



College of Liberal & Fine Arts
History Department
Graduate Student Handbook
2023-2024

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Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at San Antonio in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who is requesting an accommodation must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter from Student Disability Services. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.utsa.edu/disability or by calling Student Disability Services at (210) 458-4157 (Main) or (210) 458-2945 (Downtown). Also, visit the office on the main campus at MS 3.01.16.

Sexual Harassment

The University of Texas at San Antonio is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act).

Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence and/or dating violence. Individuals who engage in sexual misconduct and other inappropriate sexual conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

The University will take prompt disciplinary action against any individuals or organizations within its control who violate this Policy. The University encourages any student, faculty, staff or visitor to promptly report violations of this Policy to an appropriate university or department office. Graduates in the school of History may contact the GAR if they encounter problems in this area.

Racial/Ethnic/Religious Discrimination

It is the policy of The University of Texas at San Antonio to provide an educational and working environment that provides equal opportunity to all members of the UTSA community. In accordance with federal and state law, UTSA prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, citizenship, gender identity, gender expression, and veteran status in all aspects of employment and education. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is also prohibited pursuant to this policy.

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Overview

This handbook is designed to help students understand the program requirements and become familiar with resources that support them in their course of study.

The 30-hour degree program offers students an opportunity to learn various theoretical and methodological approaches to history, gives them both breadth and depth of knowledge on different historical topics, and cultivates their research and critical thinking skills. Some graduate courses correlate to geographical areas, but many others are based on issues and topics that cut across regions and are transnational in scope. Our department has adopted “Empires, States, and Borders” as its overarching theme.

In teaching as well as research, our faculty members regularly engage in topics such as empire and nation building, civil wars, state formation and disintegration, migration, and borderlands in a variety of geographic settings and across historical eras. This transnational emphasis and thematic design aligns with larger trends in the profession that go beyond the conventional study of nations and states as geographically bound entities, and highlights the importance of human mobility.

The Graduate Advisor of Record (commonly referred to as the GAR) serves as the director of the History M.A. Program. The position is currently held by Dr. Andrew Konove, Associate Professor of History. The GAR oversees most aspects of the program, such as admission, curriculum, course offering, and program assessment, along with the Graduate Program Committee.

Once a student reaches the threshold of 15-18 hours, the GAR conducts a degree audit to review the student’s degree plan, check the progress towards completion, and offer an opportunity for students to discuss any concerns. The GAR is assisted by a Graduate Program Committee which meets regularly to address programmatic issues.

Upon admission to the program, each student is assigned a faculty advisor to provide an additional conduit for mentoring. Incoming students are encouraged to contact their faculty advisor quickly to establish a channel of communication and seek advice from the professor if they have any questions during the course of their study.

I. Introduction to History: Theories and Methods

HIS 5003 (Introduction to History: Theories and Methods) provides the groundwork for all future classes by examining various ways that historians “know what they know.”

Historical theories describe the ways in which historians **interpret** their sources. The historian’s goal is to make sense of why things happened in the way that they did. Historians often understand events differently, causing significant historical debates or “schools of thought.” Historiography traces the ways that scholars have researched and interpreted historical events over time, and how and why these interpretations have changed. By exploring the ways in which historians have understood their sources and have constructed their arguments, HIS 5003 reinforces the fundamental idea that history is more than collecting increasingly detailed levels of information. Historical thinking provides a framework to make sense of the past.

The course also offers an introduction to **how** historians research—the tools they use to investigate a topic. What types of sources are they using and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these sources? We encounter typical archival materials such as correspondence, diaries, diplomatic or intelligence reports, etc. Other research methodologies may examine images such as photographs, postcards, advertisements, or editorial cartoons. Oral histories are increasingly being used as a way to learn multiple perspectives of events, especially when formal literacy may be limited. Each of these “methods” has its strengths and limitations, and a practicing historian ought to recognize the biases of each method and source.

This course is generally offered in the fall semester of every academic year. All in-coming students (including those admitted in the spring and summer) are expected to take this course during their first fall semester. This course is a pre-requisite for HIS 6813 & 6903.

