



Department of History

PhD Program Manual

2023-2024

USF History Department PhD Program

Policies and Procedures

This document describes the Department of History's key policies, procedures, expectations, and responsibilities for students in the PhD 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

Deciding Upon a Course of Study

Within the first semester, students ought to have a general idea of their interests and be ready to start research on their dissertation topic. Although students may change this topic at any time within the first two years of their program, they are strongly encouraged to begin researching their topics as soon as possible, so as to move through the program efficiently (see section on Timeline and Degree Path below).

Faculty Advisor and Dissertation Committees

Upon admittance to the program, students will be assigned a provisional faculty advisor in their field of study who will meet with them to develop a plan for their coursework. Typically, this person will become the student's dissertation advisor. However, if the student's research topic changes or they find a better fit with another faculty member, they are free to choose another advisor. In this case, they need to inform their previous advisor, the Graduate Program Specialist, and the Graduate Director of the change. When developing their dissertation committee, typically the student makes the first contact with faculty who may be appropriate to serve on the committee, but it is helpful to discuss possible members with the faculty advisor before approaching other faculty.

Students are required to have completed successfully at least 3 credits of course work with each member of their committee who is a faculty member within the USF History Department and is permitted to supervise doctoral students. There is no minimum course requirement regarding the external member.

When inviting faculty members to serve on their committee, the student should apprise them in general terms about the nature of their research and disciplinary interests, so that the faculty member can make an informed decision.

In order to move into candidacy, the student must have a complete committee comprising four members. Three of these members should be graduate faculty within the USF History Department. The fourth committee member, formally known as the external member, may be selected from another department within USF, or from another institution. The external committee member needs to hold a Ph.D. degree and be affiliated with an accredited university. Once a committee has been determined, the Doctoral Dissertation Committee Form needs to be completed by the student and signed by all committee members (available on the History Graduate Canvas page, under “Forms and Degree Planning”). Any changes to the committee must be approved by the Graduate School through a Change of Committee Form (available on the History Graduate Canvas page, under “Forms and Degree Planning”).

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 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 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.

Graduate Student Responsibilities

Graduate students are expected to maintain sufficient contact with their advisor to ensure that both are aware of the progress of the student in the program. The graduate student must take the initiative to schedule meetings. It is recommended that this be done during the first 2 or 3 weeks of each semester, and at other times throughout the semester as needed. Students are responsible for being on time for appointments and for giving prompt notice if plans must be changed.

Meeting Official Deadlines

Meeting all deadlines is primarily the graduate student's responsibility.

USF is a large institution with a complex bureaucracy, for which forms and procedures are critical to smooth transitions and complying with policies and requirements. Students should become familiar with Departmental and USF's Office of Graduate Studies requirements and deadlines.

Each semester, the Graduate Program Specialist will circulate a list (via email and on Canvas) of important Office of Graduate Studies dates; students should note these and take them very seriously, for they are firm. Doctoral students should be aware that deadlines for such important things as requests to graduate, and submission of dissertations are set quite early in the semester. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that such deadlines are met.

The Graduate Program Specialist handles the distribution and processing of forms, but students and faculty advisors must monitor the submission of both departmental and college forms and procedures outlined in this document, the [Graduate Catalog](#), and the [Office of Graduate Studies website](#). Doing so allows the faculty advisors and program staff to guide them through the system.

Degree Requirements

The USF History PhD curriculum and coursework requirements can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#) corresponding to the year you entered the program. Links to graduate catalogs from 2020-2021 and earlier can be found on the History Graduate Canvas page (under "Graduate Catalog").

Normally, full-time students will take 9 credit-hours per semester (the equivalent of three, 3-credit seminars) for their first two years of coursework. In their second year, they should complete their remaining courses and their Portfolio review to advance to candidacy.

Curriculum and Required Courses

There are three core required courses for PhD 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 or an equivalent introductory graduate historiography course (please contact the Graduate Director for course transfer approval if you think you have already taken such a course).
- **HIS 7937 – Interdisciplinary Pro-Seminar** – offered every spring semester; a research seminar required for all first-year PhD students.
- **HIS 7938 – PhD Capstone Seminar** – offered every fall semester; required for all second-year PhD students. In this seminar, students will work on preparing their dissertation proposals and completing the requirements for the Portfolio.

