

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

HISTORY GRADUATE PROGRAM

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Spring 2017

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

- A. This Graduate Policy and Procedures Handbook is a supplement to the University Catalogue and Graduate College Handbook. Both should be consulted for University graduate program regulations.
- B. Mission Statement: The History Graduate Program offers programs leading to either a Master of Arts (MA) degree in History, or a Master of Arts/Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) degree with a concentration in History, and also provides a minor field for other Graduate programs supported by the university. The purpose of the History Masters Program is three-fold: to serve those students seeking to improve their knowledge of the discipline; to provide an introduction to graduate work in History for students studying for terminal degrees; and to provide a means for students desiring to study history as an avocation. The program offers students an opportunity to learn and understand the materials, methods, and nature of the discipline.

II. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

- A. The History Graduate Program offers both an MA degree and an MAIS degree. With both degrees students may choose either a thesis or non-thesis option.
- B. The course requirements for these degrees are as follows:
 - 1. MA History with thesis: 3 hours HIST Historiography and Methods 6300
 - a) 3 hours HIST Thesis I 7300
 - b) 3 hours HIST Thesis II 7301
 - c) 6 graduate hours outside history field
 - d) 21 hours graduate history electives
 - 2. MA History without thesis: 3 hours HIST Historiography and Methods 6300
 - a) 6 graduate hours outside history field
 - b) 27 hours graduate history electives
 - 3. MAIS with thesis: 3 hours HIST Historiography and Methods 6300
 - a) 3 hours HIST Thesis I 7300
 - b) 3 hours HIST Thesis II 7301
 - c) 9 graduate hours field #1
 - d) 9 graduate hours field #2
 - e) 9 hours graduate history electives
 - 4. MAIS without thesis: 3 hours HIST 6300 Historiography and Methods
 - a) 9 graduate hours field #1
 - b) 9 graduate hours field #2
 - c) 15 hours graduate history electives

III. ADMISSION

- A. Admission to the program is based on the standards established by the Department of History, in addition to those of the Graduate College. The requirements for clear admission are as follows:
 - 1. At least 9 advanced hours of undergraduate history

2. An undergraduate overall GPA of 3.0 or higher
3. An academic writing sample
4. 2 letters of recommendation
5. A letter of intent

B. For students with a GPA lower than a 3.0 who are seeking conditional admission, a GRE score is required in addition to the above items.

IV. ADMINISTRATION

- A. The History Graduate Program is primarily administered by the Department Graduate Program Coordinator and the Department's Graduate Committee
- B. The Program Coordinator must be a tenured faculty member and is selected by the department chair, in accordance with university guidelines. Their primary duties include advising all graduate students, recruitment of new students, reviewing applications materials, chairing the department graduate committee, coordinating the graduate schedule, filing degree plans, and hiring Graduate Assistants.
- C. The Graduate Committee is assembled by the department chair for the purposes of aiding the coordinator. Those jobs include screening conditional applicants, approving Graduate Assistantships, program assessment, approving policy, and helping with any other related issues.

V. COURSES:

- A. The Department schedules a majority of its graduate classes in the evening (at 7:10 PM), in order to accommodate part-time students.
- B. Students may repeat course numbers, but can only take HIST 5395 twice. In order to repeat 5000 and 6000 level courses, the topic of the course must be different from previous credit earning attempts.
 1. It is recommended that all students take at least one 6000 level research seminar in addition to HIST 6300.
- C. Students receive credit toward their graduate degree only from graduate courses, those with 5000, 6000, or 7000 numbers.
 1. 5000-level courses are graduate readings classes. These classes are designed to provide the student with a firm grasp of the major works of historical literature in the field the class covers. While the structure of these readings courses may vary from instructor to instructor, they generally require extensive readings and both oral and written reports and group discussions. 5000-level courses may be taught in conjunction with advanced undergraduate courses. No more than 6 hours of 5000-level coursework may be taken in classes that are taught in conjunction with an advanced undergraduate course. See the History Department website for more information on courses.
 2. 6000-level courses are graduate seminars. These courses stress research and writing.
- D. The primary requirement of a seminar is the preparation of a major research or historiographical paper, the presentation of that paper to the class, and the criticism of the work of other students in the seminar.

