Art History, PhD

The PhD program is intended for students who wish to pursue original research in art history. Students should acquire a deep knowledge of art history, as well as the field's theoretical and historical foundations. PhD students are prepared to pursue careers in academia as well as to become museum curators and directors.

Learning Outcomes

Students are expected to demonstrate many, if not all, of the following:

- understanding of the development of the history and methodology of art history;
- skill in the visual analysis of primary source material;
- skill in contextual analysis and secondary source interpretations;
- productive engagement in the broad and ever-shifting philosophical, scholarly, and institutional debates that determine the structure and content of art history;
- ability to engage in sustained critical thinking;
- ability to write clearly and compellingly;
- deep knowledge of three of the following distribution fields: African, architecture, Asian, ancient, medieval, Renaissance and Baroque, 18th- and 19th-century European, American, and modern/contemporary;
- reading proficiency in French or German as well as a second language of particular relevance to their field of study;
- ability to conduct independent research in museums, archives, and/or libraries;
- knowledge and skills necessary to be effective teaching assistants for courses numbered 1000–1999;
- grant-writing skills;
- public speaking skills necessary to present research in professional academic settings;
- capacity to teach as an instructor of record in their area of expertise; and
- critical research and writing skills necessary to publish peer-reviewed articles.

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, visit the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations Section XII C. Students must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.50. They may count a maximum of 38 s.h. of work completed for the MA toward the PhD, excluding credit earned in language courses. Students are allowed only one semester of academic probation.

Students 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.

Students major in one of the following distribution fields: Asian, ancient Mediterranean, medieval, Renaissance and Baroque, 18th- and 19th-century European, American, and modern/contemporary. In addition, candidates minor in two fields: any in the preceding list plus African. One minor must be in an art history distribution field that is non-contiguous with the major field. The second minor may be in any art history distribution field, or it may be in a relevant discipline outside of art history, subject to approval from the art history faculty.

For more detailed information, consult the Art History Graduate Bulletin on the School of Art, Art History, and Design website.

Required Courses

Students must satisfactorily complete ARTH:5000 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 the University of Iowa are exempt). They must register for an art history seminar in their first three semesters of PhD coursework (or in their fifth, sixth, and seventh semesters of graduate study), before ARTH:7010 PhD Readings and the comprehensive exam.

Students must register for and satisfactorily complete ARTH:6020 Art History Colloquium for 1 s.h. each semester that they are enrolled for 9 s.h. or more or have an RA/TA appointment. Students who register for fewer than 9 s.h. are strongly encouraged to attend. Art history colloquium is a monthly series of lectures, panel discussions, or field experience focusing on professional development. Planned in conjunction with the graduate Art History Society, this requirement is integral to the degree program and is an important avenue toward professionalism in the field. Attendance is required (any absence needs to be approved by the head of art history before the missed meeting).

Students must attend at least six lectures by visiting scholars in art history during the course of their enrollment as PhD graduate students (proof of attendance is provided by short written responses of 150–250 words turned in to the director of graduate studies within two weeks of the lecture) and must register for an art history seminar in each of the first three semesters of their PhD coursework and prior to both the PhD readings course and comprehensive examinations.

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, Art History, and Design'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 PhD, although doctoral students may petition the art history faculty for permission to apply up to 9 s.h.

Language Requirement

PhD students must demonstrate proficiency in French or German for admission to the PhD program in art history. They must demonstrate proficiency in a second non-English language, generally one relevant to the chosen area of research, by the end of the third semester in the PhD program. Students may demonstrate proficiency by:

- two years of university-level coursework;
- earning a grade of B or above in an advanced language course numbered 3000 or above;
- achieving at least an 80% proficiency score on the level 5 milestone of the relevant Rosetta Stone language program; or
- scoring 500 or above in the University of Iowa World Languages Placement Test.

In exceptional circumstances, a student may make a direct petition to the faculty upon receiving a recommendation from their advisor. Language courses do not carry degree credit.

PhD Committee

The PhD 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 PhD 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. Visit the Art History Graduate Bulletin for complete instructions.

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 that includes 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 PhD committee for an oral defense of the dissertation. The oral defense constitutes the final examination for the PhD. The successful completion of this examination normally marks the last stage in the candidate's fulfillment of requirements.

Graduate Education

Graduate education prepares students with advanced knowledge and skills in specialized fields. At the University of Iowa, the Graduate College advocates for student-centered graduate education and supports equitable application of rules and policies across graduate programs.

Academics

University of Iowa graduate credentials are regulated by policies and requirements found in the Graduate College Manual of Rules and Regulations. This includes minimum grade-point average (GPA) requirements for academic standing and degree conferral. The Graduate College sets the minimum requirement. Individual graduate programs may establish higher GPA requirements.

Admissions

Graduate student applicants must meet admission requirements for both the Graduate College and the program to which they have applied. University of Iowa graduate admission requirements are published by the Graduate College and on the Graduate Admissions website.

Financial Support

Graduate students might be eligible for financial support. Several contingencies apply, including degree program and award type, satisfactory progress toward degree, satisfactory completion of all duties related to an appointment, and availability of funding. Graduate students should inquire directly with their program for more information about funding availability. The Graduate Student Employment Standards govern the employment relationship between the University of Iowa and all graduate teaching and research assistants in all matters except wages, which are covered by an existing collective bargaining agreement or the conditions of an applicable federal grant.

Admission

Application materials should be uploaded onto a student's admissions profile (consult instructions below under "Application Procedures"). All applicants must meet the admission requirements of the Graduate College and the School of Art, Art History, and Design1Q.

