

History

The Department of History offers the **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History**. The department specializes in American political culture; the ideas, culture and society of Central Europe; early modern Europe; East Asia; international urban history; religion in the medieval Mediterranean world; and slavery and freedom in national and transnational contexts in 17th- through 19th-century America. These core fields draw on the expertise of substantial segments of the faculty and provide significant opportunities for innovative graduate study that bridges conventional historical fields and fosters interdisciplinary research. The department also offers any historical specialization covered by a tenured faculty member.

The graduate program admits only a small number of graduate students each year to promote a close working relationship between students and faculty. We invite applications from mature and self-directed students with well-defined research interests. Our seminars are small and flexible, and we encourage students to develop creative, self-tailored programs of doctoral study. The Department of History funds most doctoral candidates for six years at highly competitive levels and is committed to providing additional financial resources to support advanced research.

Our graduates are accomplished professionals in academia, private high schools, nonprofits, business and the public sector.

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PhD, Stanford University

Degree Requirements

PhD in History

Requirements and Academic Assessment

Doctoral candidates ordinarily spend two to three full academic years in residence. Before the dissertation defense takes place, doctoral candidates must have completed 72 units of graduate credit. Over the course of their doctoral program, graduate students may not register for more than 72 units of credit without special consideration. Of the 72 required units, no more than 24 units may be transferred from previous graduate work elsewhere.

Course Offerings

Literature of History (History 5471), which is offered during the fall semester on an annual or biannual basis, serves as an introduction to the graduate study of history and is required for all first-year students. In addition, students must complete Writing Historical Proposals and Prospectuses (History 5470), which is offered every other spring semester and is usually taken during the second or third year.

Pro-seminars are devoted to intensive reading and critical discussion, largely of secondary literature. A pro-seminar and research seminar may be linked as a sequence, exposing the student to the literature regarding a historical field, period, or problem before requiring a research paper in that area. These experiences help students to develop a broad understanding of current problems in the fields to be covered in the qualifying examination.

Research seminars are devoted to the writing of a major paper in a particular historical field or on a particular period or topic. They train the student in the analysis of particular historical problems, in research techniques, and in writing, which are the nuts and bolts of later work on a dissertation.

In some fields, students frequently enroll in tutorials (e.g., L22 610 Readings in East Asian History or L22 613 Readings in African History). In tutorials, between one and four students work closely with a tenured faculty member (i.e., an associate professor or professor).

Graduate students may also occasionally enroll in undergraduate courses to acquire a broader mastery of a specific field or topic. If they do so, they must arrange extra course work with the instructor to qualify for full graduate credit. Undergraduate courses open to graduate enrollment will have a corresponding course number at the 500/5000 level to enable students to enroll for graduate credit.

Grades

The performance of students in Arts & Sciences is marked by the grades A, B, C (Conditional) and F. The grade of C indicates unsatisfactory work and will be awarded academic credit only if matched by an equivalent number of units graded A. Plus or minus grades may be given, except for grades of B- or C+. Some courses may be graded S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory).

Graduate students should expect to earn a grade of A or A- as a mark of good progress through the program. Although a grade of B+ or B will qualify a student for full credit, these grades should be viewed as a warning that the student has not sufficiently demonstrated a full mastery of the course material at the doctoral level. More than one or two grades at this level carry the risk of negatively affecting a student's chances on the academic job market.

Mentored Teaching Experiences

As part of their graduate training, students — with the exception of Olin-Chancellor's Fellows and McDonnell International Scholars — will complete six semesters of Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs). At least four semesters of those MTEs will be in history courses. Olin-Chancellor's Fellows and McDonnell International Scholars will complete four semesters of MTEs, at least two of which will be in history courses.

Students enroll for MTEs through registration in LGS 600. In addition, students simultaneously enroll in a 2-unit advanced reading course in a field relating to the primary topic of the MTE and in a 2-unit Teaching in History course (History 511 or History 512). As part of the department's commitment to support a diversity of career outcomes from our doctoral program, students may fulfill one Mentored Experience requirement with a Mentored Professional Experience.

Annual Letters of Review and the Second-Year Review

The Department of History uses annual letters of review and the second-year review to keep students informed about the department's expectations of their progress and to identify any problems. At the end of each academic year (except the second year), students receive annual letters of review based on the observations of all faculty members with whom they have worked during the academic year, whether in a class, in a directed readings course, or in a Mentored Teaching Experience. The letters will identify any areas in which the student needs to improve and will provide clear steps for addressing any concerns. In January of the second year, students receive a second-year review letter. The department uses the second-year review to identify students who are not performing at a satisfactory level. In consultation with the student's primary advisor, the department then sets goals for that student to meet by the end of the second semester of the second year. If these goals are not met, the student will not be allowed to proceed to the PhD qualifying examinations; instead, the student will be offered an opportunity to secure an AM degree before leaving the PhD program.

