

History, PhD

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Degree Requirements

Doctoral Candidacy

To earn a PhD at Washington University, a student must complete all courses required by their department; maintain satisfactory academic progress; pass certain examinations; fulfill residence and Mentored Experience Requirements; write, defend, and submit a dissertation; and apply to graduate via Workday Student. For the details of doctoral degree general requirements in Arts & Sciences, including an explanation of Satisfactory Academic Progress, students should review the Doctoral Degree Academic Information page of the Arts & Sciences *Bulletin*.

Program Requirements

- **Total Units Required:** 72 graduate credits
- **Degree Length:** 6 years
 - **Note:** Students must be enrolled in 9 graduate credits each semester to retain full-time status. As students complete their coursework, if enrolled in fewer than 9 graduate credits, they must enroll in a specific Arts & Sciences graduate course that will show 0 units but does count as full-time status. Students should connect with their department to ensure proper enrollment prior to Add/Drop.
- **Grade Requirement:** A minimum grade of B is required for coursework to count toward the degree.

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

HISTORY 5473 Literature of History, 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 HISTORY 5472 Writing Historical Proposals and Prospectuses, 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., HISTORY 6100 Readings in East Asian History or HISTORY 6130 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 should only enroll in graduate-level courses. Undergraduate courses open to graduate enrollment will have a corresponding course number at the 5000 level to enable students to enroll for graduate credit.

Graduate students must be registered for 9 graduate credits for the semester. Students may enroll in undergraduate courses at the 3000 and 4000 levels; however, these courses will not apply to their graduate degree. If a 3000-/4000-level course is not offered at the 5000 level, the student must reach out to the academic unit that owns the course and see if this is an available option.

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 Pass/No Pass.

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 will complete five semesters of Mentored Teaching Experiences (MTEs). At least four semesters of those MTEs will be in history courses.

Students enroll for MTEs through registration in ASGS 8010. 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 5110 or HISTORY 5120). 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 MA degree before leaving the PhD program.

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

- Students must satisfactorily complete a minimum of 36 units of credit. The Department of History does not require an MA thesis. Therefore, none of the required 36 units will be awarded for thesis research.
- Students must successfully complete the course HISTORY 5473 Literature of History.
- 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 coursework, 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 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 involving Washington University-affiliated partners, full-time members of a Washington University-affiliated partner institution. All members must be authorized to supervise PhD students and 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 department/program and approved by the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences.

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 resolved within 120 days of the last day of the semester in which it was awarded. 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, and hard copies will be distributed at the annual Department of History orientation for new PhD students, which is held in August each year.

Qualifying Examinations

Progress toward the PhD is contingent upon the student passing examinations that are variously called *preliminary*, *qualifying*, *general*, *comprehensive*, or *major field exams*. The qualifying process varies according to the program. In some programs, it consists of a series of incremental, sequential, and cumulative exams over a considerable time. In others, the exams are held during a relatively short period of time. Exams may be replaced by one or more papers. The program, which determines the structure and schedule of the required examinations, is responsible for notifying the Office of Graduate Studies, Arts & Sciences, of the student's outcome, whether successful or unsuccessful.

Mentored Experience Requirements

Doctoral students at Washington University must complete a department-defined Mentored Experience. The Mentored Experience Requirement is a doctoral degree requirement that is notated on the student's transcript when complete. Each department has an established Mentored Experience Implementation Plan in which the number of units that a student must earn through Mentored Teaching Experience(s) and/or Mentored Professional Experience(s) is defined. The Mentored Experience Implementation Plans outline how doctoral students within the discipline will be mentored to achieve competencies in teaching at basic and advanced levels. Some departments may elect to include Mentored Professional Experiences as an avenue for completing some units of the Mentored Experience Requirement. Doctoral students will enroll in ASGS 8005, 8010, or 8015 Mentored Teaching Experience - Assistant in Instruction; ASGS 8020 Mentored Teaching Experience - Mentored Independent Teaching; or ASGS 8120 Mentored Professional Experience to signify their progression toward completing the overall Mentored Experience Requirement for the degree.