



Department of History

MA Program Manual

2023-2024

USF History Department M.A. Program

Policies and Procedures

This document describes the Department of History's key policies, procedures, expectations, and responsibilities for students in the M.A. program. Since it reflects the current status of our evolving program, it may be subject to change. Students should refer to the [USF Graduate Catalog](#) for all information on their degree requirements.

Important Contacts

History Department Graduate Director: Dr. Matt King, matthewking1@usf.edu, SOC 213
Graduate Program Specialist: Ruth Borrero, borrero168@usf.edu, 813-974-2784, SOC 268
History Department Office Manager: Tami Davis, tamidavis@usf.edu, 813-974-2809

Degree Requirements

Coursework

The USF History M.A. curriculum and coursework requirements can be found in the Graduate Catalog of the year you entered the program:

- Students who entered the program in Fall 2020, should consult the [2020-2021 USF History MA Graduate Catalog](#).
- Students who enter in Fall 2021, should consult the [2021-2022 USF History MA Graduate Catalog](#).
- Students entering in Fall 2022, should consult the [2022-2023 USF History MA Graduate Catalog](#).
- Students entering in Fall 2023 should consult this document.

Students should also consult (with their advisors) the MA course audit forms (available for each concentration as well as the previous curriculum) that are linked on the USF History Graduate Canvas page, under the “Forms and Degree Planning” tab. These forms will help you track your progress through the degree and allow you to check off all requirements as you complete them.

Normally, full-time students will take 9 credit-hours per semester (the equivalent of three, 3-credit seminars). In their final semester, students who are not on the thesis track will normally take 6 credits of coursework and complete their comprehensive exams.

Curriculum and Required Courses

There are two required core courses for MA students in History:

- **HIS 6112 – Analysis of Historical Knowledge** – offered every fall semester; required for all incoming students who have not already taken the course.
- **HIS 6075/HIS 6939 – Historical Research and Publication – MA Capstone** – offered every spring semester.

Individual concentrations each have required courses, and along with your advisor, students should consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) (and Course Audit worksheets) to determine the courses you will need to take to complete these requirements. To fulfill their minor fields and remaining coursework credits, students should choose from the variety of graduate seminars offered at the 6000-level in the USF History Department as well as other opportunities available across the university.

Students may take one, 3-credit Independent Study (HIS 6908), Directed Research (HIS 6914), or Colloquium (HIS 6925 - graduate sections of 3000-level undergraduate courses) in place of a regularly scheduled graduate seminar. The Graduate Director must approve all Independent Study and Directed Readings courses, and students should complete the Graduate Directed Study form (available on the History Graduate Canvas page, under “Forms and Degree Planning”) and submit it to the Graduate Program Assistant in advance of registration.

Course Registration Procedure

All history graduate courses (and many in other departments as well) require a permit, which is granted only by the professor teaching the course. This necessitates students contacting instructors, usually initially by email, to explain their interest in the course and to request a permit to enroll. Since enrollments are limited, students are advised to begin the process of requesting permits before the actual registration process. The instructor will notify the student once permission to enroll in a course is granted. The Graduate Program Specialist will then issue you the permit to register for the course.

The schedule of classes is available online through the [Registrar’s Student Schedule Search](#). Faculty email addresses are available on the [History Department website](#). Please note that students cannot rely on the number of "spaces available" in a course listed on OASIS because a course may well be filled with permitted students who have not yet registered. Some courses have a waiting list.

Language Requirement (updated December 2021)

* Beginning in December 2021, the language requirement for MA students will become optional, and dependent on individual student needs/field requirements. Students should consult with their advisors to determine if foreign language proficiency is necessary for their research.

All students should complete the USF History Foreign Language Form (available on Canvas, under “Forms and Degree Planning”) in consultation with their advisor(s) by the end of their first year of study. On this form, students should indicate if they do or do not need to obtain proficiency in one or more foreign languages to complete the research for their degree. If they do

need foreign languages, they should document either evidence of their proficiency or plans to obtain it.

MA students who wish to go on for a PhD should be aware that most PhD programs in History continue to require language proficiency in one or more foreign languages for all students, regardless of their field of study. Students should consult with their advisor and the main faculty in their concentration to determine if they should be focusing their time and effort on language training in addition to their regular History coursework. Although USF has limited opportunities for language training, there are numerous external grants and training programs across the world that can help you gain skills in a wide variety of languages (see resources available in the graduate Canvas page under “Language”).

The Comprehensive Examination – MA Portfolio

To fulfill the requirements of the Comprehensive Examination, all MA students will need to submit an MA Portfolio for faculty evaluation during the semester they intend to graduate.

