and the International Student Fee for fully funded PhD students (information on fees is available on the Graduate School's website). To meet their service obligations for this support, students will normally serve as TAs during their careers. No teaching will be required for the first semester, but students must enroll in HIS 701. Students will also have a semester free of TA obligations when preparing and defending their prospectuses. Finally, during their research year, no teaching is required.

Students should expect to take a research year, in which they do not serve as a TA or take courses, but instead dedicate the entirety of their time to dissertation research. The timing of the research year is up to the student and their advisor but cannot be taken before the student has passed the qualifying exams and prospectus defense and has attained ABD (all but dissertation) status.

If you have support from the university as a funded PhD student, and are not a New York resident, you are expected to apply for New York residency when eligible to do so. The department staff can assist with this. If you don't apply for New York residency in a timely fashion, you will be obliged to pay the substantial difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition – a substantial difference. Students in the U.S. on a Visa are not subject to the requirements to gain New York residency, since they are not eligible to do so.

New students with support from UB are expected to enroll in the non-credit course HIS 701(Proseminar on History Teaching) in the fall. HIS 701 is a six-week forum for conversations on techniques and resources for effective history teaching. Class meetings involve discussion of

short readings and problems encountered in the classroom. The major written assignment is a first draft of a teaching portfolio. The course is open to all graduate students. If students do not complete the course they may lose their eligibility for appointment as TAs in future semesters.

TA stipends are paid biweekly. If you have a full academic year TA position, the payments are divided into 21 pay periods over ten months, so you will continue to receive pay over the winter break. You can view details about pay periods and check dates [here](#).

Paychecks and stubs are delivered to your home address and are available for pickup in 543 Park Hall during regular business hours. Teaching Assistants are strongly encouraged to sign up for direct deposit. Please contact the department staff for a direct deposit application or visit the UB Administrative Services Gateway.

The Department of History encourages graduate students to present their research at relevant conferences to get feedback and build scholarly networks. Every spring the History Graduate Association hosts the Plesur Conference, an excellent venue to begin sharing your ideas. More advanced students may travel to conferences in the region or beyond. When your paper proposal is accepted, you can submit a request to the department for funds to help you participate. The department funds conference travel at a sliding scale, depending on the significance of the conference and a student's participation in it (if it is the most important conference in your field, that would be high priority for departmental funding). The Graduate Committee will meet and decide the best way to award funding. Given our inability to always fund each request, you should also look into other funding sources: the UB Graduate Student Association is one possibility; also, many conference organizers offer funding to graduate students who are giving a paper at a conference.

International students face additional rules and restrictions in regard to travel and working on and off campus. If you are an international student, you should attend the orientation sessions offered by the Office of International Students and Scholars Services (ISSS) and consult the DGS and Graduate Coordinator at ISSS with any questions you may have.

Please note that this guide should not replace individual advisement. You should be in touch with your advisor and/or the DGS when you are in doubt about the program and its requirements. The Department's policies for the PhD program are available in the "Info for Faculty" section of the departmental website. [Policies of the Graduate School](#) are available [here](#).

General Guidelines for Doctoral Students

Bureaucracy

If you are planning to switch between full-time and part-time status, to graduate, to take a leave of absence, or to otherwise change your status as a UB student, speak to the Graduate Coordinator as soon as possible. Paperwork often needs to be filed with the Graduate School well in advance. They can always answer your questions or refer you to somebody who can.

Managing Reading

Many students find this to be the most challenging aspect of graduate study. There is no single strategy for how best to make it through the massive amounts of densely written material assigned in seminars.

Unless you are gifted with an uncanny talent for doing so, you will not retain every detail or point of information. It is important to read actively: Rather than expect passively to absorb the gist of what is being discussed, get in the habit of always trying to discern what the author is attempting to argue, how they support this argument, and whether this is persuasive. When you take notes, think of your notes not as a summary of the information from the book, but as a schema of how the author has constructed their argument. As you get better at this, you will find that you will read faster and more effectively.