The deadline to submit materials to Graduate Admissions is Dec. 15 for the art history program; admission is for the following fall.

School of Art, Art History, and Design Requirements

Prospective graduate students must meet the School of Art, Art History, and Design's admission requirements for the specific degree program they plan to enter. They must submit

application materials to Graduate Admissions and to the specific program they wish to enter.

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

Applicants must hold an MA in art history or a related graduate degree and be able to demonstrate proficiency in French or German. Proficiency in a second non-English language relevant to the student's research area is required by the end of the third semester of PhD work.

Application Procedures

Prospective students may apply online through the 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 who are able to assess the applicant's 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 also 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.

Students who completed an MA at the University of Iowa and who wish to apply to the PhD program in art history must make a formal application for a change of status through the graduate program coordinator. Applications are evaluated in the context of the entire applicant pool.

Applicants should consult the Art History Graduate Bulletin on the School of Art, Art History, and Design website. No separate application is necessary for scholarships or teaching/research assistantships for applicants.

Graduate Admissions notifies all applicants by mail of admission decisions.

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 appraiser and restorer, or community art center coordinator or instructor.

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

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, visit MyUI.

Art History, PhD

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
72 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; typically 30 s.h. (but up to a maximum of 33 s.h.) of graduate transfer credits taken for the master's from an accredited institution allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. [a, b, c]		
Maintain a cumulative program GPA of at least 3.50.		
Students major in one of the following distribution fields: Asian, ancient Mediterranean, medieval, Renaissance and Baroque, 18th- and 19th-century European, American, and modern/contemporary. In addition, candidates minor in two fields: any of the above plus African. [d]		
Students must attend at least six public lectures by visiting scholars in art history during the course of enrollment as PhD graduate students; proof of attendance is provided by short (150-250 word) written responses turned in to the director of graduate studies within two weeks of the lecture.		
	Hours	**0**
First Year		
Fall		
ARTH:4999	Capstone Seminar in Art History [e, f]	3
ARTH:6020	Art History Colloquium [g]	1
ARTH:6XXX	Graduate Art Seminar [h]	3
Elective course [f]		3
	Hours	**10**
Spring		
ARTH:6020	Art History Colloquium [g]	1
ARTH:6XXX	Graduate Art Seminar [h]	3
Elective course [f]		3
Elective course [f]		3
	Hours	**10**
Second Year		
Fall		
Language Proficiency Exam [i]		
ARTH:6020	Art History Colloquium [g]	1
ARTH:6XXX	Graduate Art Seminar [h]	3
Elective course [f]		3
Elective course [f]		3
	Hours	**10**
Spring		
ARTH:6020	Art History Colloquium [g]	1
ARTH:7010	PhD Readings [j]	3
Elective course [f]		3
Elective course [f]		3
	Hours	**10**
Third Year		
Fall		
Exam: Doctoral Comprehensive Exam [k]		
Dissertation Prospectus [l]		

ARTH:7010	PhD Readings [j]	1
	Hours	**1**
Spring		
ARTH:7020	PhD Thesis [m]	1
	Hours	**1**
Fourth Year		
Fall		
ARTH:7020	PhD Thesis [m]	0
	Hours	**0**
Spring		
ARTH:7020	PhD Thesis [m]	0
	Hours	**0**
Fifth Year		
Fall		
ARTH:7020	PhD Thesis [m]	0
	Hours	**0**
Spring		
ARTH:7020	PhD Thesis [m]	0
Exam: Doctoral Final Exam [n]		
	Hours	**0**
	Total Hours	**42**

a Students must submit an annual progress to degree report by January 15th of each year.

b Students entering with fewer than 30 s.h. of coursework from the master's degree must work with their faculty advisor to complete the needed appropriate graduate coursework.

c Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.

d One minor must be in an art history distribution field that is non-contiguous with the major field. The second minor may be in any art history distribution field, or it may be in a relevant discipline outside of art history, subject to approval from the art history faculty.

e Students must register for and satisfactorily complete ARTH:4999 even if they have enrolled in a similar course at another institution; students who have already taken this course at The University of Iowa are exempt from this requirement and should work with faculty advisor to select an alternate course.

f Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate graduate elective coursework and sequence.

g Take each semester when enrolled in 9 s.h. or more or have a research or teaching assistant appointment; all students are encouraged to attend the colloquium.

h Must register for an art history seminar in first, second, and third semesters of enrollment; credit for graduate seminars may be applied toward the five distribution fields requirement.

i Students must demonstrate proficiency in two research languages in addition to English chosen in consultation with the faculty advisor by the end of the fourth semester. Students may demonstrate proficiency by a) two years of university-level coursework, b) earning a grade of B or better in a 3000-level advanced language course, c) achieving at least an 80% proficiency score on the level 5 milestone of the relevant Rosetta Stone language program, or d) placing out of the second year of the language in the University of Iowa World Languages Placement Test. In exceptional circumstances, making a direct petition to the faculty after receiving the recommendation of their advisor. Language courses do not carry degree credit.

j Students preparing for the Comprehensive Exam will work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate PhD Readings coursework and sequence.

k Taken upon completion of course requirements; consists of three written exams and an oral exam. See the General Catalog and department website for specifics.

l Submitted after completing the Comprehensive Exam; see the General Catalog and department website for specifics.

m Up to 6 s.h. of dissertation credit may count towards degree requirements.

n Dissertation defense.