

Lamar University

**Department of
History**

Graduate Handbook

Last updated

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Introduction

This manual lists the requirements and guidelines for graduate study in history at Lamar University. It is designed as a department-specific supplement to the information contained in the graduate school catalog. All current and prospective graduate students must be familiar with the graduate catalog and with the requirements of the program in history. It is ultimately the student's responsibility to make sure that all necessary steps have been completed to ensure a timely graduation.

Mission

The history department uses the exploration of the past to provide students the intellectual tools to become informed, responsible citizens. With emphases on critical thinking and writing, the study of history prepares students for careers in education, the law, government, business, museums, archival preservation, and historical editing and publishing.

Programs

The history department offers two plans for the master's degree: the Thesis Option and the Non-Thesis Option. The 30-hour Thesis Option is strongly recommended for those who plan to continue graduate study beyond the master's degree. This program requires a reading knowledge of a foreign language. The 36-hour Non-Thesis Option is recommended for students whose interest is primarily in secondary school teaching. No foreign language is required for the Non-Thesis Option.

The history department also offers a fully online 18-hour graduate certificate, designed for (1) teachers who wish to teach Advanced Placement courses and (2) those already holding an M.A. degree in a field outside of history but who need 18 hours to add a second teaching field. Certificate courses are offered as 8-week online courses.

Admission Requirements

Applicants for the Master of Arts in History must meet all Graduate College entrance requirements.

The history department requires that all applicants have an overall undergraduate GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale and achieve scores of at least 153 on the verbal portion and at least a 3 on the analytical portion of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Applicants must also submit directly to the graduate advisor two letters of recommendation from those familiar with the applicant's academic work and a sample of the applicant's academic writing. A prospective student who already holds a master's degree or equivalent advanced degree is not required to retake the GRE.

Background Knowledge

Applicants for admission to the master's program are expected to be familiar with a basic body of historical knowledge and must have taken:

- A. One year survey of United States history (1301/1302). (6 hours)
- B. One course in historical research and writing (3390). (3 hours)
- C. Any one other upper-division (3000- or 4000-level) course. (3 hours)

Applicants who lack one or two courses *may* be admitted to the program with postbac status and begin taking graduate courses while completing those requirements. All deficiency courses should be taken at the earliest opportunity in a graduate student's academic career. Students may not gain full admission into the program or graduate until all deficiency courses have been completed with a grade no lower than a B.

Scholarships & Financial Aid

College

A College of Graduate Studies Scholarship of \$1000 annually is available to full-time graduate students. "Full-time" is defined as 9 hours of graduate work OR 1 thesis course. Students should familiarize themselves with the Graduate Studies Scholarship Policies form.

Departmental

The history department offers a number of modest scholarships for which graduate students are eligible. Graduate students are the preferred recipients of the Dr. Howell H. Gwin, Jr., Endowed Scholarship. Both graduate and undergraduate students are eligible for the Dr. Samuel L. Evans Memorial Scholarship in History, the Walter A. Sutton Memorial Scholarship, and the Peter Boyd Wells, Jr., Scholarship in History. For more information on these scholarships, please see the departmental website.

The Admissions Process

Prospective students should submit an application, found online at ApplyTexas.org. Admissions contacts the department to render a decision on the application. The department may accept a candidate for full admission or with postbac status. Postbac status is for those students who do not have the prerequisite coursework background in history; all other requirements for admission (satisfactory GRE scores, writing sample, and letters of recommendation) must be completed in advance to gain postbac status. Students with postbac status must complete all deficiency coursework requirements and may concurrently take no more than two graduate courses (6 credit hours) prior to full admission into the program. *Postbac status does not guarantee eventual full acceptance into the program*; full admission is contingent on the completion of all requirements as well as student performance in the classroom. No student with postbac status who earns

one or more grades of C or lower may be granted full admission into the M.A. program. For that reason, enrolled postbac students will not be advised or allowed to register for a second or subsequent semester until final grades for the current semester are posted. Postbac students granted full admission may apply as many as two graduate courses (6 credit hours) taken as postbacs toward graduation.

As a general rule, the College of Graduate Studies accepts no more than six hours of credit transferred in from another institution toward an M.A. at Lamar. In certain circumstances, with the approval of the history department chair, students may petition the graduate school to accept more than six transferred hours. In all cases, however, a majority of credit hours toward a Lamar M.A. in history must come from Lamar University. Consequently, students on the thesis track may transfer in no more than 12 credits; those on the non-thesis track no more than 15. Only courses in history may be transferred in toward an M.A. in history.