Resources

The best starting point for research is the UB Libraries website. From there, you can access the university library catalogue along with databases of scholarly articles (e.g., Historical Abstracts, EBSCO, J-Stor, or America: History and Life) and dissertations (Digital Dissertations), and the worldwide consortium of library catalogues (World Cat). If you identify a book or article that is not available locally, you can order it through Interlibrary Loan (ILL/Delivery +). The ILL service at UB is very reliable, but you still must begin your research in advance to be sure that the books and articles you need for a term paper arrive in time.

The Associate Librarian for the Humanities is Dr. Michael Kicey (makicey@buffalo.edu). He is the liaison librarian assigned to our department and is a fantastic resource. Throughout the academic year, he sends notifications on new databases and other new resource materials. Feel free to contact him as you plan your research.

Life of the Department

Part of your graduate education is participating in the life of the department. This includes attending speaker series events whenever possible. The cohorts here are some of your best resources: take advantage of their expertise!

We are committed to your success at UB and are always available to help. Please reach out if you need anything! **Welcome to the Department of History!**

The First Two Years

The first two years in the doctoral program are devoted to formal coursework and lay the foundation for your field preparation and dissertation research. If you are a teaching assistant, you will register for three 3-credit seminars per semester, as well as, in your first semester, the non-credit teaching proseminar, HIS 701. The Graduate School considers funded PhD students to be on full load with nine credits per semester (the SUNY requirement for other graduate students is 12 credits).

Funded students get a tuition waiver, which only covers nine credits of coursework. You would have to pay tuition for any course you take beyond that. As an alternative, you might sit in on the course as an auditor, with the permission of the instructor.

Year One

In your first semester, you are expected to take the department's introduction to historical problems and methods (Historical Inquiry - HIS 501). You will also take a core seminar in your major field, if offered that semester. The core seminars familiarize students with current debates, interpretive strategies, and big issues in the major fields. American, European, and Latin American/Caribbean History cores are two semester sequences (HIS 502-503, HIS 504-505, and HIS 559-560) and are generally offered every year. The core seminars in North and South Atlantic (HIS 506) and Asia (HIS 507) are offered every other year, although, depending on demand, they might be offered more frequently. If you intend to specialize in either Asia or the Atlantic world, we recommend that, in addition to the one-semester core in your area, you enroll in another core seminar of your choice, either in the first or second year. Your third course in the first semester will generally be a topical readings seminar. It is possible to take a research seminar in this first semester, but, given that you will be learning how to be a TA as well as taking a full load of courses, we recommend you wait until the second semester to take a research seminar.

To encourage geographical breadth in your preparation, the department requires that all PhD students take at least one course that covers an area outside the U.S. and Europe. Plan your coursework with this in mind. In the case of a trans-regional, thematic, or world history course, you should consult with the instructor and DGS about whether it can fulfill the geographical breadth requirement and, if so, ask to have a statement to that effect put in your file.

In the second semester of the first year, you will normally take the second core seminar, another readings seminar of your choice (or a different core seminar), and a research seminar. By the middle of your second semester, you should have considered who would be the most appropriate faculty advisor in your major field and discussed the possibility with that person.

Year Two

Generally, by the second year, you will have taken the core seminar in your area of interest. By the end of your second year, you should have taken a total of 12 seminars (not including HIS 701) for a total of 36 credits. Your coursework for the second year should be determined in consultation with your major advisor. In addition to the core seminar, you must take at least two research seminars during the coursework phase of the program, generally one in each of the first two years of your program.

In some cases, you can substitute Independent Reading (HIS 552) or Independent Research (HIS 612) for a regularly offered seminar, if an individual faculty member is willing to instruct you in a topic not offered that year. Whenever you take a 552 or 612, you must send Jennifer Darlak a copy of the syllabus (or faculty statement of support for the IR) at the beginning of the semester and a description of the work you accomplished at the end. The forms are available from the graduate office in the Department of History.

Although you can receive credit for a maximum of three independent courses in your first two years, the department recommends that you enroll in regular seminars as much as possible. An

organized seminar— in which students and instructor together discuss common readings and provide feedback on research and writing—generally offers a much richer intellectual experience than independent study, even when the latter is well supervised.