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 a maximum of three hours each of HIS 6908 Independent Study and HIS 6914 Directed Research (or HIS 6925 Colloquium - graduate sections of 3000-level undergraduate courses) in place of a regularly scheduled graduate seminar. Exceptions can be made with the approval of the major professor and Graduate Director. 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.

Upon advancing to candidacy, students will enroll in **HIS 7980 – Dissertation Writing Hours**, as they will be required to complete 18 hours of dissertation writing credits to complete their degree. Students who complete these 18 credit hours (42 total hours post-Masters) but still need more time to complete their degree are able to register for 2 credit hours/semester to remain enrolled and continue working on their dissertations.

Comprehensive Examinations

The PhD Portfolio

Beginning in Fall 2020, incoming PhD students will work toward doctoral candidacy through the completion of a PhD Portfolio and an oral examination, which will replace the previous version of the PhD Comprehensive Exams that earlier cohorts were required to complete.

The submission of the written component of the PhD Portfolio and the oral examination will typically take place during the student’s third or fourth semester in the program. All elements of the Portfolio should be approved and revised in consultation with the student’s advisor(s).

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. The Course Audit worksheets (available on Canvas under “Forms and Degree Planning”) provide space to check off the completed Portfolio components.

Here are the required components of the USF History PhD Portfolio:

1. An original research paper of at least 7,000 words (including footnotes but excluding bibliography); we encourage students to write this paper on a topic that is directly applicable to their dissertation project;
2. Two short historiography papers of 3,000 words each (excluding footnotes and bibliography) that do not overlap with the historiography section of the dissertation prospectus; one of these papers should relate to the student’s major field and the second should be unrelated to the major field in order to show breadth of historical knowledge [*NB: we envision these papers as revised and polished versions of historiography essays that students have already written for topical seminars*];
3. The project statement for a grant proposal relating to the student’s dissertation project;

4. A syllabus for an undergraduate upper-division seminar in the student's major field and an accompanying pedagogical statement that justifies the readings and assignments found within it (the pedagogical statement should be approximately 1,000-1,500 words);
5. A dissertation prospectus in which the student outlines the following:
 - a. Statement of the research question and preliminary thesis for said question (approximately 250 words)
 - b. Historiographical context for the research question (approximately 4,000 words)
 - c. Methods, sources, and theories to be utilized in answering the research question (approximately 4,000 words)
 - d. Proposed schedule for research (approximately 500 words)
 - e. Proposed chapter outline (approximately 500 words)
 - f. Bibliography (no word count – number of sources contingent on topic)

Upon submission of the PhD Portfolio, the student's dissertation committee spends several weeks reviewing it and providing a collective pass/fail grade to the student. If the student fails the written Portfolio review, they have one additional semester to revise it and resubmit it to their dissertation committee for review. Failing the written Portfolio review twice results in the student's removal from the program.

If the student passes the written Portfolio review, the student must then schedule an oral exam with their committee to discuss its contents, especially the prospectus. This oral exam will typically last around 2 hours. The committee then provides to the student a pass/fail grade on this oral exam. If the student fails the oral exam, they have one additional opportunity to reschedule and retake it before the end of the following semester. Failing the oral exam twice results in the student's removal from the program.

All USF History professors on the student's committee must vote on whether to pass or fail the student. If more than one committee member votes to fail the student on either the written portfolio or oral exam, the student fails that portion of the exam. It is optional for the external member of the dissertation committee to participate in the process of passing/failing a student on either the portfolio or the oral exam, although we encourage their participation if they are willing to do so.

Language Requirements

The language requirement for PhD students has now 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 dissertation. If they do need to

use foreign language sources, they should document either evidence of their proficiency in the necessary language(s) or plans to obtain it.

