Graduate Handbook

History Department, A&M-Commerce

Revised September 2019

Welcome to the History Department at Texas A&M University-Commerce. This short handbook provides a brief overview of the policies and procedures for the department. Any questions or concerns should be addressed to the graduate adviser: Dr. Andrew Baker, Andrew.Baker@tamuc.edu, 903-468-8742.

**Degree Options**

The History Department offers three different degree options for Master’s students. Each degree option requires 36 hours of coursework. See the [course catalog](http://coursecatalog.tamuc.edu/grad/colleges-and-departments/humanities-social-sciences-arts/history/history-mams/) for more information.

**Track I** is the thesis option. This track is designed to prepare students to pursue a PhD in history or other research-intensive professional fields. For this option, students complete a Master’s thesis under the direction of a faculty member selected according to student interest. Students are required to complete 6 hours of thesis (HIST 518) credit; although students may take as many thesis hours as necessary, only six count toward the degree requirements (see below). Students are also required to complete at least three hours of the History Practicum (HIST 592), taken in conjunction with HIST 518.

**Track II** is the non-thesis option. This track provides a well-rounded program and is designed for students engaged in secondary education. Students taking this option complete HIST 595, usually in their final semester (see below).

**Track III** is the History-Political Science option. This track provides state-mandated **minimum** qualifications to teach dual credit classes in history and government. Students on this track complete 18 hours of history (HIST) courses (including HIST 595) and 18 hours of political science (PSCI) courses.

All three degree tracks require Historiography and Historical Theory (HIST 590) and Historical Research and Writing Methods (HIST 591).

**Foreign Language**

Students have the option of obtaining a Master’s of Arts (MA) or Master’s of Science (MS) degree. Each degree requires the same coursework. MA students complete an additional 12 hours of language training outside of degree requirements. Students who obtained a BA degree automatically qualify for the MA degree without any additional language requirements. Language courses may be completed at TAMU-Commerce or at any other accredited institution. Students who are considering continuing on in a PhD program are encouraged to obtain the MA degree.

 Students can meet the language requirement with one of the following:

1. Completion of at least 12 semester hours (four courses) in one foreign language.
2. Completion of 6 semester hours (above elementary courses) if 2 years of high school credit in the language have been submitted as part of the regular university admission requirements.
3. Completion of 3 semester hours if the student presents 3 or 4 years of high school credit.
4. American Sign Language (ASL) is considered an acceptable foreign language. Students should consult with departmental Director of Graduate Studies regarding this requirement.

**Course Enrollment**

Graduate students without holds on their account may register for courses through MyLeo during the registration period. Students should consult with the graduate adviser before enrolling in courses.

Full-time status for graduate students is nine hours. Students employed as GARs/GATs (see below) are considered full-time with six hours. The department strongly advises against students enrolling for more than nine hours in any semester.

All history Master’s students are required to take Historiography and Historical Theory (HIST 590) and Historical Research and Writing Methods (HIST 591). Students should enroll in HIST 590 as early as possible in their course of study. Students shall not enroll in HIST 591 in their first long semester of study.

The History Department offers two types of content courses: readings courses and seminar courses. Readings courses focus on mastery of the historical literature (historiography) on a particular subject area and involve the production of a written historiography paper. Seminar courses focus on mastery of historical research methods and involve the production of a primary-source based research paper. To fulfill their requirements for graduation, students must complete at least two Readings courses and at least one Seminar course.

**Qualifying Exam**

Students must complete HIST 590 and HIST 591 before attempting the Qualifying Exam. Students must pass the Qualifying Exam before enrolling in any thesis hours (HIST 518) or Research Literature and Techniques (HIST 595).

Students should consult with the graduate adviser to make arrangements to take the Qualifying Exam. Qualifying Exams are taken in the History Department office. Students may not use notes or internet resources during the exam. Students are allotted four hours to take the exam. The exam will evaluate the student's understanding of the theoretical foundations, professional practice, and research methods of the discipline of history.

The qualifying exam is evaluated by an examination committee consisting of the graduate adviser and two other History Department faculty members. The make-up of the committee is determined by the graduate adviser and may vary from one attempt to the next. The committee will evaluate each question (fail, pass, or pass with distinction). Students will receive their results within two weeks of taking the exam and must retake any questions receiving a failing grade. The student must schedule any necessary retake within one week of the receipt of those results. Failure to adhere to these deadlines will result in a registration hold being placed on the student’s account. Students must schedule their first attempt on the qualifying exam by week six of each long semester, or by the start of the Summer II term.