You may take seminars in other departments if they suit your particular program. A course on Milton, for example, or on Native American Narratives, would expand your understanding of Early Modern England or Colonial America, respectively. Although you are usually permitted a maximum of two courses outside the department, you can petition for additional ones if they are warranted. Language courses can count for graduate credit; talk with the DGS about how this can be done, since the procedures depend on which department offers language instruction in your chosen language (Romance Languages and Literatures, Linguistics, Classics, Jewish Thought, etc.).

Your choice of seminars, besides the requirements outlined above, is up to you and your advisor. You will want to master your area of specialty, but also use this opportunity to broaden your knowledge of other times and places. Breadth is not only indispensable for the job market, but it also helps sharpen your research questions in your own chosen area of specialty.

Incompletes Although “incompletes” are not recommended, you might find yourself needing a bit of extra time to finish a particular project. Although technically the university allows you twelve months to complete a course (after which you will automatically receive a default grade), you do not want to drag out incompletes from semester to semester. Remember that incompletes are granted at the discretion of the instructor and that you should set a date for the completion of the work. A sample form is available from Jennifer Darlak.

The Department requires that doctoral students complete all courses that have received grades of Incomplete (I) before advancing to candidacy.

LANGUAGE EXAMS

Language requirements differ depending on your concentration. Those whose major field is American History need one language other than English (LOTE); those working in European and Asian History will usually have to show competence in two LOTEs. The language requirement for those in North and South Atlantic history and in African history will depend on the dissertation topic, so check with your advisor. The language exam is intended to ensure that you can carry out research in the language(s) of the regions or time periods you are studying. The major language exam should be taken at the end of the first year or at the end of that summer, and all language exams should be completed by the time you take your field examinations.

The language exams are given by a professor in the department proficient in that language or by specialists in other departments (Romance Languages, Linguistics, etc.) with approval of the DGS. Notification by the test-giver that you have passed the language exam must be provided to the department in the form of a letter or email message addressed to the DGS or Graduate Secretary of the Department of History. Please note that language training at the undergraduate level does not count for graduate credit unless you follow the procedures set up by the Graduate School, which are described in the Graduate Handbook on its website.

By your third semester you should have chosen a dissertation advisor and have defined the fields you will study for your exams (for more on fields, see the section on Qualifying Exams below). In consultation with your advisor, complete and submit the department’s Pre-qualifying-

exam checklist form, which lays out all the requirements that must be completed before you take your exams. The DGS or departmental staff can give you a copy of the checklist form.

RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH (RCR) TRAINING REQUIREMENT

The Graduate School requires that all PhD students document successful completion of “Responsible Conduct of Research” (RCR) training. This training requirement may be fulfilled by either (1) enrolling in and passing with a grade of B or better SSI 640 Graduate Research Ethics, LAI 648 Research Ethics or RPN 541 Ethics and Conduct of Research or (2) completing the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) online Responsible Conduct of Research course with an average score of 80 percent or higher. Students opting to complete the CITI online course must supply documentation of its successful completion with their Application to Candidacy. Instructions for completing the online course may be found on the Graduate School’s website.

FILING FOR AN MA

Along the way to the PhD, you might decide to file for an MA degree. The only additional requirement is an MA project. The easiest route is to expand an existing research paper. Since an MA degree is optional, do not divert too much energy from the doctorate in order to fulfill this requirement. Since you will need someone to sign off on the MA project (most likely the person for whom you wrote the paper), be sure to consult them on what will be required to turn the paper into an acceptable project.

Filing for an MA requires a formal application for candidacy which must be done months in advance. You can check the deadlines on the Graduate School website or consult with department staff who have all the necessary forms. Remember that it is never too soon to ask when the paperwork is due. Be sure to meet the deadlines.

STUDENTS WHO JOIN THE PHD PROGRAM WITH PREVIOUS GRADUATE HISTORY

Any MA student interested in applying for PhD program should speak to the DGS.

All students who have completed graduate courses in History before joining the PhD program can transfer up to 36 credits to satisfy program requirements. If you wish to transfer in credits, you should plan to meet with the DGS and your major advisor early in the spring semester of the first year to discuss the transfer of credits and your program in general. So that the department can verify that the courses are equivalent to UB’s graduate history courses, please provide syllabi for all courses for which you seek to transfer credit and be prepared to discuss your work in those courses.