In such cases, requirements for the AM degree are as follows:

- Students must satisfactorily complete a minimum of 36 units of credit. The Department of History does not require an AM thesis. Therefore, none of the required 36 units will be awarded for thesis research.
- Students must successfully complete the course Literature of History (History 5471).

- Students must develop expertise in two fields of historical study: one primary field and one secondary field.
- Students must pass an oral examination in these two fields of history.

Qualifying Examinations

To advance to PhD candidacy, in addition to completing the necessary course work, students must meet the following requirements:

1. The qualifying examination, which entails the following three requirements:
 - a. Successful completion of the qualifying examination, which consists of a written component and an oral component (see below)
 - b. Two research papers that meet the approval of the committee (see below)
 - c. Evidence acceptable to the committee of competence in foreign language(s) or other skills relevant to the proposed research
2. The dissertation prospectus (see below)

These two basic requirements may be met in any order at the discretion of the student's primary advisor. In consultation with the primary advisor, the student may either take the qualifying examination (in addition to completing the required research papers and proving language competency) before submitting the dissertation prospectus or vice versa. Please note that the examining committee and the dissertation committee will not necessarily consist of the same faculty members; however, the student's primary advisor will serve on both committees.

The qualifying examination evaluates the student's competence in three fields of history or in two fields of history and one other discipline or program. The examining committee also assesses the student's readiness to undertake independent research for the dissertation, as indicated by the student's two research papers. The qualifying examination takes place during the second or third year and no later than June 30 of the third year.

Based on the review of the student's performance on the qualifying examination, the committee will declare whether, in their judgment, the student is qualified to proceed to PhD candidacy or if further procedures are required. These additional procedures may take the form of written or oral examinations in one or more of the three fields, further written work prepared to the committee's specifications, or further courses of study. Subsequent meetings may be required to evaluate such work. The qualification process, including any post-examination procedures, must be completed before classes begin the following fall term (i.e., the student's fourth year of graduate work).

Examiners do not formally grade performance on the qualifying examination except to indicate passage or failure. Passing constitutes qualification for the master's degree as a step toward the doctoral degree. A student who fails to qualify for dissertation research may nevertheless be recommended for a terminal master's degree.

Languages and Quantitative Skills

Each graduate student's need for linguistic and quantitative skills is determined during their first semester in consultation with their advisor. This determination is subject to review by the Graduate Studies Committee. The student's examining committee will ascertain, by the time of the qualifying examination, if sufficient progress toward acquiring these skills has been made.

The minimum requirement is normally competence in the language of the documents or culture in which the student proposes to do dissertation research as well as competence either in one other language (other than English) or in the practice of a quantitative or other technical skill. Students normally demonstrate competency by successfully taking a particular course, by passing a translation examination, or by using foreign-language primary sources to write a research paper.

Dissertation Prospectus

The dissertation prospectus is a detailed statement describing the dissertation the student proposes to write. The dissertation should make an original contribution to historical scholarship.

Before choosing a subject, the student should consult the American Historical Association's list of theses in progress to avoid duplication. In roughly six to twelve pages, the prospectus should answer, as explicitly as possible, the following four questions:

1. *What are the major hypotheses or generalizations that the student expects to develop and test in the dissertation?* The prospectus should describe the historical phenomena (i.e., events, figures, situations, trends, or problems) to be explored. It should, however, look beyond mere narrative and description to the kinds of questions and potential answers the research itself will produce. In doing so, the prospectus should indicate the significance of the topic and hypotheses for the growth of historical knowledge. Since hypotheses are subject to the test of research, the prospectus may include tentative assertions that contradict as well as complement one another.
2. *What is the present status of relevant historical literature, and how will the proposed research contribute to ongoing debates in the field?* The answer will indicate how far the student has gone in thinking about the problem, demonstrate the student's familiarity with secondary materials, and attempt to situate the student's own investigation relative to other scholars in the field. A bibliography should be appended to the prospectus.
3. *What kinds of sources and data will the project involve, and what research procedures and techniques will be required?* The writer must have a conception of the resources needed, where they may be found, and how they can be tapped and analyzed. Unexpected data or documents are sure to turn up, but the researcher must know where to begin. Some indication is needed of the documents, archives, published primary materials, and oral histories that will be consulted.

