



Master of Arts in History **What you need to know is...**

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Terminology & Select Policies

Student Status

1. **Post baccalaureate - Classified**
Refers to students working on a Credential or Certificate objective only.
2. **Graduate Student – Conditionally Classified**
Refers to any student who admitted to a specific degree objective or may have deficiencies in his/her academic background; relates to the first, and often the second semester, of graduate level study.
3. **Graduate Student – Classified**
Arguably, the most important stage of your graduate study at the university. It occurs only when you have an approved STUDY PLAN on file with the graduate advisor of your chosen program and with the Office of Graduate Studies. You obtain and develop the Study Plan with the Graduate Program advisor of your field of study.

Study Plan Elements

1. You are required to meet with your graduate advisor when you are approaching or have completed 12 units of coursework to create your official Study Plan.
2. A maximum of only 9 units of 400-500 level course work completed since the BA/BS degree may be counted toward the Study Plan prior to the plan's approval.
3. Graduate students must complete a minimum of 21 units "in residence" at Cal State Fullerton. Classes taken as an Extension, Adjunct, or Open University do not count toward this residency.

General Policies and Standards

1. Time limit -- Complete all requirements within FIVE years (10 consecutive semesters).
2. Residence Requirement – Complete minimum of 21 units enrolled in regular sessions; classes completed as Extension, Adjunct, or Open University through Extended Education enrollment do not count toward this residency requirement.
3. Graduate Writing Requirement – All master's degree programs require the completion of a graduate-level writing requirement. For our program, HIST 501 covers this requirement.
4. Maintain Continuous Enrollment – *See page 4 for details.*
5. Leave of absence – Approval by the Graduate Studies Office required. Such requests can only be submitted after completion of six units. May be granted for two consecutive semesters with substantive documentation as well as department and university approval.
6. Minimum Grade Point Average – Maintain a GPA of at least 3.0 in all 400 and 500 level units attempted and all required course on the study Plan.
7. Repeating Study Plan Courses – A Study Plan course may be repeated only once. If a course is repeated, both grades are included when computing the student's Study Plan and cumulative CSUF grade-point average.
8. Probation and Disqualification – Probation occurs when either the cumulative GPA or Study Plan GPA falls below 3.0 or for “administrative-academic reasons.” Disqualification results after three consecutive semesters of probationary status.

Transfer or Extension Units

No more than nine units taken in extension or transferred from another college or university allowed. The student must seek approval from their Graduate Advisor before taking courses in extension. For information on the applicability of such course work, speak with an advisor or see the University Catalog.

Inapplicable Courses

Courses numbered 100 to 399 cannot be credited toward a master's degree. Any 400 level course which is not identified as “eligible for Graduate Credit” as defined in the current university catalog (online) cannot be credited toward a master's degree.

Minimum Full-Time Load

Twelve units of coursework per semester or nine units of coursework, including six units of 500 level classes, per semester constitute a minimum full-time load for graduate students. If you receive financial aid, you are required to enroll in at least six units each semester.

Thesis vs. Project

A thesis is a systematic articulation of a significant problem.

A history project may take either of the two forms:

1. A translation of foreign historical sources into English where such sources have never been translated before. This type of project should include both a critical and interpretive introduction, which analyzes the historical significance of the document, and provide reference and explanatory notes wherever appropriate in both texts and introduction.
2. An edited collection of significant primary sources that have not been available before. This project should contain an introduction that critically evaluates the sources, placing them in a historical perspective, and provides a conceptual analytical framework. It shall also provide reference and explanatory notes in both text and introduction.

Quality of work accomplished is a major consideration in judging the acceptability of any thesis or project. The finished product should evidence originality, appropriate organization, clarity of purpose, critical analysis, and accuracy and completeness of documentation. Mere description, cataloging, compilation, or other superficial procedures are not adequate. Independent and critical thinking should characterize every thesis and project.

It is vital for graduate students to meet regularly with their designated Graduate Program Advisor, preferably at least once each semester.

Final Stages – From “Classified” to “Candidate”

1. The student must apply (and pay a fee) for a Graduation Check. Usual deadlines are mid-August for January graduation and mid-January for June/August graduation date that same year. Please refer to the Graduate Studies website.
2. Complete the Project, Thesis, or Comprehensive Exam(s). Specific completion and filing dates apply. Check with your departmental graduate advisor for thesis deadlines or refer to the Graduate Studies website.

For additional information, schedule an appointment with your advisor or contact the Office of Graduate Studies (CP-950). Also, consult the current semester’s Registration Guide for critical dates and the University Catalog (online) for major policies and procedures.

