Graduate Study in History

**Degrees and Options**

The History Program in the Department of History and Social Sciences at Pittsburg State University offers a graduate program leading to the MASTER OF ARTS degree and supports the SPECIALIST IN EDUCATION degree.

Students interested in further information about the Master of Arts program in history should write or consult with the Graduate Program Director for History (Assoc. Prof. Jonathan Dresner; jdresner@pittstate.edu).

**Rationale**

History is a critical element in understanding human society at the global, regional or local level, as well as a keystone of an effective liberal education. The Masters Degree in History gives students an opportunity to go beyond the undergraduate level of study and develop an historical specialty as well as greater analytical skill and sophistication. The MA program serves three major purposes: enhancing the historical knowledge and abilities of secondary educators; preparing students for further graduate study in history or related fields; allowing post-graduate study of particular areas of interest for members of the community.

**Statement of Purpose**

The decision to seek an advanced degree in the History Program reflects an interest in and an appreciation for the historical past. The History Program's purpose is threefold: to prepare individuals well qualified to teach the subject of history; to provide students with research and investigative skills applicable to academic and professional situations; and to encourage the thoughtful and continuing study of history throughout the lifetime of the individual. The History Program is committed to excellence in the education of teachers and to completeness in the preparation of students for the many History-related career opportunities beyond teaching now open. The History Program further believes in the relevance of other disciplines to History and encourages work in those areas relating to the student’s historical interests.

There are a few absolute requirements for each degree path, but otherwise students have great freedom in terms of topics for study. Students should consider both breadth and depth when selecting courses: History covers an immense range of time and topics, but greater understanding comes with focus. It is possible for fulltime students to complete the necessary coursework for this degree in one calendar year (two regular semesters and a summer semester), though the program is flexible enough to permit students to make regular progress as their situation permits. Many courses are available online, though students who wish to pursue the degree mostly or entirely online may find the offerings limited, and coordination of Final Assessment will have to be done through the Program Director and your Advisor.

**Entry into the M.A. Program**
There is no prerequisite for beginning graduate study in history beyond completion of an undergraduate degree. An applicant who meets the Graduate School's requirements for admission and has earned a GPA of 3.0 (on a 4-point scale) or better over 24 semester hours of undergraduate history will be admitted fully and unconditionally to the program. An applicant who does not meet that condition will be admitted conditionally. If the student’s first 9 credit hours in graduate history classes results in a 3.33 or better, they will be admitted fully. Those who do not meet the GPA minima after 9 hours must take a qualifying examination to remain in the program: the qualifying examination will cover American and World history and will be graded by a committee of the department; if the committee deems the result satisfactory, that student will be fully admitted. If the committee determines the examination is not of passing quality, the student will be allowed one more opportunity to pass it. There is no appeal from the committee's decision on evaluating the results of such an examination.

At least 21 credit hours counted toward the M.A. in History at PSU must be taken from PSU History faculty or those admitted to Graduate Service status at PSU.

The History Program may allow transfer of up to 9 credit hours of graduate-level work taken at other institutions, provided they are graduate-degree granting and the courses are judged relevant by the Graduate Program Director. Courses taken prior to admission will be considered as part of the normal transfer process; after admission, students should consult with the Graduate Director and their advisor before taking courses elsewhere, to ensure that credits will transfer. **Graduate classes taken as a non-degree student at PSU may be counted toward the History M.A.: upon request the History Graduate Program Director in consultation with the Department Chair will review these courses for their relevance to the degree program outlined by the student.**

**Master of Arts**

There are two options available for the Master of Arts degree, all of which require a minimum of 15 semester hours of history courses numbered 800 and above. A maximum of 6 semester hours of approved courses below the 700 level may also be included in the degree program. Both options require successful completion of HIST 807 Historical Research and Historiography and at least one graduate seminar (HIST 813 or HIST 820). See the "Requirements of the Degree" section below for additional information.

**OPTION I: Thesis**
This option requires, in addition to the coursework outlined below, enrollment in HIST 890 Research and Thesis. The History Program strongly recommends a thesis for any student planning to go on for a Ph.D. degree as preparation for researching and writing a dissertation. **Option I requires 30 semester hours.**

**OPTION II: Problem**
This option is not available at this time.

**OPTION III: Seminar**
This option requires enrollment in and passing two graduate seminars in history, and in HIST 892 Final Assessment. This option involves three tracks to the degree. 1) Students may offer a substantial curricular project including annotated bibliography and presentation materials. 2) Students may present
two revised and substantially expanded seminar papers for evaluation. 3) Students may take a comprehensive examination over a broad historical field. **Option III requires 32 semester hours.**

### Requirements of the Degree

**Historical Research and Historiography** – 3 credits, offered in the Fall semester online.

**Seminar** – 3 to 6 credits, minimum. One seminar is required for Thesis students; two seminars are required for Option III. May be repeated as long as the subject matter varies.

