

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE HANDBOOK
FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN A HISTORY DEPARTMENT
GRADUATE PROGRAM

Revised: 3.27.2022

*THE DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES DESCRIBED IN THIS
HANDBOOK SUPPLEMENT POLICIES ESTABLISHED BY WEST TEXAS
A&M UNIVERSITY*

Introduction

Welcome to graduate study in the Department of History at West Texas A&M University (WTAMU). The following handbook outlines the department's requirements for obtaining a graduate degree. It gives an overview of the department itself, that is—who we are, how stuff works, and what we do. Finally, it also provides advice on how to be successful in this program. There will, however, be omissions. Therefore, the very first piece of advice I would like to offer is that when you have ANY questions about procedures, decisions, due dates, expectations, or protocols, please ask the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for information and clarification. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the WTAMU Department of History (<http://wtamu.edu/academics/history.aspx>) and Graduate School Website (<http://wtamu.edu/academics/graduate-school.aspx>) as well.

We, as a graduate faculty, and the DGS in particular, also ask that you help us help you by keeping us informed about your choices of advisors, plans of study, addresses, and personal circumstances that impact your progress to your degree. With 30 or so graduate students registered at any given time, regular communication between graduate faculty and graduate students is essential to provide you with effective advising and mentoring. The DGS will frequently email graduate students regarding announcements, deadlines, opportunities, events, and other items. Read these emails and respond in a timely manner when appropriate.

Lastly, you should know that you have chosen to pursue graduate study in a program with exceptional teachers and scholars. Collectively, the History Department faculty prides itself on being both outstanding educators and productive historians, and our record of scholarship compares favorably with much larger institutions. In short, we have high expectations of ourselves, and similarly so in our graduate students. This is said not to daunt, but to reassure, that in choosing WTAMU you have selected a top-flight graduate education in History that will prepare you for life beyond the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree. Welcome. Go Buffs!

Director of Graduate Studies

Handbook Disclaimer

The DGS tries to be as accurate as possible when composing and revising the Graduate Student Handbook. Generally, significant changes to procedures, guidelines, and policies are made only with the approval of the entire Department of History and/or the WTAMU Graduate School. Although such changes are rare, they do occur. Consequently, graduate students need to be aware that as circumstances change, so do departmental procedures, policies, and protocols. Therefore, what is written here as descriptive comments on how the Department goes about its day-to-day business may change at any time. This elasticity is meant to ensure that the Department of History can respond quickly to changes in the profession, in the discipline, and within its college and university administrations. The DGS informs students as soon as circumstances permit about these changes, but please be aware that this will not always be as they happen. If any student, faculty member, or staff person knows of errors and/or omissions that need to be incorporated in this handbook please notify the DGS at your earliest convenience.

Program Admission Requirements

To be admitted to graduate study in the Department of History, applicants must hold a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.S.), or their equivalent from an accredited institution of higher learning. Additional course work may be required if the graduate faculty deem previous undergraduate work insufficient preparation for the M.A. degree. Applicants must also have at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) in all academic work; provide official transcripts for all academic work, one letter of recommendation from individuals who can comment on your academic work and suitability for graduate school, and a writing sample of no more than twenty pages demonstrative of the applicant's ability for historical analysis.

Application deadlines are:

Fall: August 1

Spring: December 1

Summer 1: May 1

Graduate Learning Outcomes

LO1: Chronology and Context

Identify the significance of historical events within the broader social, political, and intellectual contexts.

LO2: Critical Thinking

Develop critical arguments through the evaluation of primary and secondary sources and critiquing established research.

LO3: Historiography

Explain and critique the different historiographical schools of thought as well as philosophical and ethical issues relating to the historical profession.

LO4: Research Competency

Conduct historical research using both primary and secondary sources that makes an original contribution to the field.

Plan of Study

A plan of study must be submitted to the Graduate School before the end of the first semester a student is enrolled in classes. The Plan of Study is completed by the student here:

<https://www.wtamu.edu/academics/graduate-school/current-students/index.html>.