II. HISTORICAL PRACTICE

Under the current catalog, a new requirement on "historical practice" will replace a requirement in comparative history. Of course, comparative history will always be part of historians' skill set, but recent trends in the profession suggest that our students can benefit from more exposure to the practical application of history. This new requirement (for students admitted from 2019 forward) can be fulfilled by completing one of the following courses:

HIS 5093: Designing a History Course

HIS 5103: Public History

HIS 6913: Making History in the Digital Age

HIS 6923: Teaching Practicum

HIS 6973: Special Studies in History (GIS, Public History, Historical Preservation, and other relevant topics)

HIS 6993: Internship in History

III. Electives and Focus Area

Students can take 18 credit hours of electives (six classes total) and may choose either a U.S. or World focus area, depending on their specific interests and career goals. Students will take four elective courses within their main focus area and the other two outside it. The Department strives each term to offer several electives across geographic and thematic areas, although it cannot guarantee that a specific course will be offered in a particular semester.

Some courses do not have a specific geographic point of reference. In that case, it will depend on the readings and assignments. Consult with the professor if you are not sure. The GAR will offer advice during your degree audit.

To make the best use of all available resources at our disposal, to accommodate diverse interests, and to ensure progress towards graduation in a timely fashion, students may apply the following to their degree plans:

- Up to 6 hours of graduate level courses outside the History program
- Up to 6 hours of Independent Study hours – with approval of instructor
 - Independent Study courses are rare, must be approved by the GAR, and will not be available to students in their first semester of study.
- Up to 6 hours of Internship
- Up to 6 hours of Upper-Division courses with graduate-level course enhancements – with prior approval of instructor

****Students should note that GAR approval is required prior to pursuing any of the options above.***

The history program encourages students to pursue internship opportunities as part of their coursework. The History Department has a current list of internship sites where we have placed interns in recent years and the GAR will also offer updates through special announcements. Our students have interned with local organizations such as UTSA's own Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC) and the Center of Archaeological Research, the Witte Museum, the San Antonio Museum of Art, the archives of various military bases, the National Park Service, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum. Some students have also undertaken internships away from Texas. Several online internships have been held by students in recent years. Internships will offer students an opportunity to utilize archival/research/writing skills in ways that both advance their own learning and career goals, while providing an important service to the host institution and the community.

IV. Research Proseminar/Seminar and the Thesis Option

1. Proseminar/Seminar: HIS 6813 & HIS 6903

The Proseminar/Seminar is designed to be the capstone experience for the M.A. program. Students spend an academic year researching a particular topic and writing an original article-length paper based on primary and secondary research: the research project is generally an essay of substantial length, to be determined by the instructor.

Each year, the program offers at least one Proseminar/Seminar sequence. Topics tend to be very broad in order to accommodate a wide range of student interests. Recent examples include genocide and human rights, labor history, gender history, and migration history.

The first semester of the class introduces students to a variety of background readings on the general topic, and offers students guidance to develop their research proposals.

The second semester allots more time for individual student/faculty meetings, as students complete the research and writing of the paper: roughly 30-40 pages, roughly 7,500-10,000 words. In addition, students in the second semester of the Proseminar/Seminar may elect to participate in our Oral Comps option (see below).

Many students will present their seminar papers at conferences, including the annual COLFA Research Conference in the spring and other conference venues outside UTSA. Participation in conferences is a wonderful opportunity for students to receive useful feedback for their work in progress and to meet up with fellow graduate students and scholars.

2. Thesis:

A faculty committee is currently revising the rules governing the thesis option. The guidelines listed below could change, so please consult with the GAR and obtain the most up-to-date version of the thesis requirements before preparing any materials for this option.

For most M.A. students, the Proseminar/Seminar sequence is their capstone research experience. Alternately, a student may have developed a strong interest on a historical topic that may not fit under the seminar AND the student has demonstrated the potential to carry out a substantial research project independently. The thesis is generally between 40-50 pages, approximately 10,000-12,500 words.

In that case, a thesis option is available. To do so, the student must seek the advice of a principal faculty supervisor and the approval of the GAR to proceed. A thesis committee of three will include a principal supervisor, a secondary faculty member, and the GAR. The supervisor will oversee the entire project. The second reader and the GAR (or GAR substitute—if the GAR is another member of the committee) must be provided with a complete draft of the thesis a minimum of four weeks before the final submission date. In addition, the thesis writer must complete a formatted bibliography and a first chapter (not an introduction, but a substantial

section of the thesis by the end of the first semester of the two-course sequence). Students taking this route will have to exercise considerable personal initiative.