**Electives** – 18 to 21 credits or more chosen from among the following:

- **History classes** numbered 500 and above, which may include readings classes and additional seminars

  Graduate students can count a maximum of 6 credits of 500-600 level coursework in their graduate program. Usually, 500 and 600 level courses are taken for graduate credit as 700-level History–Selected Subjects. In most cases additional work, in the form of a paper, additional book reviews, and the like, will be required beyond the undergraduate requirements in order to obtain the advanced credit. The section number (HIST 700-xx) should be found in the schedule of classes; if not, check with the Department Secretary. You must have at least 15 credit hours of 800-899 classes to graduate. Historiography, seminars, and readings classes are in this category.

  Readings courses (HIST 806 and HIST 820) require 5 books per credit hour, or the equivalent, assigned at the discretion of the instructor on a topic of special interest chosen by the student in consultation with faculty. Readings courses should not be used as a substitute for regularly offered classes. Note that students should consult with faculty and settle the topic and credits before signing up for readings classes: faculty are not obliged to offer these classes; they teach them as an overload.

- **Other Options:**
  - Internship – limited to two, unless under special circumstances (such as working on a thesis) another is approved in writing by the major professor and chairperson.
  - Class from another department specifically relevant to the student’s interest area – limited to one unless approved in writing by the major professor and Chair.

**Assessment:** 4-6 (Option I) or 2 (Option III) credits, to be chosen by the student from the four following tracks, as best suits the student’s focus. All students must successfully complete one of the assessment options to qualify for the M.A. degree. Final assessment projects will be ranked "High Pass," "Pass," or "Fail"; "High Pass" will appear on the transcript as an A; "Pass" will appear on the transcript as a B; "Fail" will appear on the transcript as an "F."

In the event of a failing grade on a final assessment, students may attempt to revise their work to make it acceptable and resubmit it (or, in the case of the Comprehensive Examination, schedule to retake it in a following semester), or they may attempt a different final assessment. In either case, the student should consult with their major advisor and Program Director, and may be required to complete additional
course work in addition to, or prior to, attempting Final Assessment again. In no case will a student be allowed to attempt Final Assessment more than three times; after three failures the student will be dismissed from the program.

**Thesis** – an extended treatment of a historical topic based on primary sources, amounting to at least 100 pages in most cases. The student will work with one member of the History faculty, who will serve as the chair of the Thesis Committee, to define the topic and the research materials necessary to complete it, to undertake that research and writing, to complete revisions in a timely fashion, and to schedule the Thesis Defense. The Thesis Committee shall consist of the supervising professor, one other member of the History faculty, and a professor from outside the History program with relevant expertise who can lend advice and propose revisions along with the other members of the Thesis Committee; the supervising professor may consult with, or recommend that the student consult with, the members of the Committee at any time. In the Defense, the Thesis Committee can explore both the substance of the thesis and its context in American and World history. Upon being approved by this committee, the thesis may require further revision, and when these changes have been approved by the chair of the Thesis Committee and the appropriate forms signed, the student shall be deemed to have passed this assessment requirement. Additional sessions of the Thesis Defense may be necessary to reach a satisfactory conclusion; the Thesis Committee’s decision is final. To give appropriate credit for this effort, students should enroll for 4-6 credits (consult with your advisor regarding the exact amount) in HIST 890 Research and Thesis. The Thesis Committee will assign the grade for this class based on the quality of the thesis.

**Two revised term papers** – the student shall substantially revise and expand two original term papers written for courses at PSU or at other accredited institutions which appear on the student’s transcript, including those done in connection with an internship session. Each revised paper should be near or above twice as long as the original paper. These revisions shall be carried out according to suggestions by the faculty member for whom the paper was originally written at PSU or the PSU faculty member whose area of expertise most naturally comprehends the topic. These papers will upon completion be evaluated by three professors from the History faculty, and the student would either be fully passed or asked to revise and resubmit one or both for a final decision. To receive appropriate credit for this effort, students should enroll in HIST 892-01, the 2-credit Final Assessment course, during their last semester. The evaluation committee will assign the grade for this class based on the quality of the revised term papers.

