Art History, Ph.D.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in art history requires a minimum of 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Of the 72 s.h., at least 39 s.h. must be earned while registered in the UI Graduate College, after formal program admission. For details, see the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations Section XII C. Students must maintain a g.p.a. of at least 3.50. They may count a maximum of 38 s.h. of work completed for the M.A. toward the Ph.D., excluding credit earned in language courses. Students are allowed only one semester of academic probation.

They are expected to acquire great breadth and depth of knowledge in the discipline of art history, achieve a high level of expertise in a specialized field, and demonstrate professional speaking and writing skills. The program provides them with scholarly challenges, research skills, and mentoring necessary for professional development and successful careers.

Ph.D. students major in one of the following 10 distribution fields: African (including Oceanic), architecture, Asian, ancient (3000 B.C.E. to 300 C.E.), medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, 18th- and 19th-century European, American (including pre-Columbian, Native American, and African American), and modern/contemporary. Students also minor in two fields. The first minor must be in an art history distribution field that is not contiguous with the major field; the second may be in any art history distribution field or in a relevant discipline outside of art history, subject to the faculty’s approval.

For more detailed information, consult the Art History Graduate Bulletin.

Required Courses

Students must satisfactorily complete ARTH:4999 History and Methods, even if they have completed a similar course at another institution (students who have completed the course for a master’s degree or other previous work at Iowa are exempt). They must register for an art history seminar in their first three semesters of Ph.D. coursework (or in their fifth, sixth, and seventh semesters of graduate study), before the Ph.D. readings course and comprehensive exam.

They also must satisfactorily complete ARTH:6020 Art History Colloquium every semester that they are enrolled for 9 s.h. or more or are serving as teaching or research assistants. Students who are not employed as teaching or research assistants or are registered for less than 9 s.h. are strongly encouraged to attend the colloquium.

Students may count up to 6 s.h. of credit earned for dissertation research toward the 72 s.h. required for the degree. Courses outside the curriculum of the School of Art and Art History’s art history division do not carry art history credit.

Directed Studies

Normally, a maximum of 6 s.h. earned in ARTH:6040 Directed Studies may be applied toward the semester-hour requirement for the Ph.D., although doctoral students may petition the art history faculty for permission to apply up to 9 s.h.

Language Requirement

Students must demonstrate proficiency in French or German for admission to the Ph.D. program. They also must demonstrate proficiency in a second non-English language relevant to their research area by the end of their third semester of Ph.D. work or before their dissertation topic is approved. Proficiency is determined by a translation exam administered under the direction of the art history division. Credit earned in language courses does not count toward the degree.

Ph.D. Committee

The Ph.D. committee consists of the student’s dissertation advisor, who is responsible for the major field; two members responsible for the two minor fields; and at least two additional members. Of these five, four must be tenured or tenure-track faculty members from the art history division. One must be from outside the division and must be a member of the Graduate College faculty. When appropriate, committees may include additional members.

Comprehensive Examination

Upon completion of course requirements, the Ph.D. candidate takes three written comprehensive examinations. The major exam consists of six questions and lasts six hours; the two minor exams each consist of three questions and last three hours. The exams are taken on any three days within one week (Monday through Friday).

The scope of the comprehensive exams is determined in consultation with the candidate’s degree committee supervisor and the committee members responsible for the two minor fields.

Oral Comprehensive Examination

Within approximately two weeks of completing the three written exams, the candidate meets with the degree committee for the oral comprehensive examination, which concentrates on questions that arise from the written comprehensive exams.

Dissertation Proposal

Each student must complete a publishable dissertation that makes an original contribution to the art history discipline and demonstrates evidence of superior understanding of critical issues in the candidate’s chosen specialization field. As soon as possible after completing the comprehensive examinations, the candidate submits a dissertation proposal to the degree committee supervisor and subsequently to the degree committee.

The committee meets as a group with the candidate to discuss the dissertation proposal and to offer comments and suggestions. (The proposal must be submitted to the committee at least two weeks before the approval meeting.) The proposal includes a 1-2 page abstract, a 10-15 page précis (including a review of the state of the field), and a bibliography.

After the proposal has been approved by the committee, the candidate circulates an abstract to the entire art history faculty. The candidate must give a public presentation on the dissertation topic no later than the end of the semester following the degree committee’s approval. The presentation is scheduled with the head of art history.
Final Examination

Upon completing a dissertation, the candidate meets with the Ph.D. committee for an oral defense of the dissertation. The oral defense constitutes the final examination for the Ph.D. The successful completion of this examination normally marks the last stage in the candidate’s fulfillment of requirements for the degree.