Being organized and able to work independently are essential for success. The GAR may organize students into working groups of (3-4 students) for their year-long experience, to assist with cross-checking progress and distributing information to all thesis writers.

Note that there are several additional requirements for the Thesis option:

1. Students must submit a completed “Intent to Write a Thesis Form.”
Thesis students must secure approval for their project from a supervisor, a second reader, and the GAR, during the semester before they enroll in HIS 6983.
2. A total of 6 hours of HIS 6983 can be applied towards the total 30 semester credit hours required for this degree. Students electing to write a thesis will complete HIS 6983 Master’s Thesis (6 Hours) in accordance with University regulations.
3. Students must be enrolled in HIS 6983 during the semester in which they graduate.
4. By the end of the first semester, students must complete one chapter of the thesis and a correctly formatted bibliography, listing primary and secondary sources. The chapter may not be the introduction but may be a substantial section in addition to the introduction.

Please note that students undertaking the thesis option are NOT required to undertake comprehensive exams to graduate.

V. Potential Timeline for Graduate Students Studying Full-time

The program is designed for full-time students to complete all degree requirements within two academic years. The following timeline is an example for someone who enters the program in the fall semester, takes a full load of three courses each in the first two semesters, and then proceed to enroll in two courses each in the two semesters of the second year.

First Year/Fall Semester:

- HIS 5003 Theories & Methods
- Elective Course #1
- Elective Course #2

First Year/Spring Semester:

- HIS 5093 Designing a History Course*
- Elective Course #3
- Elective Course #4

Second Year/Fall Semester:

- HIS 6813 Research Proseminar or HIS 6983
- Elective Course #5

Second Year/Spring Semester:

- HIS 6903 Research Seminar or HIS 6983
- Elective Course #6
- Comprehensive exams (or the semester before)

*or

HIS 6913: Making History in the Digital Age

HIS 5103: Public History

HIS 6923: Teaching Practicum

HIS 6973: Special Studies in History (GIS, Public History, Historical Preservation, and other relevant topics)

HIS 6993: Internship in History

We realize that some students work full time and have other commitments that might cause them to spread out their coursework beyond two years. Students who enter the program in the spring or summer may have to take an extra semester to finish because some required courses are offered only in a certain semester and must be taken in sequence. Summer school courses may provide a path to finishing the program within two years

Students taking the thesis route might need some extra time to complete the research and writing. In all cases, we encourage students to finish the program within a reasonable timeframe. The GAR will work with each student to design a course of study to fulfill the educational goals and meet all degree requirements.

VI. Comprehensive Exams

The comprehensive exams are designed to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency in two distinct fields of historical studies. Each field requires its own examiner and the two examiners constitute a committee.

Note: Students undertaking the thesis option are not required to take comprehensive exams to graduate.

Fields should be based on the coursework completed thus far, and must be chosen from the list provided below. Students may choose to modify or slightly refine their fields in consultation with the professor concerned. The students and professor will then agree on a reading list of books, book chapters, and journal articles that will range from a minimum of 15 items to no more than 40 per field. The two fields must be approved by the GAR.

Major Fields—

The department offers the following major fields for Comprehensive Exams.*

Colonial/Early National U.S.

19th Century U.S.

20th Century U.S.

Early Modern Europe

Modern Europe

Atlantic World

Mexican American/Latinx History

African American History

African Diaspora

U.S. West/Borderlands

Colonial Latin America

Modern Latin America

Modern Southeast Asia

Modern East Asia

Islamic World

Global History

Women & Gender

Environmental History

*Additional Fields May be Offered by Special Permission from the Graduate Committee.

Students should note that faculty availability to serve on exam committees depends on a variety of factors, including the number of other students being mentored, teaching and administrative obligations, and research leave. Comprehensive exams are offered twice a year (during the sixth or seventh week of the Fall or Spring semester), and the paperwork to take the exam is due on a date announced in the last month of the semester **prior** to the exams.

Consultation with the Graduate Advisor of Record is required and the GAR's approval should be obtained before turning in forms by the deadline.

Students will usually take the exam in their second year after they have completed 15-18 hours of coursework; many will do so during the same year they are enrolled in the proseminar/seminar sequence.