The Third Year

Choosing your exam committee: The qualifying examination committee consists of three faculty members. The advisor in consultation with the student will identify rationales for the selection of each committee member (e.g., relevant content expertise, methodological expertise, etc.) Prospective committee members will be invited to serve by the advisor, who will give prospective members the student’s statement of interest. Prospective committee members

should respond to committee invitations within one week. As soon as the exam committee is selected you should inform the Graduate Coordinator.

By the end of the second year, you should have completed all your required coursework and established your three examination fields and your examination committee (one member to supervise each field) and filed the pre-qualifying-exam checklist form. In the fall semester, you should register for an independent exam reading course (HIS 600) with each of your exam committee members. You should not, as a rule, register for regular seminars or coursework, though there might be exceptions to this. If a course is offered in the fall that is right up your alley and would provide excellent preparation for your exams, consider getting the reading list and auditing the course, or working out some other arrangement with the professor whereby you are excused from writing papers for the course. You want to keep your focus on reading. There will be plenty to keep you occupied, far more than in formal seminars or regular independent study courses.

By the end of the fall semester of your third year, you should have completed the bulk of your readings for the qualifying exams, which the department expects you to take no later than February of the third year of your program.

There is no set formula for 600 exam preparation courses: you arrange individually with each professor the format and meeting times. The amount of reading you are expected to master also varies from professor to professor. The norm tends to range from 50-100 articles and books for the major field.

In the spring semester of the third year, students once again register for three HIS 600 courses with their three advisors, but the work of this semester is as follows:

1. Complete qualifying examinations no later than February
2. File an Application for Candidacy form after passing exams
3. Complete and defend a prospectus by May 15.

QUALIFYING EXAMS

Exams are taken in three areas: your field of specialization (for example, nineteenth-century US), your major field (e.g., US History), and a minor 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 advisors 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. Exam fields tend to be **teaching fields**. They indicate to a hiring committee which areas you are best suited to teach and how you are defining yourself professionally. Choose them carefully and note that these choices for committee members should correspond to each field.

Qualifying, or field, exams are taken in two steps: a written exam in each field given separately by each instructor and a two-hour oral exam with all three examiners present. Exams are scheduled by students in consultation with their field advisors; it is recommended that they be spaced out over a week or two. The oral exam component should be scheduled for at least three days after the final written exam, so that the examination committee has time to determine that a student is ready for the oral exam. Occasionally, a student may be asked to take some time to continuing working on field readings and retake a part or parts of the written exam before proceeding to the oral exam or after the oral exam has occurred. In that case, in consultation with the DGS, the committee chair will set out in a letter to the student what further work is necessary and how the exam process will proceed.

DECISION PROCESS AND AVAILABLE OUTCOMES

The qualifying examination committee will ordinarily reach their decision immediately following the oral examination. At the end of the meeting to conduct the oral examination, the committee—with the committee chair's leadership—will evaluate the student's performance on the entire qualifying examination (the student will have been excused from the room prior to these deliberations). The decision represents the committee's holistic judgment. The student will be invited back into the room to receive the committee's decision as well as input or feedback from committee members.

A *Pass* decision signifies that the student has performed satisfactorily on the qualifying examination and will be advanced to doctoral candidacy.

If the committee determines that performance on either the written examination or the oral examination—or both—is unsatisfactory, the student will not have demonstrated readiness for doctoral candidacy and the committee decision will be *Non-Pass with Revisions*. This signifies that revisions and/or a repeat of some aspect(s) of the qualifying examination are warranted.

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.

However, if student performance on the second round of the qualifying examination is judged to be unsatisfactory, the committee decision will be *Non-Pass*. The student will not be advanced to doctoral candidacy. 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.

Once you have passed your exams, it is time to finalize your three-member dissertation committee. This committee may differ from your field examination committee. One of your dissertation committee members might come from another department or even another university, with the approval of your advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. The

committee may recommend including an outside reader on your committee. Though not required, many students find it useful to receive comments on their work from a different department and to gain a useful outside contact. Some readers from outside UB take part in the dissertation defense, either in person or remotely. Others just offer detailed written comments on the dissertation.