Application deadlines. Domestic students (U.S. citizens and permanent residents) must submit all application materials at least 30 days before Fall, Spring, or Summer registration. Deadlines for international students are April 15 for Fall semester, September 1 for Spring, and January 15 for Summer terms.

18-Hour Graduate Certificate and Non-Degree Seeking Students

Prospective graduate students who wish to complete coursework in history without seeking the full M.A. degree, including those who wish to pursue the 18-hour graduate certificate, must apply online at ApplyTexas.org. For the 18-hour graduate certificate and other non-degree seeking students, neither GRE scores, letters of recommendation, nor writing sample are required.

In the 18-hour graduate certificate program, grades of A, B, or C may count toward the certificate; however, 18-hour graduate certificate and other non-degree-seeking students who later decide to pursue the full M.A. degree may count all the courses in which they earned an A or a B toward their M.A., up to a maximum of 18 credit hours. For any C earned by an 18-hour graduate certificate or other non-degree seeking student to count toward the M.A. degree, the student must earn an A as a fully admitted graduate student to offset the C, since a minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for graduation.

Any 18-hour graduate certificate or other non-degree-seeking student who later decides to pursue the full M.A. degree may do so pending the completion of all the requirements listed above (coursework, GRE, letters, writing sample) for regular admission into the M.A. program.

Non-degree seeking students, not counting certificate students, may be accepted with postbac status and will retain postbac status throughout their coursework.

Academic Advisement

All graduate students should meet, phone, or email the graduate advisor during registration to discuss the progress they are making toward their degree and to determine the best courses to take. The graduate advisor will then submit the paperwork to secure from the Graduate School funding for full-time graduate students.

Degree Requirements

Thesis Option (30 hours). The Thesis Option is strongly recommended for those who plan to continue graduate study beyond the master's level. It requires completion of 24 semester hours of class work. A minimum of 12 hours must be taken in Seminar, Readings, or Directed Readings courses. The student may take 6 graduate hours (class or seminar) in a supporting (minor) field. Six additional hours credit will be given for completion of the thesis (HIST 5390 and HIST 5391).

Thesis students are also required to demonstrate a reading knowledge of one classical or modern foreign language. This requirement may be satisfied (1) by completing the 2312 course in a language; (2) by passing a nationally recognized standardized language proficiency test; or (3) by completing a reading project administered by faculty members in the history department. American Sign Language (ASL) does not satisfy the foreign language requirement, since it is not a language that aids in research.

Non-Thesis Option (36 hours). The Non-Thesis Option is intended to provide a strong foundation in a wide range of historical areas and periods for those who do not wish to pursue a higher degree. Non-thesis students are required to complete 36 hours in history. A minimum of 18 hours must be in Seminar, Readings, or Directed Readings courses. The student may take 6 graduate hours (class or seminar) in an approved minor field. After completing their class work, students must take a comprehensive written examination and complete an oral defense. A foreign language is not required for the non-thesis Master of Arts in History.

Graduate students admitted into the program may switch from the Thesis to Non-Thesis Option or from the Non-Thesis to the Thesis Option. To do so, the graduate advisor completes a G-15 form that the student must sign.

All course work applied toward a master's degree must be completed within a period of six years. This time limit applies to all work at the graduate level, including work transferred from another institution. Time spent in active military service is not included in the six-year limit. Because of Immigration & Naturalization Service regulations, a shorter period may apply to international students.

M.A. students who earned a B.A. or equivalent degree at Lamar may not take 5000-level courses that they took at the 4000-level as undergraduates.

Graduate Coursework in History

HIST 5300 Historiography

Mandatory course for all graduate students.

HIST 5390-5391 Thesis

Prerequisite: Approval of graduate advisor. Must complete both for required 6 credits.

Directed Readings. Individual agreement between an instructor and a graduate student to pursue a specific, detailed program of readings on a subject of mutual interest. Student and instructor meet regularly to discuss the material and its historiographic context and to explore additional avenues of inquiry. May be repeated for up to a maximum of six hours credit when the subject varies.

Readings. An intensive group study of a period or area in history, including its historiography. Class meetings include wide reading, oral and written reports, and group discussion. May be repeated for credit when topic varies.

Seminar. In-depth study of a specific area or person or historical period, featuring group discussion and reading. Results in a specialized formal paper of at least 20 pages including historiography. May be repeated for credit when topic varies.

Please see the history department website for a complete list of graduate course offerings.

Faculty expect graduate students to attend ALL class meetings, with exceptions made for only the most dire of circumstances. Absences will have an adverse affect on graduate student grades.