The written exam lasts for four hours. Students will be given two questions in each field, and they will answer one question each. The department will notify them about the time, date, and location of the exam in advance.

Both exams must be taken during the exam period specified within the same semester.

ORAL COMPS EXAM OPTION:

Some students will be allowed to substitute one oral exam for one of their written exams: Students taking the Proseminar/Seminar have the opportunity to declare "Historical Research & Writing" as an exam field as part of the comprehensive exams in the fall or spring semester.

This portion of the exam consists of an oral presentation of a substantial research project with the Graduate Committee serving as a panel of examiners. The oral presentation will take place in advance of the written exams. Students who have had a strong start with their projects in HIS 6813, and are approved by the instructor, are suitable candidates for this oral exam. In any case, their eligibility depends on the endorsement of the instructor for the Proseminar/Seminar.

Students will receive the following mark on their exams: Fail, Pass or High Pass.

A high pass indicates that the student received a high pass from *all examiners* involved in the assessment.

VII. Funding:

1. Reader/Grader or Research Assistant Jobs

The Department offers a variety of reader/grader positions, for up to 19 hours/week. Reader/graders help professors manage exams and general grading tasks. This may include helping with *ParScore*, running Scantrons, helping maintain grades in Canvas, etc.

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are competitive positions for highly motivated, self-directed students. GRAs have helped professors in diverse tasks, including preparing annotated bibliographies, doing archival research, transcribing oral histories, checking sources, etc.

Announcements about these positions are broadcast by emails. Please be sure to pay attention to history department email, particularly from the GAR.

2. Fellowships and Scholarships

The Department of History provides a variety of scholarship/fellowship opportunities for students. The most notable awards are the Nau Fellowships for first year students and Nau Research Assistantships for second year students. The Nau Graduate Fellowship award is only available for incoming students entering in the Fall semester.

Second-year students may apply for the Nau Research Assistantships; recipients of this latter award will serve as an assistant for a professor each semester and help mentor undergraduate students in an upper division writing intensive class. Occasionally, students will prepare a lecture on the original research they will undertake in connection with the course to which they are assigned. The Nau Research Assistantship awards require awardees to complete a piece of original research connected to the topic of the course to which they are assigned.

Graduate students are also eligible for the *Henderson Scholarship*. In addition, graduate students who have completed 6-12 hours and meet the GPA requirement may be nominated for the *Wing Ching Lam Scholarship*. Both scholarships are awarded annually.

3. Department funding for presentation and attendance at conferences and for research

Along with the professional development support offered by the Graduate School, M.A. students can apply for travel support from the History Department to present papers at conferences. In addition, pending availability of funding, we also subsidize up to \$200 for a student to attend a conference once a year. Travel support may be available for students to undertake research in libraries and archives. The GAR will provide information on the application process and deadlines.

VIII: Veteran and Military Affiliated Students

Military Education Benefits

1. VA Education Benefits

There are many types of military education benefits which help qualifying Veterans and their family members receive funds to cover all or some of the costs for school or training. These benefits include The Post 9/11 GI Bill or Chapter 33, Dependent Education Assistance or Chapter 35, The Montgomery GI Bill or Chapter 30, and the Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve or Chapter 1606. If you are interested in applying for VA Education benefits, contact the Center for Military Affiliated Students or visit their website <https://cmas.utsa.edu/>. Note that students must be pursuing a VA approved program in order to use VA education benefits, and all courses students enroll in must be a required part of their degree plan.

2. Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E)

The Veteran Readiness & Employment or Chapter 31 provides services to assist eligible and entitled Veterans and Service Members with service-connected disabilities that limit their ability to work or prevent them from working. The services provided with this program aim to support veterans in transition back to civilian life, at work, on campus, and at home, and in the community to maximize independence in daily living. Information on the VR&E program can be found at <https://cmas.utsa.edu/vrande/>.

3. The Hazlewood Act

The Hazlewood Act is a state benefit that provides qualified veterans, spouses, and dependent children with up to 150 hours of tuition exemption, including most fee charges, at public institutions of higher education in Texas. Information on applying for the Hazlewood Act can be found at <https://cmas.utsa.edu/hazlewood/>.