Course substitutions may be allowed with the approval of the DGS, the academic dean, and the Graduate School Dean.

Degree Programs

Students admitted to graduate work in the Department of History can pursue a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree. The Department of History offers either a thesis or non-thesis track to the History M.A. degree. Students may pursue an emphasis in Art History in either track. Please be aware that both tracks and programs require that the graduate student successfully complete specific core courses to obtain the M.A. degree. The following section describes the required core courses, the degree programs offered, and the Department of History and Graduate School requirements for each degree.

Core Courses

Depending on the graduate student's chosen degree program, he/she/they will be required to take core courses of study. These are:

HIST 6303: Historical Methods, Writing, and Historiography

All graduate students in the Department of History, regardless of their plan of study, must successfully complete this course with a B or above to earn the M.A. degree. This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the techniques, tools, and standards practiced by professional historians. Here, students will learn about what constitutes historical evidence; how to properly develop research projects, compose essays, and cite source materials; how to analyze and synthesize primary and secondary sources; and the steps involved in the publication process.

HIST 6301: Thesis

This course is designed for students who wish to pursue the thesis track for the M.A. degree.

HIST 6302: Thesis

This course is designed for students who wish to pursue the thesis track for the M.A. degree.

Graduate students who have completed all their coursework and are currently enrolled in either 6301 or 6302 may complete a form available from the Registrar's office to have their student fees waived.

36-Hour Non-Thesis Program

To fulfill this program of study the graduate student must complete 24-36 semester hours in history, including HIST 6303. With approval of the DGS and department head, the graduate student may elect an additional field of study of at least six but not more than 12 semester hours. At least 27 of the total 36 semester hours must be taken at the 6000 level. Graduate students may take up to 6 hours of HIST 6096 towards these requirements. Students will be required to pass a written comprehensive examination in their areas of concentration. These exams will be designed and administered at the direction of the committee members in consultation with the DGS.

An emphasis in Art History is also available. To fulfill this program of study the graduate student must complete 12 hours of History including 6303; 12 hours of Art History courses; and 12 hours of approved electives. At least 27 of the total 36 semester hours must be taken at the 6000 level. Graduate students may take up to 6 hours of HIST 6096 towards these requirements. Students will be required to pass a written comprehensive examination in their areas of concentration. These

exams will be designed and administered at the direction of the committee members in consultation with the DGS.

The following criteria are used to evaluate M.A. oral and written exams: (1) graduate student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the field; (2) graduate student demonstrates the ability to conceptualize, synthesize, and articulate the major themes and debates in the historiography in his/her area of concentration; (3) graduate student demonstrates an ability to write organized essays with clear arguments and presentation of evidence, that are free of major spelling and grammatical errors and errors of fact.

Graduate students may also be required to pass an oral comprehensive exam if the examination committee deems their written exams insufficient. Graduate students are allowed one retake of all or part of the exam. Failure a second time will result in their dismissal from the program.

30-Hour Thesis Program

To fulfill this program of study the graduate student must complete 18-30 semester hours in History, including core courses HIST 6301, HIST 6302, and HIST 6303. With approval of the department head, the graduate student may elect an additional field of study of at least 6 but not more than 12 semester hours. At least 24 of the total 30 semester hours must be taken at the 6000 level. Graduate students may take up to 6 hours of HIST 6096 towards these requirements.

An emphasis in Art History is also available. To fulfill this program of study the graduate student must complete 15 semester hours in History, including HIST 6301, HIST 6302, and HIST 6303; 9 semester hours of Art History; and six semester hours of approved electives. At least 24 of the total 30 semester hours must be taken at the 6000 level. Graduate students may take up to 6 hours of HIST 6096 towards these requirements.