- E. 6000-level courses may not be taught in conjunction with undergraduate courses. Undergraduate students may not enroll in 6000-level seminars. See the Course Catalogue for more information on courses.
- F. 7000-level courses are "thesis preparation" classes specifically designed for independent preparation of the thesis project under the guidance of an advisor.

VI. GRADUATE FACULTY

- A. Qualifications: All tenured and tenure track members of the faculty are permitted to oversee examinations, chair and serve on thesis committees, and teach graduate courses.
 - 1. Special Graduate Faculty Status: The following are the minimal requirements for special graduate faculty membership.
 - a) The candidate shall hold the appropriate graduate degree as specified by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and any national accrediting body of the discipline.
 - b) The candidate shall show evidence of or potential for successful graduate-level teaching.
 - c) The candidate shall show evidence of successful professional performance, activity, production or service.
 - d) The candidate shall meet any additional, approved requirements established by his or her department.
 - e) A written statement by the Department Chair explaining the credentials of the applicant for special membership must be attached to the Application for Graduate Faculty Status.
- B. Procedure for Appointment to Graduate Faculty Status
 - 1. Special status applicants, who are often selected from terminal degree holding lecturers, will submit their application directly to the graduate committee for approval. This status is good for one year.
 - 2. Thesis committee members from outside the university will follow the procedures outlined in the Graduate College Handbook.

VII. MEETINGS

- A. Normally, the Department Graduate Coordinator calls meetings of the Graduate Faculty Committee
- B. The Chair of the Department may call a meeting of the Graduate Faculty Committee in the absence of the Program Coordinator or for extraordinary reasons
- C. A majority of the graduate faculty may call a meeting of the Graduate Studies Faculty

VIII. RESERVATION OF WORK BY UNDERGRADUATE FOR GRADUATE CREDIT

- A. As allowed by the University's Catalogue, undergraduates may enroll in History graduate classes during their last semester as an undergraduate when

they are no more than 12 credit hours away from terminating their degree. The History Graduate Program places the following qualifications on this privilege:

1. Undergraduates may only enroll in 5000-level History graduate classes.
2. Undergraduates may not enroll in a 5000-level History graduate class that is being taught in conjunction with an undergraduate class.
3. Undergraduate enrollment in a History graduate class may not exceed one-fourth of the students enrolled in the class.
4. Undergraduates enrolling in graduate classes must have a 3.2 GPA in advanced History hours.

IX. GRADUATE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Graduate students should contact the Program Coordinator for advisement before they begin their first semester in the program to review class selection and discuss specific track (thesis or non-thesis) that the student will choose. In all semesters thereafter, it is recommended that students contact the Program Coordinator before registration to review their degree plan and receive information about upcoming classes.
- B. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with all of the requirements for the degree sought, that the proper forms have been submitted to and approved by Admissions and Records, that deadlines established by the Department and the University have been met, and that their records are kept up to date. Students are strongly encouraged to work closely with the Department Graduate Coordinator (Program Coordinator) to insure that they meet all requirements for continuing enrollment, and for graduation.
 1. Students entering the History Graduate Program need to decide which of the degree options they wish to pursue. Students must choose between a Master of Arts degree in History or a Master of Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) degree with a concentration in history. In both cases, students must also choose between thesis and non-thesis options. For most purposes, the M.A. degree is a stronger degree than the MAIS degree. The non-thesis options are designed for students whose interests are not oriented toward formal research. Neither the MAIS degree nor the non-thesis M.A. degree are recommended to students considering the possibility of Ph.D. work, or a law degree. As soon as the student decides upon a degree option, he or she must inform the Program Coordinator which of the degrees is being sought. A student may subsequently change degree options; again, the Program Coordinator must be informed of any changes. Students must make sure that they are familiar with all of the requirements for the degree they have chosen.
 2. To remain in good standing students must maintain a 3.0 GPA.

3. Graduate students, who do not maintain at least part-time enrollment, may be required to reapply to the graduate program. See Current Graduate Catalog website for more information.

X. ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDATE STATUS

- A. A student who has selected the thesis option of either the History MA or the MAIS degrees is considered a candidate for the chosen degree after successfully completing History 7300. See the History Department Website for more information.
- B. A student who has selected the non-thesis option of either the History MA or MAIS degrees is considered a candidate for the chosen degree after completing all required coursework. See the History Department Website for more information.
- C. Students at the candidate level should be aware that defenses and exams during the summer, while permissible, are dependent on the committee and readers availability. Faculty are not obligated to serve during the summer.

XI. GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

- A. Qualifications: Senior undergraduate and graduate students in history are eligible to apply for graduate assistantships. UTRGV is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Applicants must meet the Department's requirements for clear admissions. (See also website for yearly updates on requirements and the Graduate Catalog for GPA requirements).
- B. Students receiving a Graduate Assistantship must be enrolled in 9 hours.
- C. Preference will be given to history students first, then related fields, and if the situation arises positions remain open once qualified applicants in these fields have been hired, graduate students who have completed at least 9 hours of undergraduate history will be considered.
- D. Normally, a student is limited to five semesters as a GA. A sixth semester, or an extension, may be granted by the GSFC after new applicants but before probationary teaching assistants are considered.
- E. Application Procedures: Applicants for a GA position will submit the following to the Program Coordinator:
 1. A completed employment application form (available from the History Department website)
 2. A letter of application for the position, which should include a statement of purpose.
 3. A current undergraduate transcript, and (if applicable) a graduate transcript
- F. Review of Applicants:
 1. If there are more applications for assistantships than there are positions, students already employed as GAs, who are in good standing and have been awarded five or fewer semesters of funding will be given first right of refusal. If any remaining positions exist, the graduate committee will meet to evaluate applicants. History graduate students receive first consideration. All students must have

at least 9 hours of undergraduate history to be considered for a GA position.

G. Evaluation of Graduate Assistants

1. Graduate Assistants are evaluated each semester of appointment by the professor or instructor they are assigned to assist. The Program Coordinator will keep a record of GA work performance on file. The Program Coordinator is responsible for implementing a performance evaluation of GAs. GAs applying for reappointment must submit a letter of application, which should include a description of the student's academic progress in the previous year.

H. The department of history will not utilize GAs of any rank to teach as the instructor of record for any class.

I. Probationary GAs

1. In extraordinary circumstances, to fill a GA position, the Graduate Faculty Committee may recommend an applicant who does not have "clear admission" to the Department's graduate program.
2. While the graduate faculty may choose to rank an applicant who does not have "clear admission", it is under no obligation to do so, even if choosing to reject the application means a GA position will remain vacant for a semester.
3. If the applicant who does not have "clear admissions" does receive a GA position, then that student is considered a probationary GA. Probationary GAs may not be reappointed unless they have obtained "clear admission" status according to the Department's definition, and shown satisfactory progress toward the completion of their degree, by the end of their first semester. After their probationary semester, they must re-apply for a GA position, and compete normally with any other applicants.

J. Responsibilities

1. Graduate Assistants grade papers and deliver at least one presentation in introductory courses taught by a faculty member. Graduate Assistants will develop a full set of lecture notes for the course to which they are assigned. Appointment is for 20 hours a week and GAs should not have additional campus employment during the semester or year of appointment without the consent of the Program Coordinator and the Department Chair. All GAs should contact the Program Coordinator for a copy of "TA Bill of Rights and Responsibilities."
2. All graduate assistants are responsible for following University Handbook of Operating Procedure, and all university trainings related to their job including FERPA.

XII. THESES

- A. Purpose: A Masters' thesis should demonstrate both the student's familiarity with the appropriate secondary literature and the ability to utilize primary resources effectively. The student's research should be drawn together in a carefully structured, well-written thesis that makes a contribution to the

scholarly literature on the chosen topic. The length of the thesis may vary according to the nature of the topic, but should be approximately 100 pages. The Department requires that theses should adhere to The Chicago Manual of Style or the Turabian Handbook, and to the University's Guidelines for Masters Theses.