The general expectation for students admitted into our PhD program (who need foreign language proficiency to undertake their dissertation research) is that they have already obtained proficiency in at least one of their research languages, as there is typically not enough time built into the degree for students to begin a new language and obtain the level of proficiency needed to work with primary and secondary sources at a professional level.

Timeline and Degree Path

YEAR 1

Fall Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students** (9 credits)
 - HIS 6112 Analysis of Historical Knowledge (3 credits) (if not taken previously)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
- **Portfolio 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)
 - HIS 7937 – Interdisciplinary Pro Seminar (3 Credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
- **Portfolio Considerations**
 - Students should be using the Pro Seminar and 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 PhD program:

- Students should have developed (and ideally completed a draft of) their major research paper in their Pro-Seminar (spring semester).
- Students should have at least one historiography paper drafted and, at minimum, a plan for their second paper.
- If they have not already completed a syllabus and pedagogical statement during their first-year coursework, students should have this on their radar for potential projects to complete during their second-year coursework.
- Students should consult with their advisors and submit the Foreign Language Requirement Form.

YEAR 2

Fall Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**
 - HIS 7938 - PhD Capstone Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
 - Content Seminar (3 credits)
- **Portfolio Considerations**
 - Students should be completing the remaining elements of their portfolio during this semester.

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

- Students will have completed a draft of their dissertation proposal in the PhD Capstone course (fall semester).
- Students should consult with their advisor to determine what elements of their portfolio remain and begin revisions to prepare for the review and defense of the portfolio.

Some students may be able to defend their portfolios and proceed to candidacy during the fall semester of their second year, while others may need to wait until spring semester.

Spring Semester

- **Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**
 - Content Seminars or Independent Studies to prepare for portfolio review
- OR
- **Dissertation Hours (9 credits)** for those who have moved into candidacy in the fall semester

During the semester when you intend to defend the portfolio:

- Before they can schedule the defense (oral exam) of the portfolio, students will need to form a Dissertation Committee.
 - This committee should be comprised of three (3) History Department Graduate faculty and one (1) outside reader, who can be from USF or another institution.
 - Once a student has determined the makeup of the committee, they should download and fill out a PhD Dissertation Committee form from the History Graduate Canvas page (under “Forms and Degree Planning”) and submit it to the Graduate Program Specialist for signatures.
 - Once the committee is approved by the Graduate School, students can proceed with the defense and submit their request for candidacy.

- Everyone should make sure to check all semester deadlines to ensure that they leave enough time for the portfolio evaluation and defense before the end of the semester deadline to apply for candidacy.

After you have been approved for candidacy:

Students should begin registering for Dissertation Hours with their advisor/major professor. Typically, students with a GAsip register for 9 credits of dissertation hours per semester.

Admission to Doctoral Candidacy

Please see the [USF Graduate Catalog](#) for the university requirements on admission to candidacy.

Students should submit their Admission to Candidacy form (available on Canvas), which must include signatures from all members of the dissertation committee (including the external member), for approval during the same semester in which the Portfolio is submitted and the oral examination is conducted, but no later than the semester following the successful completion of the comprehensive exam. Once the admission to candidacy has been approved, the student can begin registering for dissertation hours.

The Dissertation

The culminating degree requirement for a PhD in History at USF is the completion of a doctoral dissertation (or its Digital Humanities equivalent) and a public oral defense of the dissertation. The dissertation should be an original work of historical scholarship that demonstrates your capacity to work as a professional historian. It should be a substantial contribution to your field, containing an original argument and historically sound analysis of relevant primary and secondary sources. Your doctoral advisor will help guide you in the process of selecting your topic, researching, and writing your dissertation, while your dissertation committee will conduct a close review of the dissertation to ensure that it meets the standards of the discipline.

Dissertation Writing

A doctoral dissertation in History takes minimally a year to write after what is typically a full year dedicated to research. There must be opportunities for significant feedback and revision prior to the final submission.

Once the student's doctoral advisor is satisfied that the dissertation is ready for review by the entire committee, the advisor should ensure that the student provides copies to committee members in a timely fashion, allowing them sufficient time to read and review. This is, nonetheless, primarily the student's responsibility, and in some circumstances, students may ask committee members to read drafts earlier in the process.