Upon completing 24 credit hours at the graduate level, or with departmental consent, the graduate student may enroll in 6301. Upon completing 6301, the graduate student will submit a written proposal for the thesis to a preliminary committee of three faculty members selected in consultation with the DGS. The proposal should be approximately ten to twelve pages in length and include: (1) a working thesis title; (2) an introduction describing the topic to be investigated; (3) a clear statement of the project's thesis; (4) a brief literature review, in which the student identifies and discusses the historiography that his/her thesis will engage; (5) a summary of intended methodology—i.e., identification of archival/primary source materials for consultation in the course of the research; (6) a preliminary outline. The proposal is due to the committee members, who will evaluate it either in the form of oral or written comments, by the end of the first week in October in

the fall semester and the first week of March in the spring semester. The thesis proposal and defense may be modified at the discretion of the thesis advisor in consultation with the DGS.

If the proposal, along with any recommended changes, receives committee approval, the graduate student may enroll in History 6302. If the proposal fails to obtain the committee's approval, the DGS will submit to the student a written explanation along with the committee's recommendations. Should the graduate student fail to make the changes and receive committee approval by the end of the current semester, he/she will receive a grade of Incomplete and have up to one semester to revise the proposal per the committee's suggestions. The graduate student will then resubmit the proposal as per the above. A second failure to win committee approval will result in the graduate student moving to a non-thesis program, or the graduate students' suspension from the Department of History.

Graduate students will be required to pass an oral comprehensive examination over the thesis upon its completion. M.A. thesis defenses must be scheduled as follows. A fall semester thesis defense must take place no later than the final Friday in October. A spring semester thesis defense must take place no later than the first Friday in April. In exceptional circumstances, thesis defenses may occur after these dates with approval from the DGS and the student's primary advisor.

Emphasis in Art History: 30-Hour Thesis Program

To fulfill this program of study, the graduate student must complete 15 semester hours in History, including core courses HIST 6301, HIST 6302, and HIST 6303; 9 hours of HIST prefixed Art History courses; and 6 hours of additional field study courses approved by the Art History advisor. At least 24 of the total 30 semester credit hours must be taken at the 6000 level. Students may take up to 6 hours of HIST 6096 towards those requirements.

Emphasis in Art History: 36-Hour Non-Thesis Program

To fulfill this program of study, the graduate student must complete 12 semester hours in History, including course HIST 6303; 12 hours of HIST prefixed Art History courses; and 12 hours of two additional fields of study courses approved by the Art History advisor. At least 27 of the total 36 semester hours must be taken at the 6000 level. Students may take up to 6 hours of 6096 towards those requirements.

Masters of Arts or Science in Interdisciplinary Studies

Graduate students seeking a History subject area as part of an Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) must complete 12 hours of coursework at the 5000 level or above, including HIST 6303. Students will be required to pass a written comprehensive examination in their History subject area. These exams will be designed and administered at the direction of the committee members from each subject area.

The following criteria are used to evaluate IDS oral and written exams: (1) graduate student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the field; (2) graduate student demonstrates the ability to conceptualize, synthesize, and articulate the major themes and debates in the historiography in his/her area of concentration; (3) graduate student demonstrates an ability to write organized essays with clear arguments and presentation of evidence, that are free of major spelling and grammatical errors and errors of fact.

Graduate students may also be required to pass an oral comprehensive exam if the examination committee deems their written exams insufficient. Graduate students are allowed one retake of all or part of the exam. Failure a second time will result in their dismissal from the program.

Thesis Guidelines

The Department of History has certain requirements regarding the scope, content, style, and format of its M.A. theses. Graduate students are responsible for submitting the thesis in the proper form, proofreading the copy, and taking the initiative to resolve with their advisor, DGS, and Graduate School any issues regarding text, notes, citations, photos, etc. Thesis advisors are there principally to help guide the graduate student in the process of composition—that is, organization of chapters, direction of the narrative, and issues of argument and analysis. Although advisors should also advise with problems or questions about format and style, it is not the advisor's job to format the thesis for the student, or to perform as copy editor for the thesis. Rather, it is incumbent upon the graduate student to ensure that the thesis meets all departmental, Graduate School, and WTAMU formatting and stylistic standards. Students may need to hire copy a copy editor or visit the WTAMU Writing Center for assistance in formatting the thesis.