**Thesis**

Writing a thesis requires students to engage in extensive primary- and secondary-source research into a particular field of history across multiple semesters under the direction of a thesis adviser. This process provides the most effective preparation for a PhD program in history or a related discipline. As an artifact, the thesis reflects the student's professional and intellectual development over the course of the program.

In order to enroll in thesis hours (HIST 518), the student must first pass the qualifying exam and must have completed HIST 591 with a grade of B or higher. The student should then approach a faculty member in the History Department whose academic interests and research experience best align with the student's desired field of study. The thesis adviser must be a full-time, tenured or tenure-track member of the History Department and a Graduate Faculty member. Most thesis projects will change significantly over the course of the thesis experience. It is ultimately up to the faculty member whether they chose to serve as the student's adviser. Once the student and adviser have agreed on a field of study and topic for the thesis, the adviser will request permission from the graduate adviser to create a course (HIST 518) for the student.

Completing the thesis project requires the student research and craft a substantial writing project under the direction of the thesis adviser. Students must defend their thesis proposal in their first semester of HIST 518. In order to schedule the proposal defense, the student and adviser will establish a thesis committee consisting of the thesis adviser and at least two additional faculty members. All committee members must have graduate faculty status. The thesis adviser and at least two of the committee members must be from the history department at A&M-Commerce. The committee may include an additional member from outside the department (either a historian from another university or an A&M-Commerce faculty member from a different department, provided they bring "significant and helpful cross -disciplinary perspectives to bear on the research and writing of the thesis." Students should complete and submit a [Thesis Committee Selection Form](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesiscommitteeselectionform.pdf) at least 30 days prior to the proposal defense. During the proposal defense the committee members will question the student on research project including its historiographical framing, research question, and the sources that will be examined. The faculty will make recommendations for both substantive and typographical changes. Before submitting the revised thesis proposal to the graduate school, the student must complete the [Thesis Proposal Packet](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesis--dissertation-services/Thesis%20Proposal%20Packet%202018.pdf).

Students must be enrolled in HIST 518 in the semester they defend their proposal and continuously in each long semester after that until they defend their thesis. Students may take as many thesis hours as necessary, but no more than six hours count toward the completion of the degree. Thesis students must take HIST 592 at least once while they are enrolled in thesis hours, although no more than six hours of HIST 592 will count toward the completion of the degree.

The thesis adviser may require the student to revise the content, argument, and scope of the project as they deem appropriate. No thesis may proceed to the defense without the thesis adviser's approval. Students may consult with the graduate adviser with any questions related to this process. Once the thesis has received the approval of the thesis adviser, the student and committee members should [schedule their thesis defense](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesis--dissertation-services/Notification%20form%20for%20Thesis%20Defense.pdf). This must be scheduled at least one week before the defense date. The student must also distribute copies of the thesis to the committee members at least two weeks before the thesis defense date.

During the thesis defense the committee members will question the student on the thesis project's conclusions including its historiographical framing, research method, the sources examined, and the argument pursued. The faculty will make recommendations for both substantive and typographical changes. Before submitting the revised thesis to the graduate school, the student must complete the [Thesis Proposal Packet](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/thesis--dissertation-services/Final%20Thesis%20Submission%20Packet%202019.pdf) including submitting the thesis to iThenticate. The graduate school will also likely require revisions and corrections before final acceptance of the thesis document. The thesis committee will also conduct the student's comprehensive exam as part of the scheduled thesis defense (see below for more information).

Each step of this process must abide by graduate school deadlines, policies, and procedures. Contact the [Thesis and Dissertation Services](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/Thesis%20and%20Dissertation%20Services/) site for more information.

**History 595: Research Literature and Techniques**

Students on a non-thesis track (Option II or III) must complete HIST 595 as part of their degree plan. HIST 595 is generally taken in a student’s final semester.

Students enroll in HIST 595 in conjunction with a different history graduate course (excluding HIST 590 and HIST 591) being offered in the same semester. The instructor of this course will also serve as the HIST 595 instructor and the student's major adviser. Once the student has secured instructor approval they should arrange with the department graduate adviser to register for HIST 595.

The product of HIST 595 is generally a historiography paper on a subject related to the course topic as selected by the student in consultation with the course instructor. Evaluation of the student's HIST 595 project will constitute part of the student's comprehensive exam, which will generally occur in the same semester.

In the case of a student pursuing a specialization in public history, the student may arrange to take HIST 595 with a history faculty member with a specialization in public, digital, or oral history even if there is no related course being offered during that semester. In this case the faculty member may arrange a substantial project for the student during that semester that demonstrates the student's proficiency in public, digital, or oral history methods and/or archival methods. The product of such a HIST 595 may be a portfolio, process journal, public exhibit, and/or other such public history artifact as determined by the HIST 595 adviser. Evaluation of this public history experience will constitute part of the comprehensive exam.