4. General Financial Aid

Although students may receive VA education benefits or the Hazlewood Act, everyone is encouraged to fill out a FAFSA. FAFSA information is often used to determine eligibility for scholarships and used to determine eligibility for certain types of emergency aid. In many cases additional aid available through submitting a FAFSA can supplement military education benefits. Note scholarships that are “tuition specific” may impact military education benefits. Information on applying can be found at <https://onestop.utsa.edu/financialaid/apply/fafsa/>.

Resources

1. CMAS Scholarships

The Center for Military Affiliated Students offers many scholarships that may be used in conjunction with federal or state funding or to help bridge the gap when funds are no longer available. Scholarship categories include the Veteran Scholarship, the VMA Student Worker Scholarship, the Guard and Reserve Scholarship, and the Military Affiliated Family Scholarship. Information on CMAS scholarships can be found at <https://cmas.utsa.edu/resources/>. The UTSA Scholarship Hub can be found at <https://utsa.academicworks.com/>.

2. MAC

Veteran and military affiliated students interested in joining a military related student organization may be interested in the Military Affiliated Collaborative, MAC https://rowdylink.utsa.edu/organization/mac_utsa. The purpose of the MAC is to bring students together who are or have been military affiliated including veterans and family members. As an organization they provide support, mentorship, advocacy, and transitional assistance through events programs, and fellowship.

IX: Resources

1. Graduate Cohort

The Department of History encourages a collaborative, friendly learning environment. Students in the program can help one another refine ideas, suggest readings, and provide hints to sources/archives. Along with academic and intellectual interchange, fellow students will also become a source of moral support. Graduate school can be stressful when balancing the demands of school, work, and family. Talking to peers can be a great way to gain fresh perspectives and to solve various problems. The departmental HISTORY CLUB welcomes graduate students and undergraduates.

2. Phi Alpha Theta

The Department of History has an active chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (PAT), the history honor society. The chapter sponsors a variety of events including movie nights, trips to local historical sights, etc. The national and regional PAT association hosts various conferences for student research presentations.

Phi Alpha Theta, Alpha Theta Iota chapter has an open membership. Anyone interested in attending meetings and events is welcome; however, only those members accepted into the Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society may elect officers of, or hold office in the Alpha Theta Iota chapter. Graduate students must have completed at least one-third of the residence requirements for their Master's Degree. The student must have at least a 3.5 GPA in all graduate classes.

3. Faculty: Mentoring and Professional Development

Each student entering the program is assigned a faculty advisor, usually on the basis of declared interests in the application. The advisor can serve as a wonderful resource regarding secondary readings, research topics, and other general advice regarding the student's program of studies. Oftentimes, faculty advisors also can help students with professional development in the areas of teaching, internships, and further graduate study. If you are interested in learning how to teach, you may want to ask a professor for permission to observe their class. Talk to a faculty advisor about tips on internships as they have professional contacts in their fields. Faculty advisors also have up to date information on academic conferences that might be suitable venues for students to present their work. They can also offer valuable suggestions regarding doctoral programs should that be your interest at some point.

4. Graduate School/Tomás Rivera Center/The Writing Center

Students admitted into the graduate program have excellent undergraduate records. However, the level of writing, researching, time-management, and reading skills advances to an entirely different level in the graduate program. Students may find that faculty members refer them to various workshops held by the graduate program, or to services offered by the Tomás Rivera Center. Faculty members sincerely want students to succeed academically, and students are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to polish their writing skills or develop their research abilities. The TRC has very specific programs geared towards graduate students at all stages, from new students to those completing a thesis. <http://utsa.edu/trcss/la/gsla.html>. In addition to formal workshops, the TRC also offers academic coaching, which is a one-on-one meeting focused on meeting a student's specific academic needs.

The Writing Center helps students with various elements of drafting a paper or working with various writing or grammar challenges. <http://www.utsa.edu/twc/>. Unlike the TRC program, they can provide more immediate assistance than the formally scheduled writing workshops. Students who need short-term help with brainstorming or proofreading a paper may find the Writing Center helpful, while those who want to work more intensively on a variety of academic skills may find the TRC beneficial.

The Graduate School also offers a variety of activities and workshops. Take advantage of career building opportunities offered by the university—these are an integral part of becoming a professional historian. <http://graduateschool.utsa.edu/current-students/graduate-student-success-events>