The MA portfolio is designed as a light version of the PhD portfolio. It aims to provide students with the opportunity to showcase a plurality of writings that they can use for their future studies and/or careers. As it is currently envisioned, students will complete their MA portfolio near the end of their fourth semester in the program. All three components of the MA portfolio must be approved in consultation with the student’s advisor(s):

1. A capstone project chosen from the following options:
 - a. A thesis or research paper based on original historical research;
 - b. Another work related to the profession of history including (but not limited to) public history or the digital humanities that represents the equivalent amount of work required from option 1a (and approved by the student’s advisor(s));
2. A historiography paper of 6,000 words that is on a topic other than that of the Capstone Project (including footnotes but excluding bibliography);
3. A project chosen from the following three options:
 - a. A project statement for a grant proposal relating to the student’s area of specialization;
 - b. A syllabus for an undergraduate survey course and an accompanying pedagogical statement that justifies the readings and assignments found within it (no word count for syllabus; pedagogical statement should be approximately 2,000 words);
 - c. A statement of interest for a PhD program in the field of the student’s choice;
 - d. Another work related to the profession of history that represents the equivalent amount of work required from options 3a, 3b, and 3c (and approved by the student’s advisor(s)).

Upon submission of the MA portfolio, the student’s committee of three faculty members spends several weeks reviewing it and providing a pass/fail grade to the student. If more than one committee member votes to fail the student on the portfolio, the student fails. If the student fails the portfolio, they have one additional semester to revise it and resubmit it to their committee for review. Failing the portfolio twice results in the student’s removal from the program.

Detailed instructions (including descriptions of appropriate assignments to use, timelines, and evaluation criteria) of how and when to submit your portfolio elements to your committee are available on the History Graduate Canvas page (under the “Portfolio and Exams” tab).

Master's Thesis

Students should decide by the end of their first year of the MA whether they want to write a thesis, as it will entail more than a year of research and writing. Students who write a thesis will take 6 thesis credits (typically 3 credits each in the fall/spring semesters of their second year) in lieu of regular coursework. Students who write a thesis will select – in consultation with their advisor – a committee of 3 faculty to evaluate the thesis. Students will need to complete an MA Thesis Committee form (available on the History Graduate Program Canvas page, under the “Forms and Degree Planning” tab) and submit it to the Graduate Program Specialist for signatures and submission to the graduate school early in the semester they plan to defend.

Students should be aware that the final deadline for submission of an approved MA thesis to the graduate school is typically in week 10 of the semester. Therefore, it is advisable that students have a full draft of the thesis completed (or near completion) by the beginning of the semester they plan to defend, in order to have time for revisions and for the committee to review the thesis before the oral defense. Defenses should ideally be scheduled no later than week 9 of the semester so that the student has time to make revisions before the final submission deadline. All deadlines should be checked and confirmed with the Graduate Program Specialist well in advance, as they tend to vary each semester.

Non-Thesis Track

Students who choose not to write a thesis will enroll in two more content courses for a total of 6 hours of credit.

MA Capstone course

During the spring semester of their second year, MA students will take their final required core course, the MA Capstone (HIS 6075 *Historical Research and Publication*). In this course, they will develop and revise a major research project. Students should begin planning for this capstone project in advance of their final semester and start researching and developing their capstone research project during their earlier coursework, so that they are not starting from scratch in this course. For those who are not completing an MA thesis, their capstone project will typically serve as a major component of the MA Portfolio.

Timeline and Degree Path

Unlike with the previous format of timed, written comprehensive exams, the Portfolio is designed for students to complete the major components during their coursework. Students

should work closely with their advisors during both the first and second years of the program to determine which assignments that they have completed during their courses would be appropriate to develop further as elements of their Portfolio. This timeline is suggested for full-time students and will vary for those with individualized needs.

YEAR 1

Fall Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**
 - HIS 6112 Analysis of Historical Knowledge (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
- **Portfolio/Thesis Considerations**
 - Students should be using the content seminar final assignments to prepare final portfolio elements when appropriate, in consultation with their advisors.

Spring Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
- **Portfolio/Thesis Considerations**
 - Students should be using the content seminar final assignments to prepare final portfolio elements when appropriate, in consultation with their advisors.

By the end of the first year of the MA program:

- Students should be well on their way to completing the requirements for their Concentration/minor field; they should use the MA Course Audit worksheets (available on the History Graduate Canvas page – “Forms and Degree Planning”) to assess their progress through their degree, in consultation with their advisor.
- Students should have decided whether or not they will write a thesis.
- If they are not writing a thesis, they should (at the very least) start thinking about what they will do for the capstone project (Part 1) of the Portfolio; ideally, they will have already started developing a research project in one of their seminars.