Additionally, the Office of Graduate Studies can be reached at (657) 278-2618 and their website can be found at www.fullerton.edu/graduate

Continuous Enrollment Policy and Procedures

General Policy Statement

In order to maintain quality and provide adequate supervision, graduate students are expected to maintain continuous enrollment until award of the degree. Maintaining continuous enrollment assures the student's right to complete the study plan as previously approved, according to the "Election of Curriculum Requirements" provision of Title 5. A student who does not need to enroll in any other coursework must register for Graduate Studies 700, which carries no credit and does not require attendance.

GRAD 700 Enrollments

Students who have completed all coursework on the study plan and are continuing to work on thesis, project, or comprehensive exam preparation have two options for registration:

1. GRAD 700 through regular registration. Students pay full fees and receive full student benefits (health center, study activities, etc.)
2. GRAD 700 through Extended Education. Students pay a reduced fee and receive no university benefits other than library privileges. Permission to enroll through Extended Education is monitored through the Graduate Studies office. Graduate Studies contacts eligible students via their campus email. Registration materials are provided online through the Graduate Studies office. Graduate program advisors receive a list of students enrolled in this special GRAD 700.

Qualifications for Enrollment in GRAD 700 Extended Education

These qualifications should be verified by the Graduate Studies office:

1. Applied for graduation.
2. Filed a request for change of graduation date if applied to graduate in an earlier semester.
3. Granted classified standing.
4. Enrolled in all units required for the degree and continuing work on thesis, project, or comprehensive exam preparation.
5. Completed the Graduate Writing Requirement.
6. Previously enrolled in 596 and 597 or 598 as applicable.
7. Not employed in a work-study program.
8. Not receiving financial aid or veteran's benefits.
9. Coursework completed within the 5-year time limit, or extension approved.
10. Any outdated coursework, beyond 7 years, is validated.
11. Enrolled previous semester (includes GS 700 Extended Education enrollment).
12. In good academic standing, i.e. not on probation.

The Graduate Studies office (CP-950) identifies and contacts students who are eligible to enroll in GRAD 700. If you believe you are eligible, contact their office directly at (657) 278-2618. Note that the Department of History advisors and graduate coordinator can provide guidance regarding this process but do not initiate enrollment in GRAD 700.

Comprehensive Exam Guidelines

Objectives of the Comprehensive Exams

Students who choose the Comprehensive Exam option must test out in two non-overlapping fields. Possible exam areas include U.S., European, Latin American, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and World History. With the consent of a graduate advisor and the examiner, students may construct a thematic field for examination. Thematic options need to be comparative across cultures or over two or more eras (for example, gender in Europe, 1400-1900 or gender in 19th century Europe and Latin America). M.A. candidates ideally will have had at least nine units of study in a “major” field, and six units in a “minor” field. Those who successfully complete the exams should:

1. Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the key events for the period under consideration.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the major historiographical interpretations in the field.
3. Demonstrate the ability to synthesize these same historiographical themes and offer a clear overall argument regarding the literature.

Preparing for the Exam

Students should consult closely with their examiner who will generate a reading list of no less than 25 and no more than 60 books that combine to offer thematic and chronological breadth. If the examiner has instructed the student in an American, European, or World History reading seminar, they may choose to have that class serve as a core for the reading list. As a general principle, no textbooks are allowed on the reading list. At least four substantive scholarly articles constitute the equivalent of one book.

Administration of the Exam

The examiner and the student should meet no later than the second week of the semester in which the student intends to take the exam. However, it is preferable that they meet the semester prior to the exam to allow ample preparation time for the student.

Exams are conducted at least three weeks prior to semester finals. Students who do not meet the criteria may be asked to postpone graduation until the following semester. This is intended to create uniformity in what has been an ad hoc procedure.

The Exam

The faculty administrator will determine the format and timing of the exam. Often, exams are taken at home over multiple days.

Grading

Exams receive a mark of pass or fail. The only exception is in cases where the student has changed from thesis to exam option. In this instance a letter grade is needed to assess the units of HIST 599 (Independent Study) that are generally used to replace previously recorded HIST 598 (Thesis) units.

If a completed exam is determined to be inadequate by the faculty readers, students will have the option to retake it. Details regarding exam retakes must be determined prior to the administration of each exam.

Guidelines for Writing an M.A. Thesis Proposal

Your proposal should be a coherent, carefully constructed road map for your thesis.

I. Forming a Committee

Each thesis committee will consist of at least three persons. As you progress in the program you should consider whom, exactly, you will want to serve on this panel. It is important that you choose someone with whom you can closely work to serve as the chair of your project. Once a faculty member has agreed to serve as the chair of your committee, you should then consult with him/her in order to identify appropriate committee members. You will then ask the particular faculty members if they will serve as readers for your thesis. If they answer yes, you can have them sign a simple form indicating their approval. You can obtain the forms either from the graduate secretary or the graduate advisor.