After you have passed your qualifying exams, the Graduate School requires you to file an Application to Candidacy form. You must arrange to get the appropriate forms from the department office. On this form, you indicate when you expect to finish your degree. Many students take longer than they estimate. When your expected graduate date changes, simply file a replacement ATC form giving the new date. You should also file a Certification of Full Time Status form, which will allow you to register for fewer than 12 credits a semester while still maintaining full-time status, which can be important if you have student loans in deferment. You need 72 credits minimum to graduate. However, the University will not fund anyone with more than 72 credits, so be careful not to exceed that number. The department office can assist you to plan your credit load.

PROSPECTUS

While you are doing your field reading and preparing for your exams, you should also devote thought to the dissertation prospectus. The prospectus describes your research questions, frames the major interpretive and historiographical problems in play, and describes as precisely as possible your plans to work in the archives and libraries, including the documents that you intend to consult. Once completed, the dissertation prospectus will be distributed to members of your committee and defended in a meeting with your committee members.

The department expects you to complete and defend your prospectus by May 15 of your third year in the program. It is understood that there may be delays related to scheduling or other factors. If you believe you are on course for a successful prospectus defense but will not meet the deadline, be sure to seek approval for an extension from your advisor and the DGS. Failure to do so may result in loss of good standing and/or suspension of funding.

RESEARCH FUNDING

Many libraries and archives list all their holdings online, and many documents can even be obtained on the web. This greatly facilitates initial research, but in most cases visits to libraries and archives off campus will be invaluable. During the third year, you should bear in mind application deadlines for outside research funding and the department's Plesur funds. The department's Plesur travel fellowships are designed to get you off campus to work on primary sources available in special deposits, be they in the US, in Europe, or elsewhere. UB's Graduate Student Association (GSA) manages the Mark Diamond Research Fund, which will grant PhD students up to \$2500 for research expenses (amount subject to change). This fund is highly competitive and requires a great deal of pre-planning. You can arrange to attend information sessions through the GSA to aid you in your grant application. Please direct all questions to the GSA.

External funding is also an option, such as a DAAD to go to Germany, or a Massachusetts Historical Society grant to get you to Boston. The American Historical Association maintains an extensive list of fellowships and grants for research. Many individual libraries and archives offer short and long-term fellowships. While you are preparing your prospectus, be sure to explore the possible funding options that may exist for the libraries and archives you hope to use. The

money earned from research grants, including the Lockwood or Plesur, is the funding that you will need in order to carry out dissertation research in your research year, so you must be sure to put in your applications on time.

The DGS organizes annual sessions on how to write grant applications, in addition to other useful topics. Please make it a point to attend. Consult with your advisor as well on which grants are most appropriate for your specific research. The director of fellowships at the Graduate School runs workshops, welcomes your inquiries, and can give you feedback on applications.

Dissertation Years

Once you have successfully defended your prospectus, you are considered ABD (all-but-dissertation). As an ABD student, you will register for thesis guidance, History 700 (for 1 to 9 credits) every semester while working on your dissertation. Continue to take 9 credits per semester until you reach 72 credits.

Thereafter, you should register for one credit of HIS 700 per semester until you complete your degree.

The fourth year is generally devoted to research. You will receive your stipend and benefits as normal, but you will not be asked to serve as a TA and may travel for research as necessary. You can return and resume your TA-ship in your fifth year. ABD students can file a form that allows them to have full-time status while only paying for one credit a semester. But you need a total of 72 credits at the minimum to be awarded the PhD.