YEAR 2

Fall Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)

- Content Seminar or Thesis Hours (3 credits)
- **Portfolio/Thesis Considerations**
 - Students writing a thesis should be developing chapter drafts and aiming for a completed draft by the beginning of the spring semester.
 - Students should be using their content seminar final assignments to prepare final portfolio elements when appropriate.

By the end of the first semester of the second year:

- Students should have decided on their historiography essay for Part 2 and be working to expand or develop it (if needed) to prepare for their Portfolio review.
- At this time, students should also be discussing with their advisor which faculty will be asked to participate in their Portfolio review the following semester (the advisor + 2 additional faculty members).
- Students writing a thesis should have a nearly full draft completed by the beginning of the spring semester so that they can revise and submit it to their committee for review in plenty of time before the university ETD submission date (typically mid-March).

Spring Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students (6 or 9 credits)**
 - HIS 6075 Historical Research and Publication
 - Content Seminar or Thesis Hours
 - Content Seminar (if necessary to maintain 9-credit status for funding)

At the beginning of the semester when the Portfolio review will occur:

- Students and their advisors should finalize all three components of the Portfolio and students should be working on revising them for the Portfolio evaluation.
- In consultation with the Portfolio review committee, the student should determine how and when they should submit the Portfolio to the committee (no later than Week 12 of the semester).

Once the committee receives the Portfolio, they will review it according to the evaluation criteria provided on the MA Portfolio Assessment form, which will be provided to the student upon completion of the evaluation.

Program Policies and Student Responsibilities

Faculty Advisors

Upon your arrival at USF, you will be assigned a faculty advisor. We will do our best to match you with an advisor who best fits your research interests. Ideally, you should remain in close

contact with your faculty advisor and meet with them at least once a semester to assure your successful progress through the program. However, it may come to pass that your interests change or you find another faculty member with whom you work better, and you might wish to change advisors. That is fine. In that case, you should inform your previous advisor, the Graduate Director, and the Graduate Program Specialist. If you have already progressed into your Portfolio or an MA Thesis, you may need to file a Change of Supervisory Committee form. Make sure that the Graduate Director and Graduate Program Specialist have the correct information about your advisor, your Portfolio committee, and Thesis committee *before* you proceed in your preparations, so we can assure you have filed the appropriate paperwork with the College.

Accessibility and Disability Services

The office of [Student Accessibility Services](#) at USF provides students with official disability accommodation letters. If you need any disability accommodations, you should register immediately with the SAS office so that they can help you set up your plan and accommodations for the academic year. If you run into any problems with faculty or students who don't follow the accommodations requests, please inform the Graduate Director immediately.

Grades/Academic Standing

For USF Graduate School policies on academic standing and minimum GPA as well as policies on Incompletes, please consult the [Graduate Catalog](#). The department strongly discourages students from taking Incomplete grades, except in cases of emergency or when personal circumstances arise that make it absolutely necessary. Incomplete grades convert automatically into the original grade if the student does not complete the work within the contracted period (typically by the following term). In order to remain in good academic standing, students must take care to finish their Incompletes in a timely fashion so as not to have failing grades on their transcripts.

Continuous Enrollment and Leaves of Absence

For USF Graduate School policies on continuous enrollment (including the minimum number of hours to be considered "full time" and continuously enrolled during Comps and Thesis hours) and leaves of absence, please consult the [Graduate Catalog](#).

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

USF has detailed policies regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, and student conduct. Please consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more detailed information on these policies as well as university protocol for academic and non-academic grievances.

Diversity, Discrimination, and Harassment

The University of South Florida (USF) is a diverse community that values and expects respect and fair treatment of all people. USF strives to provide a work and study environment for faculty, staff and students that is free from discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, marital status, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, or genetic information, as provided by law. USF protects its faculty, staff, and students from discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, as well as gender identity and expression. USF is also committed to the employment and advancement of qualified veterans with disabilities and veterans protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act, as amended (VEVRAA).

All discrimination, harassment, and retaliation are **prohibited** at USF, and there are numerous mechanisms for reporting and investigation within the university. Please carefully read the History Department Diversity Manual to acquaint yourself with these policies and regulations.

Funding

The USF History Department has a limited number of Graduate Assistantships available for M.A. students that we distribute between incoming and continuing students on a competitive basis. All new applicants will be considered for funding during the admissions process, unless they indicate that they do not wish to be considered. Students who did not receive a GA-ship in their first year are eligible to apply in their second year by supplying a statement of interest, unofficial transcript, and one letter of recommendation from a professor within the History Department. Continuing students who wish to renew their GA-ship must also supply a letter of recommendation from one of the professors with whom they worked.

A GA-ship for M.A. students provides a tuition waiver for full-time enrollment, subsidized health insurance, and a stipend that is determined according to a [contract](#) set by the USF-GAU (graduate student union). During the regular school year, GAs are contracted to work no more than 20 hours/week. In the History Department, most GAs work as teaching assistants to professors, although a few are assigned to research or administrative positions.