II. Schedule your Proposal Defense

Once you have established a committee, you will need to schedule a “proposal defense” with them. In this meeting, you will discuss the rationale for your historical approach. Your committee members will then offer advice/suggestions for constructing a well-researched, analytically sound, and coherent thesis. As a matter of courtesy, you should give the committee your proposal at least two weeks in advance of the defense date.

III. The Proposal

There are some general guidelines to producing a good proposal. The result should be a formal prospectus to distribute to your committee—double-spaced, 12 point font, with proper citations, and in paragraph form.

A. Establish the Historical Problem (about 1-2 pages)

In this section you will sketch the contours of the historical problem that you plan to research. What is the historical context of your topic? Who are the main actors, organizations, etc.? You are setting the background for your thesis.

B. Current State of Knowledge on the Topic (about 1-2 pages)

Here you will provide a brief historiographical overview of your topic. What are some of the key works and interpretations on your topic? What are the major debates among historians who have previously studied this issue? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature? Where does your work fit into this literature? Are you developing an entirely new thesis, revisiting an existing one, or filling a gap in the current historiography?

C. Methods and Sources (about 2-3 pages)

In this section you do two things: describe the primary sources you plan to use and establish your theoretical or methodological approach. In discussing primary sources, let the committee members know if you are using newspapers, memoirs, official documents, novels, speeches, etc. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each source?

In terms of methodologies and theoretical perspectives, what form of analysis do you plan to use? Is it cultural, social, or political history? Do you use an analysis based on gender, race, class, etc.? You should mention any scholars who have influenced your approach.

D. Chapter Outline (2-3 pages)

In this section be sure to list the title and/or subtitle for each chapter. In one paragraph per chapter, outline the content for each chapter. This section should include a rationale for the content of each chapter, explain the rationale for your organization (chronological, thematic, etc.), and discuss the key sources for each chapter.

Thesis Process

1. Submission of a draft of the thesis proposal to the advisor that meets the specifications in the General Guidelines.
2. Once the advisor determines the proposal adequate, he or she circulates the paper to the other members of the committee and schedules the defense for at least two weeks after the draft has been distributed.
3. Students are responsible for obtaining and completing the necessary paperwork for the defense of the proposal.
4. If necessary, submission of revised proposal to all committee members; committee members may reject a proposal that does not include the revisions agreed upon in the proposal discussion meeting.
5. Meeting with the Committee to discuss the proposal. After the discussion, the student should leave the room while the Committee debates the merits of the proposal and decides to approve, conditionally approve, or reject the proposal.
6. Students are strongly encouraged to share an early sample of their thesis, such as a chapter or the introduction, with the entire committee to allow for feedback useful in the remaining writing process.
7. Submission of the first thesis draft to the committee chair. The chair will decide whether the draft is ready for the entire committee's attention.
8. If necessary, revision of thesis draft, and submission to the committee chair and the committee.
9. Students are responsible for obtaining and completing the necessary paperwork for the defense of the thesis.
10. Thesis committee meeting with the entire committee. The committee may accept the thesis or ask for further revisions. The student will be asked to leave the room in this instance to allow committee members the freedom to discuss.
11. If necessary, submission of the revised thesis and a second thesis committee meeting. The committee may accept the thesis or declare the thesis incomplete.

Thesis Procedures and Regulations

The student must obtain a copy of THESIS PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS, well in advance of graduation. This may be obtained, along with all information regarding the thesis submission process, on the Graduate Studies Office website at <http://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/currentstudents/thesis.php>.

The thesis must conform in matters of style and format to the rules in THESIS PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS.

An abstract of no more than 150 words must accompany the thesis for publication in *Master's Abstracts*.

History Department Style Manual

The Chicago Manual of Style is the style manual approved by the History Department for the use in the M.A. Program.

Goals and Learning Outcomes

The following goals and student learning outcomes apply to students pursuing the M.A. in History:

Knowledge

- Demonstrate knowledge of historical facts, themes and ideas
- Summarize accurately and concisely other historians' arguments
- Understand the particular methodological and theoretical approaches of historical, as well as interdisciplinary scholarship

Effective Written and Oral Communications

- Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate historical knowledge and reasoning both orally and in writing
- Demonstrate the ability to comprehend, evaluate, analyze and synthesize information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including written sources, images, film and oral histories
- Demonstrate the ability to articulate respective critical observations
- Demonstrate the ability to adhere to professional conventions of historical writing, including rigorous documentation

Analysis, Evaluation, and Synthesis

- Differentiate between and properly identify the topic, purpose and thesis in a work of historical writing
- Differentiate between evidence and interpretation in a work of historical writing
- Differentiate within the context of a piece of historical writing between primary and secondary sources
- Critically analyze how those sources are used by historians to support their arguments
- Describe and evaluate the methodological approach employed in a piece of historical writing, as well as theoretical underpinnings
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of a piece of historical writing
- Contextualize historical writing both diachronically and synchronically

Pre-Professional Information

Students seeking career advice are encouraged to speak with their program advisor, any faculty member of their choice, or visit the university Career Center in LH-208. Additionally, students should actively participate in on-campus student organizations, attend academic conferences, and network with fellow students already pursuing careers.