The M.A. thesis provides an opportunity for the graduate student to demonstrate that he/she can engage in the extensive independent investigation of a historical topic. For this purpose, a 100-200 page thesis is sufficient, so long as it provides a sustained examination of a specific subject, and demonstrates the creative integration of primary and secondary sources to construct its main argument. The thesis should be composed in clear and considered prose, and be free of major grammatical, spelling, citation, and typographic errors.

Graduate students must adhere to specific stylistic requirements when composing the thesis. The Department of History requires that graduate students follow as a stylistic manual the *Chicago Manual of Style*. It is strongly recommended that graduate students use this style manual when writing all graduate work, so that its forms and will become familiar prior to the thesis writing process. Failure to properly cite source materials in the thesis may be construed as plagiarism and lead to the graduate student's dismissal from the program.

The Graduate School has additional guidelines for theses. Its guide should be consulted early on in the thesis-writing-process; a copy can be obtained from the DGS and can be found online by clicking the following link on the WTAMU Graduate School website: www.wtamu.edu/graduate-school

Thesis Deadlines

Each semester the Graduate School posts the deadline for submitting theses on its Graduate School Calendar. It is recommended that the graduate student have a preliminary draft of the thesis ready for review by his/her major advisor at least nine weeks prior to graduation, and have a final draft ready to present to their major advisor and the Associate Dean of Graduate School for final review of format and content at least five weeks before graduation. The final version must be in pdf format and submitted through the Viero System. For additional requirements see the Graduate School Thesis Manual.

Degree Requirements

The Graduate School at WTAMU has set academic standards for students who wish to remain enrolled in its programs. The Department of History has established supplemental requirements for graduate students who wish to remain enrolled in its degree programs.

Minimum Grades and Grade Point Averages

For graduate students taking classes in the Department of History only grades of A and B will fulfill degree requirements. Courses in which a grade of C is earned must be retaken. Additionally, if a student receives two C's or one F as final grades in their coursework they will be dismissed from the program. Finally, a graduate student must have a GPA of 3.0 or above to earn an M.A. degree from the Department of History.

Graduate students must maintain a minimum GPA in their graduate work as established by the Graduate School and the Department of History. The Graduate School requires that graduate students maintain a 3.0 grade point average in all coursework that applies toward their degree. If a graduate student's GPA falls below a 3.0, he/she will be placed on academic probation for a length of time determined by the Dean of the Graduate School and may be suspended. The Department of History further requires that once a graduate student has been placed on academic probation he/she must raise their GPA to 3.0 or above after a further nine credit hours of coursework or he/she will be dismissed from the program.

Incompletes

Graduate students are expected to complete their coursework as required. You may not have more than two incomplete grades at any time. According to WTAMU guidelines, incomplete courses must be completed within one calendar year. If the required course work is not completed within that timeframe a final grade of F will be assigned for the course and the student will then be dismissed from the program.

Registration Requirement Policy

Students who do not take classes in a long semester (fall or spring) will have to reapply to the Graduate School, using the WTAMU Graduate School Application, before continuing the program. The application fee will be waived.

Thesis students who have completed all coursework must be continuously enrolled in either 6301 or 6302 until their thesis is completed. Thesis students must enroll in a summer session only if they plan to graduate in the summer; otherwise, continuous enrollment applies only to registering for fall and spring semesters.

Satisfactory Progress to Degree

All requirements for the M.A. must be completed within six years. The time limit begins with the first class taken that counts towards the degree, whether that class is taken at WTAMU or is transferred from another school. Thus all coursework taken towards earning the degree, including the thesis, must be completed within six years upon entering the program.

Academic Complaints

If you have a grievance with a faculty member in the Department of History for academic reasons, you should first attempt to resolve the dispute with that individual. If this meeting fails to resolve the matter you should next contact the DGS for further assistance. If your grievance still remains unresolved next contact the Head of the Department of History for further assistance. You should also consult the relevant sections in the WTAMU *Code of Student Life*.