FAQs

What is considered “good academic progress”?

The Graduate Director and departmental graduate committee keep a close eye on the academic progress of all of the graduate students in our program. The grading norms of graduate school are somewhat different than you might be used to in your undergraduate program. A GPA of 3.0 is necessary to remain in “good standing” with the USF Graduate School, and any grade below a “C” is considered by the USF Graduate School to be a failing grade and will not be counted as credit toward your degree. However, within the department, any grade below a “B” is considered a sign of poor performance in the course and may merit some intervention, as may multiple

Incomplete grades, depending on the circumstances. Students who fail to maintain “good standing” may be placed on academic probation and/or dismissed from the program.

Can I apply for funding if I did not receive a GAship in my first year?

Yes, you can apply for a GAship for your second year. They are distributed on a competitive basis and decisions about funding for all GAships are made during the admissions deliberations in the spring semester. Please consult the section above on Funding for specifics on what materials should be submitted to the Graduate Committee, and feel free to speak to the Graduate Director if you have further questions.

Do I have to write an M.A. thesis?

No. This is an optional track for the degree. However, it can be considered useful for students who wish to continue on to do a PhD in History, particularly if they want to apply to another program, as it demonstrates that you have the skills in conducting primary source research, analysis, and writing that are essential to a doctoral dissertation as well.

How long does it take to write an M.A. thesis?

Graduate students must allow plenty of time when planning to write the thesis; we suggest that you begin preparing for your thesis at least a year in advance of your planned graduation date. USF's hard deadlines for submission of a final copy are generally in October or March, *not the end of the semester*. There must be opportunities for significant feedback, revision, and so forth, prior to that final copy being submitted. In practice, this means it is highly unlikely that a student can start writing a thesis at the beginning of the semester, and then submit it that same semester.

The thesis must be read and approved by the entire committee, and all members must have the opportunity to read it thoroughly and request changes and revisions. Students should not assume that because their advisor has approved a draft, that the other members will follow suit. They may suggest substantial revisions, and time is needed to respond.

Students should not plan on completing drafts and distributing them during the summer, when committee members and supervisors might not be on academic contract and therefore unavailable for thesis/dissertation review and defense.

How do I format and submit my M.A. thesis?

All M.A. and PhD theses and dissertations are submitted electronically through the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\) Center](#) in the Office of Graduate Studies. They host several ‘ETD Boot Camps’ throughout each term to guide students through the submission process. All students submitting a thesis or dissertation must now attend an [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\) workshop](#) in the semester PRIOR to the semester in which they apply for graduation.

Consult the ETD webpage and the Graduate Program Specialist well in advance of your final semester for all deadlines related to ETD submission and graduation so that you do not miss an important deadline related to thesis submission and/or graduation!

How do I apply for graduation?

To apply for graduation, you should ensure that you have met all degree requirements, including clearing all Incomplete grades and financial holds, and then go to the [Graduation Application page](#) on the Registrar's website to formally apply for graduation. The deadline to apply is typically at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to graduate, so you should keep an eye out for deadline announcements from the department and university. Graduate students cannot walk in commencement unless they have met all degree requirements, however, so if you do not complete your degree during the semester in which you initially apply, you will need to reapply for a subsequent semester, after you have completed all of your requirements.

Graduate Student Resources

USF Library Liaison: [Matt Knight](#)

The History Department has an in-house library liaison who works directly with students and faculty to facilitate our access to research resources in the USF Library. Feel free to email Matt directly if you have questions related to library resources. He is an amazing resource and also teaches Irish and Irish-American history in our department!

[History Graduate Student Organization](#)

The USF History Graduate Student Organization is open to all students and is an academic and social organization dedicated to supporting the work of the USF History Graduate Students.

[Phi Alpha Theta](#)

Phi Alpha Theta is the history honor society and sponsors numerous academic and social activities throughout the year.

[USF Student Mental Health Resources](#)

Graduate school can be incredibly stressful, but you have access to counseling services and wide array of mental health resources through USF. Please also do feel free to reach out to the Graduate Director if you need assistance in accessing further resources.

[USF Ombuds office](#)

The USF Ombuds office is a confidential service available to students to help you resolve and mediate any issues on campus that you don't know how to resolve, or if you wish for confidential assistance in understanding how to proceed in a conflict or problem.

[USF Center for Victim Advocacy](#)

The Center for Victim Advocacy provides free and confidential support, both personal and institutional, for victims of crimes that take place both on and off campus.

USF Student Food Pantry

The USF student food pantry is open to all USF students; check the website for hours and location.

USF Financial Aid Office