Admission

Application materials should be uploaded onto a student’s admissions profile (see instructions below under “Application Procedures”). All applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College and the School of Art and Art History requirements.

Deadline date for submission of materials to the Office of Graduate Admissions is December 15 for the art history program; admission is for fall.

School of Art and Art History Requirements

Applicants whose first or official language is not English and whose previous academic degrees were not earned at an English-language institution must score as follows on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): for art history applicants, at least 100 (internet-based). All applicants must have a minimum TOEFL iBT speaking score of 26 and a listening score of 25. An application will not be reviewed if scores are lower than the requirements specify.

Prospective graduate students must meet the School of Art and Art History’s admission requirements for the specific degree program they plan to enter. They must submit application materials to the University’s Office of Graduate Admissions and to the specific program they wish to enter. Program-specific application requirements and deadline dates are listed below.

All applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College; see the Manual of Rules and Regulations of the Graduate College on the Graduate College website.

Although exceptions may be made when other components of the application are strong, art history applicants should have a combined verbal and quantitative score of at least 300 and an analytical writing score of at least 5 on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) General Test. Art history applicants must have a bachelor’s degree, preferably in art history or a related field, and have an undergraduate g.p.a. of at least 3.25.

Non-native speakers of English should note that most students are financially funded through teaching, and the Iowa Board of Regents mandates that all non-native speakers of English pass an oral English test in order to teach.

Application Procedures

Prospective students may apply online through the Office of Admissions website. After submitting an application, applicants will receive email instructions on how to access their admissions profile on MyUI. Applicants then upload the required supplemental documents through a secure portal.

Required documents include:

- transcripts from all colleges and universities an applicant has attended,
- contact information for three individuals (able to assess applicants’ potential for graduate study) designated to provide letters of recommendation,
- a statement of purpose, and
- the Supplemental Graduate Application Information form.

Art history applicants should supply a research paper (preferably from an art history course) or thesis that demonstrates potential to undertake graduate-level research in art history, and a personal statement of 1,000 words describing their intellectual development, academic interests, and career goals. The statement must name the University of Iowa faculty member under whose guidance the applicant hopes to work and indicate how that faculty member’s area of expertise, or how the art history program is especially suited to the applicant’s interests and goals.

Applicants should consult the Art History Graduate Bulletin on the School of Art and Art History website.

A student who completed an M.A. at the University of Iowa and who wishes to apply to the Ph.D. program in art history must make a formal application for change of status through the graduate program coordinator. Applications are evaluated in the context of the entire applicant pool.

The Office of Graduate Admissions notifies all applicants by mail of admission decisions.

Financial Support

Fellowships, teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and tuition scholarships are awarded to graduate students on the basis of artistic and/or scholarly record.

Iowa Arts Fellowships

The Graduate College awards Iowa Arts Fellowships to two incoming or first-year studio art graduate students each year. For more information, see Iowa Arts Fellowships on the Graduate College website.

Teaching and Research Assistantships

Assistantships are awarded to graduate students on the basis of academic record, promise as scholars or artists, and demonstrated ability to do the job. Quality of performance in one’s graduate program at Iowa is generally the major criterion for awarding teaching assistantships. The number of hours of work required depends on the amount of the award.

Scholarships and Fellowships

The School of Art and Art History offers a variety of scholarships and fellowships made possible by contributions from alumni who wish to support promising artists and scholars. These awards are made on the same basis as teaching and research assistantships.

Information and application materials for graduate scholarships and fellowships are included in the admissions package. They also are available from the School of Art and Art History main office.

Renewal or reappointment for fellowships and assistantships depends on adequate progress toward the degree (graduate students must accumulate at least 18 s.h. of graduate credit each calendar year and maintain a grade-point average...
above the required minimum) and satisfactory performance of assistantship duties.

Decisions on assistantships and financial aid generally are made during the latter part of the spring semester for the following academic year. Applications and all relevant materials should be on file by January 15.

Career Advancement

Many graduates pursue careers that match their degree specializations, such as commercial or graphic designer, conservation or museum curator or administrator, art educator, public artist, gallery and museum administration, art appraisal, and restoration, or community art center coordinator or instructor.

The Pomerantz Career Center offers multiple resources to help students find internships and jobs.