**Curriculum Project** – the student should prepare a semester-scale course (or equivalent) on an historical topic for secondary or post-secondary use, or carry out a substantial teaching-and-learning project emphasizing historical content knowledge and its mastery and application by the teacher in the classroom. The curricular project must include an annotated bibliography of relevant resources and scholarship, as well as specific classroom materials. These materials should demonstrate the student’s grasp of the material and an understanding of history pedagogy and they must represent a significant body of work by the student choosing this option. This project should be developed in close cooperation with one or more faculty members, and must have their approval before being submitted for evaluation by a panel of three professors (at least two from the History faculty; the third may be from History or another relevant department). The panel may pass the project, or pass conditional on minor revisions, or require that the student revise and resubmit. To receive appropriate credit for this effort, students should enroll in HIST 892-01, the 2-credit Final
Assessment course, during their last semester. The evaluation committee will assign the grade for this class based on the quality of these presentations.

**Comprehensive examination** – the student must take a four-hour essay examination over a broad field based on the focus of their coursework: e.g. American history to 1877, or from 1850 to the present; European history 1500-1815, or from 1789 to the present; Classical Western History; Pre-Modern or Modern Asia, etc. The scope of the test will be determined by the student's advisor and the Program Director. The Comprehensive Examinations will include questions on factual and interpretive material germane to the primary area of emphasis. The History Graduate Program Director, in consultation with other members of the History faculty, will prepare appropriate examinations and will have them graded as soon as possible after their completion. The Comprehensive Examinations will usually be scheduled for the last week in November, the last week in March, and the last week in June of each year. Special accommodations may be made in advance given sufficient notification, including use of a word processor or off-campus administration via another academic institution. The questions will be graded by a committee of three History faculty as high pass, pass, or fail; two members giving a failing grade to a student’s response to a question shall constitute failure on that question; and three-fourths of the questions must have passing marks for the examination to be an overall pass. To receive appropriate credit for this effort, students should enroll in HIST 892-01, the 2-credit Final Assessment course, during their last semester. The evaluation committee will assign the grade for this class based on the overall quality of the examination essays.

### Declaration of Candidacy and Assessment Option

After completing 12 hours towards the M.A. in history, all fully admitted graduate students must fill out and file with the Graduate School and History Program a Declaration of Candidacy, including a proposed schedule of completion, and an “Assessment Option Declaration” form indicating which of the assessment options you are working towards. You may change your mind at any time. This is only so that we can keep track of your progress and anticipate events (such as scheduling a Comprehensive Examination, for instance). If you are still listed as "conditionally admitted" after 12 hours, please consult the Program Director.

You and your advisor should complete a Candidacy form online through GUS. The purpose is to set out the classes you have taken and need to take to complete the M.A. You will be asked for your Option (I or III), your anticipated date of graduation (subject to revision), and coursework (already taken and/or future). Please ensure that the proper number of seminars for your Option, Final Assessment credits (4-6 credits of HIST 890 for Option I or 2 credits of HIST 892 for Option III), Historical Research and Historiography, and fifteen hours of 800-level classes are included. The Candidacy form is subject to revision and correction, and should not be regarded as a binding contract.

The History Program Secretary will have the "Assessment Option Declaration" form, which is filed with the Program. If you choose a project – thesis, revised term papers, or curricular – you should work out the topic and organization with the faculty member designated as your major professor. You will have to select a three-member committee for this – Thesis committees will include someone from another program; Curricular project committees may include outside faculty; other committees will be composed
entirely of History faculty – but you should develop this project with the major professor, who will advise you on the timing of consultation with other faculty.

**Pursuit of mastery without boundaries**

Though there are structural requirements that the History Program and Graduate School feel are essential to a coherent and effective plan of study, the PSU History MA is designed to be open to students with a wide variety of interests and purposes. PSU History faculty have expertise which covers a wide swath of US and World history, and students are encouraged to explore and expand their interests through the program.

Many courses, including foundation courses like Historiography and Research Methods, may be completed via online classes and via mail or email, so that the M.A. may be delivered anywhere in the state, nation, or internationally, to meet the particular needs of the student. Not all on-campus classes may be suitable for learning at a distance, but students should contact instructors with questions. Depending on the Option, Final Assessment may require advance planning to arrange; contact the Program Director with questions if you intend to pursue the degree at a distance.

"Pittsburg State University is committed to a policy of educational equity. Accordingly, the university admits students, grants financial aid and scholarships, conducts all educational programs, activities, and employment practices without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, ancestry or disabilities. Students seeking assistance with academic programs because of disabilities (physical, emotional, mental or multi-disabilities) are to contact Director of Equal Opportunity or because of learning disabilities, are to contact Director of the Center for Student Accommodations." *University Course Catalog, 2009-2011.*

**Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate Assistantships are available on a competitive basis to students with outstanding records of performance. Applications on the form provided by the History Program and letters in support of the application should be submitted by March 1 (for first consideration; applications will continue to be considered until the Assistantships are awarded), prior to the year for which the student is eligible for a graduate assistantship. Graduate Assistants must be full-time students throughout their assistantship; if applicants are beyond 12 credits, a Candidacy Declaration must be completed and must show that the student will be registered full-time throughout the assistantship.