4. *What are the specific limits to the research that will keep the dissertation within manageable scope and length?* Reasonable care must be taken to develop a practicable dissertation problem and research plan that can be brought to completion. The prospectus should include information about any completed research work, manuscript drafts, and a tentative schedule for the project.

Since research alters the character of any proposed dissertation, the student is not bound to carry out the exact program described in their prospectus. However, the student should be able to present a reasonable plan at this stage. Those students intending to apply for Fulbright scholarships or foundation grants for their fourth year of study should have the prospectus ready at the beginning of their third year.

Dissertation Prospectus Defense

The dissertation prospectus is defended before the Research Advisory Committee. The Research Advisory Committee consists of three faculty members, and the formation of the committee is a required milestone for program completion. The primary advisor (i.e., the faculty member supervising the dissertation) is the first reader and the chair of the committee. The student and the first reader select appropriate faculty members to serve as second and third readers on the student's dissertation advisory committee. At least two of the three must be drawn from history department faculty.

Proficiency in significant original research, which is a major requirement for the PhD, is demonstrated chiefly in the dissertation. Students are encouraged to look beyond the dissertation to its publication.

Title, Scope, and Procedure

After passing the qualifying examination, the candidate files two copies of the dissertation prospectus (revised, if necessary) with the department and submits the Title, Scope, and Procedure Form to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The student should also register the thesis in progress with the American Historical Association. Students may file the Title, Scope, and Procedure Form as soon as the research advisory committee has signed it. The Title, Scope, and Procedure Form must be filed before the start of the fifth year of graduate study.

Dissertation Defense

Prior to submitting the final dissertation to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, the student must successfully defend their dissertation in an oral examination before a committee approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Committee approval. The examining committee consists of at least five members who normally meet three independent criteria:

- Three of the five members (or a similar proportion of a larger committee) must be full-time Washington University faculty members or, for programs offered by Washington University-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University-affiliated partner institution who are authorized to supervise PhD

students and who have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study. One of these three members must be the PhD student's primary thesis advisor, and one may be a member of the emeritus faculty.

- All other committee members must be active in research/scholarship and have appropriate expertise in the proposed field of study whether at Washington University, at another university, in government or in industry.
- At least one of the five members must bring expertise from outside of the student's field of study to the committee, as judged by the relevant school's graduate program oversight body.

All committees must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, or their designee. To have their committee approved, students must fill out the Dissertation Defense Committee Form. This form must be signed by the department's director of graduate studies (DGS). The DGS or a department staff member will submit it to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. Only after this step has been completed should the defense be scheduled.

After the committee has been approved and at least 15 days before the defense, students must send a copy of their curriculum vitae and the time, date, and location of the defense to the DGS and the department administrator. The DGS or department administrator will submit the Defense Notification to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

Procedure. Attendance by a minimum of four members of the Dissertation Defense Committee, including the committee chair and an outside member, is required for the defense to take place. This provision is designed to permit the defense to proceed in case of a situation that unexpectedly prevents one of the five members from attending. Students should not plan in advance to have only four members in attendance; if one of those four cannot attend, the defense must be rescheduled. Note that the absence of all outside members or of the committee chair would necessitate rescheduling of the defense.

Submission of the Dissertation

Students who defend their dissertations successfully have not yet completed their PhD requirements. They finish earning the degree only when their dissertation submission has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences. The exact dates for the deadline to submit the dissertation to the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, are set yearly.

Academic Probation and Dismissal

The Department of History closely follows the guidelines of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, as described in the Policy on Probation and Dismissal for Academic Reasons.

All students in the PhD program are expected to satisfy the academic performance requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, which can be found in the General Requirements section of the Graduate Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

Additional History Department Requirements and Explanations

A full-time graduate student is not allowed more than one incomplete per semester, and that incomplete must be removed by the end of the following semester. Within this requirement, faculty and students may wish to enter into contracts specifying conditions for the resolution of the incomplete.

To remain in good standing, a student should take the qualifying examinations by the first semester of their fourth year, at the very latest.

The Department of History's Graduate Studies Committee manages all departmental decisions regarding placement on probation, removal from probation, recommendations for dismissal after a probationary period, and recommendations for immediate dismissal due to extreme underperformance. The Graduate Studies Committee consists of the Director of Graduate Studies and three or four additional Department of History faculty members appointed by the department chair at the beginning of each academic year.

Otherwise, there are no additional requirements beyond those of the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

These guidelines will remain posted on the Department of History website (<https://history.wustl.edu/graduate-requirements-grades/>), and hard copies will be distributed at the annual Department of History orientation for new PhD students, which is held in August each year.