Department of History

Master of Arts in History
Doctor of Philosophy in History

http://www.uiowa.edu/~history/

Guide
For Applicants
To our
Graduate Program
The Department of History at the University of Iowa offers graduate programs for candidates who seek the Master of Arts degree (M.A.) and the Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.). The close association of faculty and students in teaching and research ensures excellent professional training. We encourage students to design individual programs in historical research based on varied methods of critical inquiry and interpretation. The graduate program in History prepares graduate students for careers in university teaching and scholarly research; historical writing and editing; secondary school teaching; archival, museum, and library work; government service and other professions.

Faculty members in History teach and publish on the histories of Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Mexico, and the United States. They focus on economic, political, religious, social, and cultural history, with particular interests in medieval Europe, African-American studies, American social and cultural history, Women's history, and legal history. In order to enrich studies in these fields, the History Department maintains interdisciplinary links with other departments and programs in the College of Liberal Arts and other colleges in the University.

We do not match students to faculty mentors upon admission to our programs. We expect that applicants have seriously considered the high quality of our Department and are prepared to work with the current and future faculty. Applicants interested in the work of specific faculty members are urged to contact them to discuss their research plans and suitability for our degree programs.

University of Iowa Nondiscrimination Statement

The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination in employment or in its educational programs and activities on the basis of race, national origin, color, creed, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preference. The University also affirms its commitment to providing equal opportunities and equal access to University facilities.

For additional information on nondiscrimination policies, contact the Coordinator of Title IX and Section 504, and the ADA in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, telephone (319) 335-0705 (voice) or (319)335-0697 (text), 202 Jessup Hall, the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, 52242-1316.
Graduate Program in History

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the graduate program in History at the University of Iowa. We have designed this short guide to supplement the material you have already received from the University of Iowa's Graduate Admissions office. In this guide you will find:

- a description of our program and degree requirements............................... 3
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Please read over this information before you contact us with further questions so that we may be able to help you as quickly and accurately as we can.
Degree Requirements

Students may apply for admission to one of three graduate programs offered by the History Department. In each of these programs, students concentrate on two or three areas of historical scholarship distributed between broadly defined divisions of history. Our formal divisions are: the Ancient World, Medieval Europe, Early Modern Europe, Modern Europe, Russia, United States, Latin America, China, Japan, India, Africa, and ‘Other’.

**M.A. (terminal): Master of Arts without admission to the Ph.D. program.**

This master's degree is designed for students who want to obtain an M.A. degree and who do not intend to continue for a Ph.D. degree. A student pursuing the M.A. (terminal) usually completes a total of 30 credit hours of graduate course work followed by an examination in the major area of study. M.A. (terminal) students may opt to write a research essay instead of taking an examination. Such students need to work closely with a faculty advisor soon after beginning their studies. If a M.A. (terminal) student later wishes to continue in our doctoral program, she or he must re-apply and be considered alongside all new applicants during the regular admissions process. Because support for graduate students at the University of Iowa is limited, we normally cannot offer terminal students appointments as Graduate Research Assistants or Graduate Instructors, nor do we recommend our students for positions elsewhere in the University.

**M.A./Ph.D.: Master of Arts leading to admission to the Ph.D. program.**

Applicants for this degree intend to take the M.A. degree and to continue immediately into the doctoral program if admitted at the end of the Master's work. This degree requires 30 credits of graduate course work and the completion of a substantial research essay in the student's major division of history. The essay is not a Master's thesis, but serves some of the same purposes in that it demonstrates the student's ability to carry out original research and analysis. The faculty normally considers the student for admission to the Ph.D. program at the oral defense of the research essay. M.A./Ph.D. students do not need to apply for doctoral status through the Departmental admissions committee.

**Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**

Students who complete the M.A./Ph.D. Master’s in History are automatically considered for admission to the doctoral program. Students who have an M.A. in History (or in a closely-related discipline) from another university may apply directly to our Ph.D. program during the annual admissions cycle. The Ph.D. degree requires 72 credits of graduate course work (including the credits obtained for the M.A. degree), comprehensive examinations in three fields of history (distributed between two of our major divisions, as listed above) and completion of a doctoral dissertation under the direction of a member of the department.

