

History, PhD

The Department of History offers a doctoral program for students interested in earning a PhD in history. Students interested in graduate work may obtain a copy of the current Guide to Graduate Study in history from the Department of History website. The guide is revised periodically to include the latest detailed regulations on study toward advanced degrees and other information for students.

Learning Outcomes

The PhD program is intended for students who wish to pursue original research in history. The end goal is a first-rate dissertation based on that research. Students should acquire a deep knowledge of two fields of history and understand the field's historical and theoretical foundations. They are prepared to pursue careers in and outside of academia, and they fashion their plans of study together with their advisors.

Students are expected to demonstrate:

- understanding of the development of the historiography and historical methodologies;
- skill analyzing primary source material;
- skill in contextual analysis and secondary source interpretations;
- an ability to engage in the broad and ever-shifting philosophical, scholarly, and institutional debates animating the practice of history;
- the ability to engage in sustained critical thinking;
- the ability to write clearly and compellingly;
- a deep knowledge of their two research fields;
- reading knowledge of a second language of particular relevance to their field of study;
- the ability to conduct independent research;
- knowledge and skills necessary to be effective teachers;
- public speaking skills necessary to present research in professional academic settings; and
- critical research and writing skills necessary to publish peer-reviewed articles.

Requirements

The Doctor of Philosophy program in history requires at least 72 s.h. of graduate credit. Students must maintain a cumulative University of Iowa grade-point average of at least 3.33. Those who have earned MA degrees can apply up to 30 s.h. of credit toward the PhD.

Students must complete at least seven graduate-level history or related field courses numbered 6000 or above, earning 3 or 4 s.h. of credit for each course. Courses taken at the MA level may be counted toward this requirement.

Students must complete a required course sequence in their first year: HIST:6002 Introduction to Graduate Studies in History: Historiography and Methods and HIST:6003 History Theory and Interpretation. These courses develop an understanding of the philosophy of history, historiography, and methods of historical research. Students also must complete the comprehensive exam sequence in the second or third year depending on their degree at admission: HIST:6004 Comprehensive Exams Seminar I (the semester before the comprehensive exam) and HIST:6005 Comprehensive Exams Seminar II (the semester of the comprehensive exam).

Students who enter the program without an MA must write two research papers that are the length of a standard journal article (7,000–9,000 words) before taking comprehensive exams. One of these research papers is the qualifying research paper. For students who enter the program with an MA, only the qualifying research essay must be completed before taking comprehensive exams. The essay must be based on original research and should be of sufficient quality to submit for publication in learned journals, just as the PhD dissertation takes the form of a full-length scholarly monograph. The qualifying essay must be approved by the faculty advisor and a second faculty member in order for a student to continue in the program.

The department has a basic world language requirement for the PhD; however, the supervising faculty member may require a student to demonstrate reading proficiency in one or more languages and proficiency in the use of other study tools. Students may not complete the comprehensive exam until these requirements have been met.

The comprehensive written and oral exams cover three distinct fields. The primary field is defined thematically and geographically in consultation with the advisor. The secondary field is defined with a field supervisor; it must have a different thematic and/or geographic focus than the primary field. Both of these fields are based on core sets of readings created together with advisors. There are two options for the third field: a teaching option and a non-teaching option. In either case, the parameters are set by the student's advisor, and the required work must be completed prior to the written examinations. The written portion of the comprehensive exams consists of two questions for each field, each answered over two days during the comprehensive exam period. The oral portion of the comprehensive examination focuses on the submitted written examination.

In most cases, the candidate submits a written prospectus for the dissertation to the faculty advisor before the comprehensive exams, and the student defends the prospectus within two weeks of passing the oral portion of the examination. The examination committee considers the prospectus and may approve it, reject it, or require its revision. At this point, all that remains is researching and writing the dissertation, in regular consultation with the faculty advisor. When the dissertation is completed, a dissertation committee composed of at least four faculty members administers the final examination. A formal oral defense of the dissertation typically lasts two hours.

Admission

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

Applicants submit their application online. Along with the official application, they submit academic transcripts; examples of original writing, such as a term paper, a seminar paper, or a master's essay; letters of recommendation from three persons familiar with the student's past academic work; and a one- or two-page personal statement of the applicant's purpose for doing graduate work. See History (MA or PhD) on the University of Iowa Graduate Admissions website for more information.

All application materials are due by Jan. 15 for entry the following August.

Career Advancement

Graduate study in history prepares students for occupations such as secondary or college teaching, publishing, commercial research, foundations and nongovernmental organizations, and government or other public services. With additional specialized training, students may become qualified for careers in historical site preparation and display, or archival, library, or museum work.

The University of Iowa's history graduates who earn a PhD have an excellent history of job placement, depending on their area of study. Graduate and postdoctoral career services offer multiple resources to assist students in preparing for job opportunities upon completion of the program.

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, see MyUI.

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Entering with a BA

Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		
72 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; more information is included in the General Catalog and on department website. ^a		
Hours		0
First Year		
Fall		
HIST:6002	Introduction to Graduate Studies in History: Historiography and Methods ^b	3
History course ^c		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		9
Spring		
HIST:6003	History Theory and Interpretation ^b	3
History course ^c		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		9
Second Year		
Any Semester		
Language Requirement ^e		
Hours		0
Fall		
Qualifying Research Essay ^f		
History course ^c		3
History course ^c		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		9
Spring		
History course ^c		3
History course ^c		3

Elective course ^d		3
Hours		9
Third Year		
Fall		
HIST:6004	Comprehensive Exams Seminar I	3
History course ^c		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		9
Spring		
Comprehensive Exam ^g		
Dissertation Prospectus ^h		
HIST:6005	Comprehensive Exams Seminar II	3
Elective course ^d		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		9
Fourth Year		
Fall		
Elective course ^d		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		6
Spring		
Elective or Independent Study ^d		2
Hours		2
Fifth Year		
Fall		
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		3
Spring		
HIST:7193	Thesis	2
Hours		2
Sixth Year		
Fall		
HIST:7193	Thesis	2
Hours		2
Spring		
HIST:7193	Thesis	1
Hours		1
Seventh Year		
Fall		
HIST:7193	Thesis	1
Hours		1
Spring		
HIST:7193	Thesis	1
Final Exam ⁱ		
Hours		1
Total Hours		72

a 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.

b Students must complete HIST:6002 and HIST:6003 during their first year.

c Students must complete at least seven graduate level history (or related field) courses numbered 6000 or above; work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate coursework and sequence.

- d Work with faculty advisor to determine appropriate elective coursework and sequence.
- e The department has a basic world language requirement for the PhD. However, the faculty advisor may require a student to demonstrate a reading knowledge of one or more languages and proficiency in the use of other study tools. Students may not complete the comprehensive examination until these requirements have been met.
- f Must be completed prior to the end of second year fall semester.
- g Written and oral examination typically completed during the second year; more information is included in the General Catalog and on department website.
- h Typically completed during the second year, written prospectus for the dissertation is submitted to the faculty advisor before the comprehensive exams; the student defends the prospectus within two weeks of passing the oral portion of the comprehensive examination.
- i Dissertation defense.