The dissertation 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. Committee members may suggest substantial revisions, and time is needed to respond.

With that in mind, students should typically allow for *at least three months* between handing their polished draft to the faculty on their committee and delivering the final copy to the Office of Graduate Studies. Students should note that firm university deadlines for submission of a final copy are generally in early November or early April, not the end of the semester. Students planning to graduate in the spring semester should, therefore, schedule defenses no later than early March in order to have time to make revisions and submit their final version through the ETD system on time.

Students should confer with the Graduate Program Specialist and, if necessary, appropriate staff in the Office of Graduate Studies regarding the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation submission process which entails specific deadlines (see the FAQ section below). Students should plan to attend an [ETD workshop](#) at least one semester prior to their anticipated graduation date.

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.

The Dissertation Defense

Please see the [USF Graduate Catalog](#) for university policies on the conduct of the final oral examination, or dissertation defense.

Once the committee has approved the dissertation and the advisor decides it is ready for the defense, the student should meet with the Graduate Program Specialist to check over their records and make sure they are prepared for the defense. The Graduate Program Specialist will then process the paperwork certifying that the dissertation is ready for defense, following the guidance of the faculty advisor and the requirements of the Office of Graduate Studies and the College. Advertisement of the defense must be posted at least two weeks prior to the date on which the defense is to occur to comply with state requirements.

The time and date of the defense will be set by the student and faculty advisor, based on availability of the committee members and outside chair. In normal circumstances, the Graduate Program Specialist will schedule a room; special procedures are also in place if the defense must be conducted remotely (in this case, please consult with the Graduate Director and Graduate Program Specialist).

A copy of the announcement must also be submitted to CAS and publicly distributed, preferably two weeks prior to the defense date. The public, including other students, faculty, friends, and relatives, are welcome to attend, although they will be asked to vacate the room during the committee's final deliberations.

Candidates will be asked to give a 20-minute presentation of their dissertation at the beginning of the defense and then committee members will ask them questions about their research and

conclusions. If time permits, the audience may also ask questions of the candidate. Once the committee is satisfied that the candidate has successfully responded to their questions, the candidate and audience will be asked to leave the room.

The Committee then discusses both the dissertation itself and the performance of the candidate in the defense. The outcome of the deliberations will be one of the following:

- The student passes the defense and dissertation with no further revisions needed.
- The student passes contingent on specified changes or additions.
- The student may be required to schedule a second defense, if the committee deems the performance inadequate.

The vote of the Dissertation Committee must be unanimous and recorded on the Successful Defense form.

Once the decision has been reached, the student is invited back into the room and is informed of the outcome. If revisions are needed, these should be explained clearly prior to adjourning the defense, and a plan developed for when the final draft will be completed and how it will be assessed. If changes are minor, all committee members usually sign the Successful Defense Form certifying the outcome of the defense. If revisions are significant, certification may be withheld until the entire committee is satisfied.

The student must then submit their final revised dissertation through the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) process (see the FAQ section below).

Funding

To foster an ideal working relationship between students and faculty, the History Department at USF only admits a few full-time PhD students each year. Normally, students admitted to the PhD program will receive a four-year financial package that includes a tuition waiver, subsidized health insurance, and a Graduate Assistantship with 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, GAs who are still in their coursework and have not yet achieved candidacy work as teaching assistants to professors, although a few are assigned to administrative or research positions; once students have achieved candidacy, they are assigned as Instructors of Record to their own courses.

We strongly encourage students to pursue external funding opportunities, particularly for their dissertation research. The Office of Graduate Studies provides a [database of funding opportunities](#) and the History Department offers resources on our Canvas page as well as workshops on how to find and apply for grants and fellowships, including year-long grants such as the Fulbright or short-term grants to individual archives.

Program Policies and Student Responsibilities

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.

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. 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. Students with a GAship must maintain a 3.0 GPA. Additionally, 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.

How do I format and submit my dissertation through the ETD process?

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 are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to attend an [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\) workshop](#) in the semester PRIOR to the one 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