Applicants with an M.A. from another university may transfer up to 30 credit hours of graduate credit from their Master's program, if the credits are accepted by the University of Iowa's transcript service. This is the number of credit hours that students must complete for an M.A. degree in our program. Doctoral students thus need to complete an additional 42 hours of graduate credit for the Ph.D.

In addition to the course requirements, the comprehensive examinations and the dissertation, individual faculty may require their students to master one or more languages, to demonstrate proficiency in particular research methods (quantitative analysis, paleography) or to develop other skills as necessary for their fields of study and dissertation projects.
How to apply for admission to the M.A. and Ph.D. programs

The materials you have received from the Graduate Admissions office, the Department of History, or have downloaded from Graduate Admissions (http://www.uiowa.edu/admissions/graduate/index.html), you should find an explanation of all the necessary information about what you need to submit to the Graduate College along with the formal online application. After you have read over their instructions and the material in this guide, and have made a decision to apply, please fill out the application according to the following directions. Following these instructions is important because we need to know the exact degree program in History you wish to pursue.

If you want to apply for admission to the M.A. (terminal):

1) Please mark MA Terminal on the degree objective form available in your Graduate Application folder.
2) Please be specific as to which area of history you wish to study.

If you want to apply for admission to the M.A./Ph.D:

1) Please mark MA/PhD on the degree objective form available in your Graduate Application folder.
2) Please be specific as to which area of history you wish to study.

If you already have an M.A. in history and want to apply to the Ph.D. program:

1) Please mark PhD on the degree objective form available in your Graduate Application folder.
2) Please be specific as to which area of history you wish to study.

In addition to the information that the Graduate College requires (GRE scores, transcripts, the completed application form, and letters of reference), applicants should upload into their Application File a one to two-page Statement of Purpose and a sample of their written work. This should be the best substantial paper you wrote as an undergraduate in an upper division history class. If you have an M.A. in history, it should be your Master’s thesis or a major paper that you wrote for a graduate seminar. Applicants often ask us what to submit if they did not do a research paper in history as an undergraduate, or if they are now considering graduate work several years after their B.A. degree and do not have a current essay. The best choice for a writing sample is what you think best displays your ability to write clearly and critically, while using evidence from various credible sources to make a persuasive argument. We sometimes suggest that applicants who have been out of college for a while take an upper level history course that will provide them with an opportunity to write a substantial paper, if they can find an appropriate class at a nearby college. We have also had some successful applicants who have sent a paper from a course in another discipline (e.g., English, Political Science) that demonstrates their ability to write well and to think historically. If you do not have a single undergraduate or Master’s level writing sample that best displays your abilities, you may send two or three writing samples.
What Happens After You Apply: The Admissions Process

As you will see from the letter enclosed with this Guide, once you begin to submit your application you will be able to check your online file to see if it is complete or when parts of it are missing. The Director of Graduate Studies begins to review completed files in late December and early January. The Department's admissions committee meets as soon as the second semester begins and works to identify the most promising candidates for our programs. The very best students have their files forwarded to the Graduate College to be considered for the graduate recruitment awards. (See the brochure sent to you by Graduate Admissions)

Applicants frequently ask what our criteria are for admission to graduate work. We do not impose cut off scores for GRE results. The minimum GPA required is the same as the minimums enforced by the Graduate College (this currently stands at 3.0 for applicants for the M.A. and Ph.D. degree). We do take GRE scores and GPAs into consideration, of course, but we do so in light of our evaluation of the writing sample(s). The admissions committee reads these papers very carefully, and an excellent research paper can offset less than stellar GRE scores. Similarly, "A" work in an applicant's history classes during the last years of college can offset a low GPA resulting from poor performance during the first year as an undergraduate. Lastly, we look closely at the applicant's letters of recommendation, Statement of Purpose, application form, general course of study pursued, and the quality of undergraduate or graduate institution from which degrees were earned.