- B. Each semester the university offers training sessions on the formatting of thesis documents. Students should consult the graduate college website for dates and times.
- C. Selecting a Topic
 - a) Students should select a feasible, scholarly topic that is of interest to them, that they have the sources, ability, and skills to research; and that allows them to work with a qualified faculty advisor. Until students have selected a topic and a thesis advisor, the graduate coordinator serves as their interim advisor.
 - 2. After selecting a topic, the student needs to select a thesis advisor, who will help them build a committee of at least two additional members from the graduate faculty. The committee chair and the majority of the committee members must be History faculty. The student is responsible for approaching the chosen faculty and asking them to serve on the Committee.
 - 3. The student must present the committee with a thesis proposal before the writing of the thesis begins. Once the chair and the committee have reviewed and approved the proposal the student may proceed with the research and writing phase of the thesis.
- D. Once the student has chosen the committee and the committee members have agreed to serve, the student should formally notify the Program Coordinator of the thesis topic and the committee's composition. If there are any subsequent changes either with the topic or to the membership of the committee, the Program Coordinator should be promptly informed.
 - 1. The student will then submit the thesis committee form from the graduate college website with thesis advisor signature and the names of committee members.
- E. History 7300 and 7301
 - 1. Students working on a thesis must take History 7300 and 7301. These classes are "thesis preparation" classes specifically designed for thesis students. Only students who have completed at least 21 hours of coursework may sign up for thesis hours.
 - 2. Special permission from the graduate coordinator is required prior to registering for 7300 and 7301 to ensure progress to degree is being made. The Program Coordinator may refuse students the right to register if they are not making adequate progress to degree and keeping their thesis chair informed of work completed.
 - 3. Students may repeat 7300 and 7301 as necessary. Note that students must be enrolled at the university in the semester(s) in which they defend their theses, take their comprehensive examinations, and graduate.

4. If the student has not already done so, then during the course of the term in which the student takes 7300, the student needs to determine the thesis topic as well as the chair and members of the thesis committee. Additionally, all students enrolled in 7300 must submit to their thesis committee chair a formal thesis proposal. The Thesis Committee Chair must provide a copy of the thesis proposal to the Program Coordinator and committee members.
 - a) Once the student has successfully defended, the thesis committee chair will inform the Program Coordinator of the grade assigned, and this grade becomes the grade of record for 7300. No incompletes will be assigned for 7300.
5. When a student enrolls in 7301, only grades of “S” or “U” may be assigned until the thesis is complete, at which time a letter grade will be substituted. The chair of the committee will forward the grade to the Program Coordinator. Should a graduate student choose to switch to the non-thesis option after taking one or more sections of 7300/7301 they will not receive credit for the thesis classes toward their degree.
6. Students who register for thesis credit (History 7300 and 7301) must continue to register each Fall and Spring semester until the thesis is completed. Students who do not register for a semester may not again register for thesis credit without applying to the graduate college for readmission. Students may request a leave of absence for a semester or academic year. The request must be submitted to the Program Coordinator and then will be forwarded to the Graduate Office.

F. Thesis Defense

1. The semester before the student intends to defend the thesis, the student must schedule a defense date at least two weeks before graduation. The student will consult with his/her committee to determine date of the defense. The committee will then inform the Program Coordinator of the scheduled defense date.
2. When the student and the thesis committee chair feel that the thesis is ready for defense, the student should provide the other committee members with a final draft of the thesis. The student should provide committee members with the defense draft of the thesis one month before the scheduled defense date.
3. The student, in consultation with the thesis chair, is responsible for arranging a defense date at a time when all thesis committee members can be present, or available via skype or phone. The committee chair must be present for the defense.
4. When the student has arranged a defense time, they will post this information for the University community.
5. On the given defense date, the student will meet with the members of the thesis committee for an oral examination on the thesis, usually lasting from one to two hours. It is the committee's responsibility to insure that the thesis and the oral examination are of passing quality.

All members must agree that the thesis is defensible before the defense can be finalized.