**Comprehensive Exam**

All students must complete an oral comprehensive exam before being eligible to graduate.

Thesis-track students will complete their comprehensive exam as part of their thesis defense. The comprehensive exam committee is the same as the thesis committee.

Track II/Track III students will generally complete their comprehensive exam in conjunction with their HIST 595. The comprehensive exam committee should consist of three members selected by the student in consultation with the faculty member supervising the HIST 595. Where possible each member of the committee should have previously instructed the student in a graduate-level course or internship. The major adviser will chair the comprehensive examination. Each member should be a graduate faculty member.

In preparation for the exam, the student should compile and submit to the examination chair a properly formatted bibliography consisting of all of the monographs and articles from each of their graduate courses at A&M-Commerce, organized by course and semester. This document should be submitted to the chair at least a week before the examination. Once the examination chair has reviewed this list they will distribute the document to the other committee members.

During the comprehensive exam the student will answer questions from the committee related to their HIST 595 project, their internship experiences (if applicable), and their reading list. Students should come prepared to answer interpretive questions across multiple timeframes, regions, and fields. Students pursing a certificate in public history should also anticipate questions related to public history methods and practice. The student may bring an unmarked copy of their reading list to the examination, but may not bring notes or any other aids with the exception of any accommodations approved by the Student Disability Resources office.

After the defense the committee will confer and select one of the following results:

* Pass with distinction: Recognizes student mastery of the material and the skills of a historian.
* Pass: Recognizes satisfactory knowledge of the material and skills of a historian.
* Provisional Pass: Recognizes satisfactory knowledge of most of the material and/or skills of a historian, but points to significant gaps or errors in student understanding that critically undermine the student's understanding. Upon receiving a provisional pass, the graduate adviser will develop, in consultation with the examination committee, a plan for **limited** remedial work to be submitted by the student to demonstrate understanding of the material in question. This plan must be approved by the department head and must include a reasonable time for completion. This remedial work will be evaluated by the examination committee to determine if the student passes or fails the exam.
* Fail: Recognizes extensive failures of knowledge and/or skills of a historian. The student may submit a request to the department head to allow them to retake the exam. A third attempt requires the approval of both department head and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

See policy 11.99.99.R0.13.2 Examinations for Graduate Degrees for more information.

Graduate school deadlines must be met for the comprehensive exam to ensure graduation. The student should bring a copy of the [Master's Degree Final Comprehensive Examination Report](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateSchool/documents/comprehensiveexaminationreport.pdf) for the committee to complete at the end of the exam.

**Graduate Assistants for Research (GARs)/Graduate Assistants for Teaching (GATs)**

Students wishing to be considered for GAR/GAT positions should indicate their interest to the graduate adviser or the department head and fill out an application form by the appropriate deadline, usually in the spring semester. All students employed by the department as GARs/GATs must fill out the application each year to be considered for appointment or reappointment.

Students are eligible to receive two years of funding, with a possible extension of one year depending on satisfactory progress toward their degree.

Once students complete 18 hours of HIST courses, they are eligible to develop and teach courses as Teachers of Record under the supervision of the GAT Supervisor. Students must be Graduate Assistants (graders) for at least one semester before they can be Teachers of Record.

GARs/GATs work 20 hours per week. They are expected to attend regular meetings with the GAT Supervisor. GATs assigned as graders are required to attend the class to which they are assigned, per instructions of the professor.

GARs/GATs will receive a written evaluation each semester by their supervisor. The student may raise any concerns related to this evaluation with their supervisor and/or the graduate adviser.

**Certificate Programs**

The History Department offers several Certificate Programs for graduate students. Students may use up to 6 hours of the Certificate coursework toward their Master’s degree program requirements. See the department [website](http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/colleges/humanitiesSocialSciencesArts/departments/history/graduatePrograms/default.aspx) for more details. Current Certificate Programs include: Public History, World History, and the History of Christianity.

**Phi Alpha Theta**

Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) is the National History Honors society. TAMU-Commerce’s chapter, Eta Beta, was founded in 1959 and the original charter hangs in the History Department office. Membership is open to all history graduate students who have completed 12 hours in History and maintain a 3.1 GPA. Membership is for a small fee and is for life. Students are encouraged to become members of PAT as soon as they are eligible. PAT offers a variety of benefits, such as scholarship and publication opportunities, as well as participation in regional and national student conferences. Applications are available in the History Department office. Questions about PAT should be directed to the PAT adviser, Dr. Mylynka Cardona (Mylynka.Cardona@tamuc.edu).