By the last meeting of the admissions committee in late February or early March, the committee has compiled two short lists of candidates. The lists are presented to the entire faculty at a faculty meeting in early March for the Department's approval. One list names the recommended M.A. (terminal) students; the other a ranking of all the M.A./Ph.D. and Ph.D. students.

**M.A. (terminal) applicants:**
Because we normally do not offer financial support to M.A. (terminal) students, once the faculty admits the students on this list, the Director of Graduate Studies can contact all of them immediately with the good news.

**M.A./Ph.D. and Ph.D. applicants:**
We do not impose quotas on the numbers of students to admit for work in various fields, such as U.S. history or the history of China; nor do we match students to potential dissertation supervisors before allowing admission. We do, however, consider the number of doctoral students whom we can likely support as Graduate Research Assistants and as Graduate Instructors during the time they need to complete the doctoral degree. With this number in mind, the History faculty admits a certain number of M.A./Ph.D. and Ph.D. students and put some others on a waiting list.

The Director of Graduate Studies immediately contacts the students to whom we can make offers of a Research Assistantship or a Graduate Instructorship. He or she also contacts the students who will be admitted with funding if funding becomes available; such students are admissible, but we usually do not officially admit them until we can offer them financial support. By an agreement signed by most Graduate Colleges in the United States, students admitted with funding have until April 15 to decide whether or not they will accept it. As soon as we know (either before or after April 15) that a student with funding has decided not to attend the University of Iowa, the Director of Graduate Studies contacts the next student on the waiting list and makes an offer of admission with funding if that student is still interested.
Sources of Support for Graduate Study in History

This guide has already introduced the major forms of support that we can offer. These are also described in the material sent out from Graduate Admissions. Also included with that admissions material is an "Application for Graduate Awards." You must fill this out if you want to be considered for financial assistance.

We nominate our very best candidates for a UI Recruitment Fellowships from the Graduate College. We also have two sources of support that we can offer directly from the History Department. We normally offer a Research Assistantship (RA) to those we admit to the M.A./Ph.D. program for their first year of support. A Research Assistant helps History faculty with their research projects. We sometimes offer an RA to students entering the doctoral program with an M.A. from another university. We find that serving as an RA helps incoming students to get to know History faculty while adjusting to the Department and to Iowa City. RAs pay tuition at the in-state level, which is substantially less than tuition for non-residents of Iowa. After a year with Fellowship or RA support, we expect that our graduate students will enter the classroom. The first assignment as a Graduate Instructor is normally as a discussion leader for sections of a survey course in which a faculty member delivers lectures to a large class. Such courses may have 200 to 300 students enrolled, and these large groups are divided into discussion sections of 25-30 students each. The Graduate Instructor meets with these students every week to go over course material and to discuss the assigned readings. The Graduate Instructor is usually responsible for grading the writing assignments and examinations for his or her sections, as well. Teaching discussion sections prepares Graduate Instructors for their next teaching assignments.

After serving as discussion leader, our Graduate Instructors then teach their own courses within our "Issues in Human History" curriculum. We have defined a number of "Issues," such as "20th Century Crisis" and "Gender in History," which have general course descriptions. Half of the content of each Issues course, for example, must be about non-U.S. material. Within these general guidelines, Graduate Instructors design their own sections of the issue they have chosen. They write the syllabus, choose the course texts, create the assignments and do all of the grading. While under the overall direction of a faculty supervisor, who is there to help with problems, to provide support and to ensure high-quality teaching, our Graduate Instructors have excellent opportunities to grow as teachers of college level courses.

Graduate Instructors are represented by a union, COGS-UE 896. The terms of the current contract (including wages and benefits) can be found at www.uiowa.edu/~hrpersvc/relations/Cogs/. The stipend for 2016-17 for a full HTE was no less than $18,809 for the academic year. Graduate Instructors and their partners pay tuition at in-state rates, a portion of which (based on the student’s course load and level of employment) is reimbursed by the Graduate College.