Survival Tips from Those Who Know

Advice from alumni of our program

About People...

- Find people you can work with, there is nothing more valuable than another pair of eyes to read your work and offer commentary. Even if they are not privy to the subject matter you are writing on, a good editor can correct problems with flow, grammar, formatting, and argumentative structure.
- Find fellow students you can decompress with. Your experience is a shared one with your fellow graduate students, and over time you will feel pressure and stress about your research and your work. Building a cohort is a healthy and important part of the graduate program experience. Phi Alpha Theta, the History Student's Association, and Cultural and Public History Association are excellent opportunities to build your cohort, and there are countless other student groups available on campus, both academic and recreational.
- Be friendly, and eschew pointless rivalry or competition. The rising tide raises all ships here; don't treat this like a battleground, but rather a journey you take with your fellow grad students.
- Be nice to the department staff. Their work makes your life easier, so don't make theirs harder.
- Work with professors beyond signing up for their class. Internships and TA positions are excellent opportunities to build your skill set while developing a stronger working relationship with faculty.

About Perspective...

- Always have your post-graduate plan in mind. It doesn't need to be fully flushed out from the onset of the program, but as you progress it is important to think about what you will do with your degree. Today's CV will eventually become tomorrow's Resume, if you decide to transition out of academia.
- There is absolutely no shame in transitioning outside of the academic field. Far too many history students are of the mindset that an education in history must lead to history teaching. The skill set you build for yourself can be applied to different fields, so think creatively about your interests and the opportunities that you can seek out to use those skills in a different field.
- A very wise professor once told me: "If you can see yourself doing literally anything else, do not get a PhD." In spirit, this refers to the level of madness you must possess to pursue a Doctorate. I had to make a conscious decision to not pursue a PhD, although part of me wishes I had, I know that ultimately I could have pursued a career and a happy life without it. I don't regret my decision at all.

About Research...

- Find a subject you will not fall out of love with. Spend some time getting familiar with a subject before committing to it. If you pursue a Thesis or Project based track, you will need to keep up a certain amount of research and writing momentum. The worst thing that can happen is to spend several semesters working on a project that you end up hating. Ask your professors about Thesis track students who gave up mid-way through, it is sadly more common than you think.

- When researching, go off site to find sources. The Pollak Library is a great resource, and Inter Library Loan is a great way to access distant materials; but traveling to place your hands on primary source material should be a beautiful and rewarding experience. Your professors will also appreciate the leg work you put in.
- Find the professor who is an expert in your field of study, and get friendly with them. If there are none, find a professor to get excited about your research and bring them along for the ride.
- Develop your public speaking and interpersonal communication skills. Being able to write well about your research is expected, being able to speak confidently about it is a slightly different skill set, but an important one none the less.

Things to Do...

- Find the place where you work the best. Is it an empty room in the library? Is it on your couch with music or mindless TV in the background? Is it at a cafe or bar? And does it change over time? Get familiar with your working habits, and understand what makes you productive vs. unproductive. For me, I wrote best at the kitchen table of the house I was renting a room at. I wrote 90% of my MA Thesis in the same chair, on the same corner of the kitchen table. Sometimes with company, sometimes alone.
- Set deadlines for yourself, and make them stricter than the ones in the classroom. Every research paper, project, or routine assignment has a due date, treat these dates as sacred, and always have a completed draft ready before the due date. Learn to prioritize as well, you'll need to during mid-terms and finals. Fortunately not all classes issue their big assessments at the exact same time, so learn to use the schedule to your advantage when planning time to study or work.
- Read the syllabus the day you get it. Then read it again. Then put it as the first item in the folder you've dedicated to that class. And don't, DON'T ask a question that is answered in the syllabus.

Life in General...

- Always have the sense that you can fail. Your success is not guaranteed at any point in this program. Just don't let a healthy fear develop into a crippling paranoia. To put it more generally, find your own personal motivations to succeed, whether its fear of failure, commitment to excellence, and/or desiring a sense of accomplishment.
- With all of the work involved with the grad program, it may seem difficult to build a healthy work/life balance but you should find time to relax and catch your breath every so often. Academia can wear heavily on our mental health and our sense of self-worth, I've seen it impact my fellow colleagues in many different ways, and often times the worse of it can be painful to experience. Be aware of how your state of mind is being impacted by your time here, and know when to pull back for your own sake.
- Making friends and finding mentors can help improve your mental stamina, and there are resources for mental health available on campus. Be good to yourself, and be there for others.