The College of Arts and Sciences, Humanities Institute, and Gender Institute offer dissertation writing fellowships. These are competitive and are awarded each spring. The DGS will announce application deadlines, so keep an eye out for emails. The DGS will also notify you about the possibility of teaching your own class for the Department of History in the form of a Plesur Instructorship. It is also possible to teach courses at other colleges, but while this can help you make ends meet, it will direct time and energy away from dissertation writing. You must make the department aware of your desire to teach courses at other colleges and receive approval of your advisor and the DGS in order to take outside positions. This is to ensure that you are not overcommitting and hurting your path to your degree. It is important to finish your dissertation in a timely fashion. The Graduate School requires doctoral students to finish their degrees within seven years, or fourteen semesters, after initial matriculation. Extensions are permitted if there is a good reason; application forms for such extensions are available from the departmental staff. Your advisor and the DGS must sign a request for an extension.

The Graduate School requires that dissertation defenses include a component that is open to the public. There is also a component which is reserved for your committee and you (this time will make up the majority of your defense. Your advisor and committee will decide how to conduct the defense; be sure to ask about how it will proceed when your committee says it is OK to schedule the defense. The public session should be advertised within the department (and beyond, if you like) two weeks before it is to take place.

Dissertations are submitted online to the graduate school. After you successfully defend your dissertation, you are required to submit your work to Proquest via the Graduate School website. Generally, the deadline to upload your dissertation is in mid-May for spring conferrals. This process requires strict formatting, which applies to everything from the style of page numbers to

the organization of your title page. Formatting guidelines are available on the Graduate School's Electronic Thesis/Dissertation Submission page. Once your dissertation is uploaded to Proquest, it will become available for researchers on the Proquest Dissertations and Theses database. In some cases, PhD students may want to keep their work out of this database for some time to ensure that they have "fresh" material for publication with a press. In that case, you will need to submit an embargo form, found on the Graduate School website, which requires an explanation and the signature of your advisor. An embargo is effective for 6 months or one year and can be renewed.

In each year of your program, you should submit a progress report to your advisor, who will add in his or her comments on your work and submit it to the DGS. See the link for the annual progress report in the Graduate section of the departmental website. These reports will be used in the departmental annual report, when we share information on student accomplishments with the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School.

The Graduate School requires that PhD students maintain a 3.0 average in all courses to be considered "in good standing." If your grades fall below that mark, or if you are not showing satisfactory progress in exam preparation or dissertation research and writing, your advisor and the DGS may ask to meet with you and, after discussion, decide to put you on probation. In that case, the DGS will give you a letter spelling out what steps you need to take to regain good standing and by when.

If you encounter temporary obstacles to your work in the program, you can request a leave of absence by filing a Leave of Absence Petition, which must be submitted by the end of the first week of the semester in which the leave is to begin. Failure to secure a leave of absence by the end of the first week of the semester will result in a \$350 reactivation fee being assessed to your account when you register for classes. If you have an emergency during the semester and are unable to finish up, talk with the DGS and your advisor about withdrawing from your classes and/or taking incompletes in your classes that semester.

Graduate school can be very stressful. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is key to making the most of your time in the program. Take part in the activities of the Graduate History Association and the many other clubs on campus. Eat well. Get enough sleep. And, if you encounter problems, talk with your advisor and/or the DGS. Excellent, confidential counseling is available through the Office of Counseling Services. Same-day appointments can be made by calling 716-645-2720. Students can take a leave of absence for a semester or two, if needed. Talk with your advisor and the DGS about what is possible, given your circumstances.

Surviving and Thriving as a Teaching Assistant

Most funded History PhD students are appointed as teaching assistants at some point in their career. As a TA, you are responsible for assisting a professor teaching an undergraduate history course, usually by leading discussions of course readings in recitation sections. The department will assign you to a specific course. You will be invited to express your teaching preferences, which the department will try to accommodate, although it will not always be able to do so.

A list of duties generally expected of TAs is below; the instructor with whom you work will assign specific duties. You and the other TAs assigned to the course generally will meet with the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss these duties, as well as at times during the semester (this should be determined in advance, whenever possible). If you have any questions

about your duties, you should first speak with the course instructor. If you are unable to get a clear answer to your questions, you are welcome to talk with the DGS about the matter.

The number of hours of work associated with a TA-ship will vary over the semester, but it may not exceed 20 hours per week. If you think your TA duties are taking too much time away from your own coursework, you should speak with your advisor and the course instructor, both of whom may be able to suggest ways to increase efficiency in grading, etc.