Graduate Assistants are assigned teaching duties, and must enroll in Orientation to College Teaching in addition to regular coursework. They may be encouraged to complete a Readings course as preparation for teaching. The hours spent in teaching will be considered part of the 20 weekly hours of service the department expects of each Graduate Assistant.

**Grade Policy**

Only grades of A, B and C are acceptable in a graduate degree program. A cumulative grade point average of 3.0 is required for grades earned in: 1) all graduate coursework at the 700, 800 or 900 level; and 2) senior-graduate coursework (500 or 600 level) applied to a graduate degree.
A maximum of six hours of C or pass work may be applied to a student’s degree program. If the student receives any grade of C, their status in the Graduate School will be reviewed by the adviser, the Graduate Program Director, and the Chair of the Department, who may suggest remedial coursework that does not count toward the M.A. program, may counsel more concentrated effort in classes, or may in extreme cases propose termination of the student’s enrollment in the M.A. program. An extension of no more than six hours credit may be made to the approved degree program in order to achieve the minimum 3.0 and offset C grade credit.

The status of any graduate student who earns a second grade of C in a graduate program will be reviewed by a committee of the Chair, Graduate Program Director, and the instructor(s) giving the Cs. If they determine that the student's work has been unsatisfactory, that student will be required to sit out a full year, upon which the student may begin graduate work once again. If that student earns another C, that will result in dismissal from the graduate program. Any graduate student earning a D or F in a graduate history class will be suspended from taking graduate classes for one year; at the end of that time the student may begin again, but any subsequent grade lower than a B on any graduate course will result in dismissal from the graduate program.

Courses taken for pass/fail credit may not be applied to degree programs unless the specific pass/fail course has been approved as a degree component by the department which offers the degree program; in the case of the History Program, consult the History Graduate Program Director.

### Advisement

The Graduate Program Director will assign every student a major professor to guide the student’s initial and future enrollments. The major professor will make decisions with the student regarding coursework leading toward the degree sought. Students wishing to change graduate advisors should feel free to do so because crafting a course of study most suited to students’ needs, abilities, and expectations is our highest priority. Students should consult with their advisor at least once a semester to decide on courses, check progress towards graduation, and discuss career options and other educational opportunities. Advising is a shared responsibility, but students have final responsibility for meeting degree requirements.

### International Student Admission

International students must meet all entry requirements of their specific degree program. In addition, for full admission any student who matriculated outside the United States must show familiarity with not only the history of their home country and area of the world but with the broader world as well; this includes some acquaintance with the history of the United States. If the student's academic record does not indicate study in these areas, they should consult with their advisor and the Program Director regarding testing or courses to fulfill this requirement.

International students from countries in which English is not their language of instruction must submit scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) of 550/79 (paper-based/internet-based) or IELTS score of 6.5 (overall and in all bands) for entrance into the Master’s program in History. If scores are above the graduate school minima but below these requirements, students may be admitted
conditionally but they will be required to take one or more courses in the Intensive English Program
which will not count towards the MA. It is especially important for international students entering the
program to have skills not only in reading English but in spoken and written English as well so they can
participate in discussions, take lecture notes and write examinations effectively.

International students must also present evidence of financial resources adequate to support the
necessary period for graduate study and must have in their possession the proper credentials as defined
by the U.S. Office of Immigration and Naturalization.

Departmental Standards

Because the History Program expects graduate students to make the fullest effort to broaden and deepen
their knowledge of history, the Department requires that all work should be the student’s own original
effort. Work should be written specifically for the course in which it is submitted, and should not be
submitted for credit in any other course without full disclosure and prior permission from the instructor.
Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. For the handling of cases of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism,
see the "Academic Integrity" section of the University Catalog.

Any appeals on grades or any academic irregularities, such as plagiarism or improper duplication of
assignments, should be discussed first with the instructor, and if they cannot be resolved, a formal
appeal may be made using the forms available in the Graduate Office, in accordance with the "Grades
and Grading Policy" section of the University Catalog.

The History Program has adopted the Chicago style (Kate L. Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term
Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 7th ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007] or Chicago
Manual of Style, 15th or 16th print editions or http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/) as its standard.
Individual professors, however, may request that you use a different system. If they don’t you should
follow the formats of the Chicago system and not use APA, MLA, or a style employed in another
department. The vast majority of history departments in the United States use the Chicago style.

The Graduate Guidelines are effective immediately.
PSU Graduate School Regulations also apply to all History Program graduate students.

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