6. After the committee has finished examining the student on the thesis, the committee will send the student and any observers from the room and then discuss the thesis and the examination, and retire for confidential deliberations. The Committee will decide whether to assign a grade and/or to ask for further revisions. When the committee has reached an agreement, it will inform the student, the Program Coordinator and the Department Chair. A majority of the members must agree that the defense and thesis has passed.
 7. If a student fails the oral defense and the committee has reason to believe the student can make the necessary revisions within a semester, the student may take one semester (while enrolled) to make the necessary corrections, and then redefend. If after two failed defenses, the student chooses to continue, they must switch to the exam track or terminate their attempts at the degree.
- G. Submitting the Thesis to the University
1. Once the student has made all requested revisions to the thesis, the student should follow the guidelines set by the Graduate Office regarding online submission of the final thesis.
 2. To graduate the student must pay all fees for binding the thesis copies, copywriting the thesis, microfilming the thesis, and for publication of the thesis abstract in Masters Abstracts.
 3. A student may have additional copies of the thesis bound for personal use, at additional cost.

XIII. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

- A. Picking Reading Fields
1. In the non-thesis option, the student will choose two reading areas and will be expected to take comprehensive examinations in both areas.
- B. The reading list for a reading area will be drawn up by the person designated to read the exam. Each reading list will consist of a minimum of 30 books. Only Full and Associate members of the Graduate Faculty may serve as examination readers.
- C. Picking an Examination Chair
1. The exam will be written, administered and graded by the faculty member who developed the reading list at the student's request.
 2. There will be two readers for each exam. The student will choose the first and the Program Coordinator will appoint second reader in consultation with the first reader. If there is disagreement, the Program Coordinator may arrange a conference with the committee to reach an agreement, or request a third reader. As explained below, the student may retake the exam only once.

D. The Examination

1. Once the student has completed the required coursework, the student, in consultation with his/her reader or examination chair, will schedule the comprehensive examinations. The scheduling of such examinations will be coordinated by the reader or examination chair and the graduate coordinator. It is the student's responsibility to sign up for comprehensive examinations.
2. Exams are taken on campus before the final two weeks of the semester. The exam should last between 4-6 hours. Students can decide with their examination faculty whether they will use a computer to type the exam or blue books to write it by hand. The first reader of the examinations will inform the Program Coordinator of the P/F outcome of the exam via email.
3. Students will take the first exam and may not take the second exam until they have passed the first exam. Students need to plan for examinations one semester prior to planning to take them.
4. The exams will receive a pass or fail from both readers. If student fails either exam, he/she may retake the exam. The student will only be allowed to retake the exams once. The retake of the exam should be in the semester following the failing score. If students do not pass both examinations after completing their second attempt, they will need to move to the thesis option as the way to attempt to complete their degree. A majority of readers must agree that the student has passed all three components.

E. Once the readers are satisfied that the student has passed the written portion of the exams, an oral defense will be scheduled. Students will defend their positions and answers to the readers. If the readers believe a student may be able to successfully pass a poorly answered question in an oral defense, a student may advance to the oral defense of exams, with permission of the readers.

XIV. General: It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with all the requirements for the degree sought. Graduate students should be familiar with the requirements listed both in the UTRGV Catalogue and in the Graduate Handbook. Students should work closely with the Program Coordinator to insure that they meet all of the requirements for graduation.

- A. Students must terminate their degree within the time limits set by the university. If the degree is not terminated in time, credit hours from the student's degree plan will begin to expire.
- B. All degree plans are available on the department website and the graduate college website. Students should track their progress in consultation with the Program Coordinator. Advisement should take place regularly.
- C. Once the student has completed 18 graduate hours he/she will set up an appointment with the Program Coordinator to draw up a formal degree plan declaring their degree track.

XV. Applying for Graduation

- A. No later than one semester prior to their intended graduation date, students should submit an Application for Degree form to the Graduate College. The deadlines for each semester are published in the UTRGV Graduate College Calendar. It is the student's responsibility to apply for graduation on time.
- B. Students must also pay a non-refundable fee at the same time the Application for Degree is submitted. Students may later "transfer" the graduation date if necessary, for an additional fee.

XVI. Evaluation and Revision of Procedures for Policy Review

- A. Every three years, the Graduate Faculty Committee will review the policy in its entirety.
- B. The Department Chair, the Program Coordinator, or two-thirds of the Department's graduate faculty may call for revisions to specific sections of the policy.
- C. After review by the Graduate Faculty Committee, the Graduate Faculty may revise these policies with a simple majority vote.
- D. After Graduate Faculty approval, the revised policy goes to Dean of Liberal Arts and the University Graduate Council for approval.