UB's Office of Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Transformation offers workshops and personal guidance on pedagogy for all instructors at UB, including TAs (<https://www.buffalo.edu/catt.html>). Their training in various education technologies—including course management software such as UBLearn, classroom response techniques, and online learning—may be valuable for you as a TA and as a future instructor of your own classes.

Expectations for TAs

TA training: Before or during their first semester as TA, students must attend the HIS 701, (Proseminar on History Teaching). This non-credit proseminar meets for a weekly two-hour session during the first six weeks of the Fall semester. The proseminar is run by the department's Professional Development Officer, an advanced PhD student.

Meet with the course instructor: The instructor, in consultation with the TAs, may set a regular meeting time to discuss assignments and other aspects of the course.

Attend lecture: The professor usually gives two or three lectures a week. You are responsible for attending every lecture, taking notes, and keeping up with the coursework. The instructor may ask you to assist in taking attendance or other such duties.

Recitations: Recitation is a discussion-based class held once a week for the students. If you are assigned to a 100-level class, it is likely to be large (100-300 students). For these large 100-level classes, in addition to the lecture sessions, undergraduate students sign up for a "recitation" section, which have enrollments of about 25 students each. Recitations meet once a week for 50 minutes. As a TA, you are responsible for leading the discussion for your assigned recitations. The course instructor's lectures provide a lot of information, and recitation allows the class to analyze lectures and readings in a smaller and more intimate setting. The professor will not be in the room with you, so you are in charge of leading the discussion. You should not give your own lectures during recitation sections. The course instructor may provide detailed lesson plans for the recitation or give you more latitude to design your own. You should discuss this at the beginning of the semester. If you are having problems with recitation attendance or troubled students, speak with your instructor. The DGS is another resource.

Classroom observation: The Department of History expects course instructors to observe at least one recitation session for all of the TAs working with them. This provides a chance for them to offer you suggestions about teaching and to identify excellence in teaching for departmental and university awards, as well as to write well informed letters of recommendation for you. The instructor will consult with you about when they will visit your class.

Grading: Whether or not you lead recitations, you will be in charge of some percentage of grading of the students' coursework. This includes exams, papers, quizzes, and other

assignments. Some instructors ask TAs to help create the assignments, others do not. Some provide detailed rubrics for grading, others do not. Some have TAs meet with them to go over a few sample assignments and how they should be graded. Although there are a range of approaches, every course instructor should discuss grading standards with TAs, including deadlines for giving students their grades and feedback.

Office Hours: The Department of History assigns each TA a shared office. Before the semester begins, you should set office hours (two hours a week) and notify the course instructor when they are. Encourage the students to meet with you during office hours to discuss course content and any problems they are experiencing. Some students will prefer to email you. There is no expectation that you will respond within minutes but do try to reply to students' questions within a day or two (you can be off call on weekends, of course).

Give a Lecture: Some instructors offer their TAs the opportunity to give a lecture during the semester. You may decline this opportunity, if you wish, but it can be a very valuable experience, as well as enjoyable. Students often are very supportive when their TA gives a lecture.

Exam Proctoring: Generally, TAs are expected to proctor exams for the whole class and may be asked to proctor a make-up exam or two during the semester.

Professional Conduct: TAs are expected to treat the instructor, fellow TAs, and students with respect and professionalism. In the classroom, TAs are held to the same professional standards as faculty and can refer to the Faculty Code of Conduct for details.

Teaching Awards

The Graduate School has an annual competition for Excellence in Teaching Awards for Graduate

Teaching Assistants. If you would like to be nominated for this award, speak with your advisor and the DGS. Nominations are generally due in January and require the creation of a teaching portfolio that includes course evaluations from your students and other supporting material. They involve quite a bit of work, so it is best to get an early start on them. The DGS can let you read an example of a successful portfolio assembled by a former History PhD student.

Launching Your Career

The PhD program affords you time to reflect on your career goals, and UB offers many resources to help you identify and plan for your career of choice. Students are encouraged to attend the departmental proseminar, HIS 702 "Careers for Historians," which covers the conventional academic job search as well as strategies for pursuing positions in public history, policy, business, etc. This non-credit proseminar is open to all graduate students but is not required. It meets in the Spring semester. The proseminar is run by the department's Professional Development Officer, an advanced PhD student, and typically features a range of guest speakers.