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 GPA on all courses that receive graduate credit. The only acceptable grades are A and B; a C is considered failing. A C may only count toward graduation if a student has an A to counterbalance it and restore the minimum 3.0 GPA required for graduation. *Any graduate student in history who earns any combination of three grades of C or lower will be automatically expelled from the program and prevented from registering for additional courses.*

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will result in prompt expulsion from the program.

The Path to Graduation

Admission to candidacy. Graduate students may not be admitted to candidacy if they (1) are on probation, (2) are suspended, (3) have not removed all undergraduate deficiencies, and/or (4) have not completed at least 12 hours of recommended graduate courses.

International students who are required to pass the Michigan Test to indicate English proficiency must do so before they can be admitted to candidacy.

The committee. A graduate student's committee typically consists of three members – a supervising professor as well as two other professors from the history department. Usually these professors are those from whom the student has taken the most classes. If the student has a minor field from outside the history department, one faculty member will represent that department on the committee, as either a third or optional fourth reader. Students should ask the faculty politely to serve on their committee. That committee will be responsible for guiding to completion the thesis for those students on the Thesis Option. For students on the Non-Thesis Option, the committee will create and evaluate a comprehensive exam for the student to pass in order to graduate.

Graduate students on the Thesis Option work closely with their supervising professor to complete a thesis, a work of original research based on primary sources and firmly grounded in the relevant scholarship, or historiography. Once a draft of the thesis is written to the satisfaction of the supervising professor, it goes to the second and third members of the committee for reading. Those professors will offer recommendations and suggestions to improve the thesis. After the student makes revisions, each member of the committee reads the thesis again. If revisions are satisfactory, each committee member indicates their approval to graduate director. During the student's final semester, as work on the thesis is nearing completion, he or she schedules with the graduate director an oral defense of the thesis. The student must successfully answer the questions of committee members in order to graduate. The three-person thesis committee must unanimously agree that a student has successfully completed and defended the thesis for the student to graduate.

Graduate students on the Non-Thesis Option take a comprehensive exam during their final semester in the program. It is the student's responsibility to contact each committee member early in the semester, if not before, for a reading list and/or list of possible questions that may appear on the exam. The usual procedure is for professors to supply three to six study questions for each course the student has had from that individual, then on the comprehensive exam give a choice of two out of three or one out of two questions. Each committee member's question(s) should take two hours to complete, for a total of a six-hour exam, and are answered in separate examination books or on a laptop computer. Committee members submit the questions to the graduate advisor, who sets the time and place for the student to take the exam. Either the committee chair or the graduate advisor administers the exam. After the exam is completed, the person who administered the exam delivers it to the committee members. Each committee member reads the entire exam and grades his or her portion. Students may pass, pass conditionally, or fail. A "conditional pass" requires a retake of at least one portion of the exam. For retakes, faculty reserve the right to ask the same or a different question from among those previously given the student. As a final step, students must meet with their committee to orally defend their exam. The three-person non-thesis committee must unanimously agree that a student has successfully completed and defended the comprehensive exam for the student to graduate.

Whether the graduate student pursues the Thesis or Non-Thesis Option, DegreeWorks is used to note the outcome of the oral and/or written exam.

Application for graduation. Graduate students must apply and pay for graduation by the first Monday in October or March or second Monday in June, for a December, May, or August graduation, respectively.

All graduate students should secure a copy of the graduate calendar that the Office of Graduate Studies makes available each semester.

Survey & exit interview. In the interest of self-assessment and program improvement, graduate students, in the final semester before graduation, after the completion of all program requirements, complete a brief survey regarding their graduate experiences and meet with one or more members of the faculty to discuss the program.

Progress Tracking Worksheets

Below are two unofficial worksheets, one for the Thesis Option and one for the Non-Thesis Option, that students and the graduate advisor may use to monitor student progress through the program and prevent any unpleasant surprises.

THESIS OPTION

STUDENT: _____ Date: _____

Deficiencies, if any	Date
_____ HIST 1301	_____
_____ HIST 1302	_____
_____ HIST 3390	_____
_____ HIST 3000/4000	_____

Coursework	Date
_____ HIST 5300 Historiography	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST or minor field 5____	_____
_____ HIST or minor field 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5390 Thesis	_____
_____ HIST 5391 Thesis	_____

Foreign language: 2312 exam

- Committee: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

NON-THESIS OPTION

STUDENT: _____ Date: _____

Deficiencies, if any	Date
_____ HIST 1301	_____
_____ HIST 1302	_____
_____ HIST 3390	_____
_____ HIST 3000/4000	_____

Coursework	Date
_____ HIST 5300 Historiography	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST 5____	_____
_____ HIST or minor field 5____	_____
_____ HIST or minor field 5____	_____

Committee: 1. _____

 2. _____

 3. _____