Graduation

Students must apply to the Graduate School early in the semester in which they expect to receive their degrees. Applications are available online or in the Graduate School office. There is no fee to apply for graduation. Deadlines to apply are:

May graduation: December 1st

August graduation: May 1st (no ceremony)

December graduation: August 1st

Transfer Credit

The DGS will evaluate courses students wish to transfer into their WTAMU graduate program and determine if any coursework completed at another university will apply toward degree requirements at WTAMU. Up to one-third of degree requirements may be satisfied by transfer coursework, and only classes in which a grade of A or B was earned may be transferred. Further, graduate students already holding a M.A. degree in another discipline may, with approval of the DGS, apply 12 hours of previous coursework towards their M.A. degree in History. Again, only classes in which a grade of A or B was earned can be used.

Financial Assistance

Both the Department of History and WTAMU offer many means of financial assistance to their graduate students. Within the department itself, Graduate Assistantships (GA) and various scholarships are available. Eligible graduate students are invited to apply for both Graduate Assistantships and departmental scholarships. To be considered for either form of financial aid the graduate student must have a GPA of 3.0 or above, and be in good standing with the department. Additionally, graduate students who are appointed as a GA must be enrolled full time during the semester in which hold the appointment. Similarly, scholarships also require that graduate students be enrolled in a minimum number of semester hours to be eligible. The dates to apply for these are:

Departmental Scholarships (February 1)

Graduate Assistantships (Spring: November 1; Fall: April 1)

The Graduate College also offers a number of internal grants for which graduate students may apply. Descriptions, requirements, and deadlines for these grants can be found on the Graduate College webpage at: <http://www.wtamu.edu/internal-grants-info.aspx>.

Both the Department of History and the Graduate School also offer travel funds for graduate students to present at conferences or conduct individual research. Eligible graduate students are invited to apply for both forms of aid. For requirements and deadlines for departmental travel funds inquire with the DGS. For more information on Graduate College travel funds see the Graduate College Webpage at <http://www.wtamu.edu/internal-grants-info.aspx>.

Standards of Professional Conduct and Academic Honesty

Graduate study is a professional endeavor. The graduate faculty in the Department of History maintains high standards of comportment for themselves as teachers, students, mentors, scholars, and colleagues. As graduate students you are expected to embody those same standards in such situations. WTAMU has established its expectations of appropriate student and faculty conduct in its, *Code of Student Life*, which can be found online at:

<http://wtamu.edu/webres/File/Student%20Life/2014-15CodeOfStudentLife.pdf>. The Department of History has set additional standards of professional conduct for its graduate students. These policies as established by WTAMU and the Department of History are meant to ensure that students, staff, and faculty are treated respectfully and equitably in their interactions, and all are expected to be familiar with them. Lack of knowledge of these policies is not an acceptable defense to any charge of personal misconduct and/or academic dishonesty.

According to the *Code of Student Life*, as a student enrolled at WTAMU, you “have the right to appropriate personal contact with faculty, professional staff and other students in an academic setting.” If at some point in your graduate career you believe that a member of the faculty, staff, or administration violated this right you should first voice your grievance with that individual and attempt to resolve it together. If that fails you should next contact the DGS for further assistance in resolving your grievance. If your grievance still remains unresolved next contact the Head of the Department of History for further assistance.

Likewise, faculty, staff, and administrators have the same right to appropriate personal contact with WTAMU students in an academic setting. Abusive, intimidating, deceitful, and/or disrespectful behavior on the part of graduate students towards faculty, staff, and/or their colleagues will not be tolerated. If a graduate student’s behavior becomes disruptive to the department he/she may be dismissed from the program at the discretion of the graduate faculty in consultation with the DGS and Head of the Department of History.