Those interested in careers in public history are encouraged to arrange internships with cultural organizations that have public history programs.

Beyond the Department, the Graduate School and the [Career Design Center](#) provide career advice and assistance to students. Both offer workshops regularly, and the Career Design Center can provide individual counseling by appointment. [Beyond the Professoriate's](#) Career Training Platform helps graduate students, postdocs and PhDs successfully transition into academic or nonacademic careers.

Appendix

Timeline for a typical PhD student's program (if you already have a History MA, the work of the first two years could be accomplished in one, with advisor approval).

Every semester

Attend workshops to explore career possibilities and learn about resources that can help you develop skills that will make you an attractive job candidate

Broaden your intellectual horizons and networks by attending events sponsored by the Humanities Institute, Gender Institute, Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy, and the many other scholarly units on campus, in addition to Department of History events.

First Semester

- Enroll in HIS 501, a core seminar, and a topical readings seminar
- Enroll in the non-credit teaching proseminar, HIS 701
- If you are an American citizen but not a NY resident, apply for NY residency.

Second Semester

- Enroll in a core seminar, a topical readings seminar, and a research seminar
- Consider enrolling in the professional development proseminar, HIS 702
- Make a plan to complete language exams
- Identify major advisor and discuss choice of major, specialized, and minor fields and advisors for each
- Consider presenting a paper at the annual Plesur Conference organized by the GHA
- Serve as a TA
- Submit a progress report to your major advisor at the end of the semester

Third Semester

- Enroll in two topical readings seminars (or an additional core seminar and a topical seminar), as well as a research seminar
- Meet with field advisors to discuss how to prepare for each field, including classwork and independent reading
- Plan to complete Responsible Conduct of Research training
- Complete the pre-qualifying exams checklist with copies to major advisor and DGS
- Serve as a TA

Fourth Semester

- Enroll in three seminars of your choice (be sure you have the needed two research seminars (600-level) as well as at least one non-US/non-Europe seminar
- Complete language exams, if not already completed
- Complete Responsible Conduct of Research training, if not already completed

- Consider presenting a paper at the annual Plesur Conference organized by the GHA
- Serve as a TA
- Submit a progress report to your major advisor at the end of the semester
- In the summer, read for qualifying exams

Fifth Semester

- Enroll in three HIS 600 readings courses supervised by the three field advisors
- Continue reading for qualifying exams, meeting with advisors as needed
- Give thought to dissertation project, investigate funding sources to support research trips
- Serve as a TA

Sixth Semester

- Enroll in three HIS 600 examination/prospectus courses supervised by the three field advisors
- Complete the qualifying exams early in the semester (ideally by mid-February)
- After exams, submit the Application to Candidacy (ATC) and Certification of Full Time Status forms
- Write a dissertation prospectus and defend it by May 15
- Apply for research funding from the department and beyond
- Serve as a TA
- Submit a progress report to your major advisor at the end of the semester

Seventh and Eight Semesters

- Conduct research. Report into your advisor periodically.
- Investigate future funding possibilities
- Present your research results at conferences for feedback and advice; the department sets aside funds to support graduate student conference participation
- Apply for dissertation-year funding from UB and beyond (UB's fellowship office can suggest places to apply, given your research topic)
- Submit a progress report to your major advisor at the end of the semester

Ninth Semester and Beyond

- Write your dissertation
- Consider organizing and participating in dissertation writing support groups for peer feedback and support
- Consider revising a seminar paper for publication and publishing book reviews
- Present papers at conferences (the Department can help with expenses)
- Follow job openings and consider applying to some that fit your interests and training
- Serve as a TA or as an adjunct (but don't take on so much work you have trouble finishing your dissertation)
- Submit a progress report to your major advisor at the end of the semester Submit an updated ATC and an "M form," register to take part in Commencement, defend your dissertation, celebrate, and move on to the next stage of your career. Remember to keep in touch with the Department – we love to get news about our alums!