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GANTS)

Graduate students serving as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GANTs) have additional standards of professional conduct to which they must adhere. Graduate Teaching Assistants are expected to observe all WTAMU policies and guidelines, act in a professional manner with students and faculty, attend the classes for which they serve, regularly hold office hours, grade and return assignments in a timely manner, and be available to meet with the instructor of record upon request. Serving as a Graduate Teaching Assistant is a privilege, not a right. Graduate students who fail to meet these standards of professionalism will lose their appointment.

Plagiarism

The written word is the historian's primary medium of expression. We can spend years refining the prose of a particular piece before finally seeing it in print. In short, we view the written word as the intellectual property of others, and respect the amount of labor our fellow historians exerted in producing their own work. Plagiarism, in sum, is the theft of another person's creativity, industry, and passion, and the Department of History, therefore, takes an especially grave view of plagiarists. According to *Webster*, plagiarism is "the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person." Additional, although not exhaustive, examples of plagiarism would include submitting research or completed papers composed by another without proper documentation; failing to indicate the extent of nature of one's reliance on other sources; taking work from the Internet, in whole or in part, without proper reference (i.e., the URL); and transcribing lecture notes from class and submitting them as your answers in examinations. Graduate students are responsible for knowing the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate means of citing materials in an academic work, and the consequences for engaging in unethical scholarly activity. Plagiarizing work and submitting it as one's own is simply unacceptable behavior in a graduate student and those who do so will be punished severely. A graduate student who commits plagiarism will, at a minimum, receive a zero on that assignment, and depending upon the degree of the offense, may fail the course and be dismissed from the Department of History M.A. program without the possibility of readmission.

Cheating

Cheating on examinations and other academic assignments is also unacceptable. All graduate students are expected to complete their coursework individually unless expressly instructed otherwise by a member of the graduate faculty. Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to: giving or receiving unauthorized help before, during, or after an examination in the form of notes, computer based resources, texts, crib sheets, or the interpersonal sharing of information through verbal, written, or electronic means; intentionally allowing another student to view one's own work; collaboration before, during, or after an examination; and the falsification or fabrication of information in an academic exercise. A graduate student found to have cheated will, at a minimum, receive a zero for the assignment, and depending upon the degree of the offense, may fail the course and be dismissed from the Department of History M.A. program without the possibility of readmission.

Multiple Submissions

It is a violation of academic honesty to submit substantial portions of the same work for credit in multiple classes without the expressed written consent of the faculty member(s) to whom the duplicate work is being submitted. A graduate student found to have committed this infraction will, at a minimum, receive an F for the assignment, and depending upon the degree of the offense, may fail the course and be dismissed from the Department of History M.A. program without the possibility of readmission.

Succeeding in Graduate School

Instruction in history at the graduate level is built upon a tripartite foundation of reading, writing, and discussion. To be successful in graduate school these are habits and skills that you want to develop early on in your graduate career.

The first semester of graduate school can be jarring. The amount of work is heftier and the expectations are much higher than at the undergraduate level. Get organized early; manage your time wisely; and start work well before it is due.

If you initially feel overwhelmed as a graduate student take comfort in knowing that so did many of your professors. Having been there we know what it is like—use us as a resource. Ask questions when you don't know a policy, procedure, or protocol, or simply ask us for advice on getting through your graduate career here. We are here to help!

Use each other as resources as well. No one knows better what it's like to be a graduate student in the Department of History at WTAMU than other graduate students in the Department of History at WTAMU. Share, argue (civily), celebrate, and commiserate with one another; offer to read drafts of each other's work; present papers to each other. Again, developing these habits and skills will allow you to successfully navigate your graduate career.

The Department of History encourages its students to be active within the profession. You should, circumstances permitting of course, join professional organizations such as the American Historical Association or the Organization of American Historians, present papers at conferences, and submit articles and/or book reviews for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Finally, let us, the graduate faculty in the Department of History at WTAMU, offer our congratulations on making perhaps the most intellectually challenging and rewarding decision in

your academic career. We look forward to working with you as you pursue your M.A. degree in History here at WT.