Because our Graduate Instructors are supported primarily by teaching, it is very important that applicants whose first language is not English gain the necessary speaking and writing skills in English to communicate effectively in the classroom. There is an extensive program of courses and examinations for students to learn English and to be certified when ready to instruct undergraduates. We urge foreign applicants to be aware of our expectation that they be able to teach and come to the University of Iowa prepared to do intensive language work if necessary.

There are also a number of fellowships and grants that doctoral students may apply for to support research travel and dissertation writing later in their programs.
Reasons to Choose the University of Iowa Department of History

*Resources for research:*

In the material you may have received from the Graduate College the brochure called "The Graduate Experience" contains pictures of the campus and descriptions of some of the University’s resources, such as the University Library system. The general historical collection is first-rate, and includes unusual (and, in some cases, unique) documentary resources in a number of fields. The library has an exceptionally fine Government Publications collection, in part because it is a Regional Federal Depository for American documents, but also because it has been for many years collecting government publications from the principal European nations and member states of the British Commonwealth. A systematic attempt has been made to assemble documentary collections of various international organizations including the League of Nations and the United Nations along with their constituent bodies, and regional organizations, e.g., the Organization of American States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It has been library policy to try to buy all current publications appearing in the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Latin America that are of interest to historians. As a result of Iowa’s membership in the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago, moreover, materials from a large and fast-growing microfilm collection of press, archival, and series materials can be made available in Iowa City, often within 24 hours. Recently, a number of computer database collections have been added, such as the collection of medieval authors in Corpus Christianorum on CD-ROM.

The library holds valuable collections of French and English primary materials, including for medieval and early modern France the Histoire générale de Languedoc, inventories of provincial archives, microfilms of fourteenth-century administrative and scholastic documents in manuscript, a rich collection of Roman, medieval and early modern French legal treatises, and extensive holdings of French Revolutionary pamphlets and nineteenth-century French periodicals. English local history holdings are extensive, and nineteenth-century British government materials are particularly well represented, including a complete set of Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates. A project to film the entire 400 volumes of the private papers of Sir Robert Peel is in course. A large collection of labor and radical periodicals for the U.S. and Britain is also available. Biographical sources for nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain are plentiful. For German social history the holdings include local histories, histories of business corporations, and Gymnasium histories. An excellent collection of printed primary sources in the history of medicine is held in the John Martin Rare Book room in the medical library.

A fine research collection exists for all periods of U.S. History, including the papers of Vice-President Henry Wallace, valuable for investigating such topics as agricultural policy and the Progressive Party in 1948. The library also has an extensive microform collection in areas of American social reform, African-American history, Southern plantation records, and labor union records. There is also an expanding Women’s History archive. The Iowa State Historical Society in Iowa City has important materials for studying the social, political, and labor history of Iowa and the Upper Mississippi region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, in West Branch, ten miles from Iowa City, contains basic sources for the study of federal policies of the 1920s, isolationism between the wars, depression programs, governmental reorganization, and related topics, and for the history of American foreign relations.

The University Library has acquired on microfilm (from the Library of Congress) the entire collections of American presidential papers, giving students ready access to and opportunities for training and research in vast manuscript collections important to American political history for the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The government documents collection of the University Library has extensive National Archive series on film pertaining to U.S. relations with Mexico and China, and to American participation in World War I and the subsequent peace negotiations.

Collections for China, Japan, and India are expanding rapidly. The Chinese collection, started in the 1950s, has some 50,000 volumes including a large number of reprinted local histories. There are excellent collections for Russian and Latin American history. The library is unusually strong in codices and collections of documents pertaining to sixteenth-century Spanish American history; it also has an extensive microfilm collection of nineteenth-century Mexican publications and a wide range of materials for modern Mexico and Argentina.
Preparation for college-level teaching:
Not only do we ensure that our graduate students get excellent training to pursue independent research in history, but we also are at the forefront of training our students to become excellent college teachers. As described above, our graduate students get a great deal of experience in the classroom. We prepare our students for that experience in a number of important ways. One of our senior graduate students, known for his or her excellent teaching, is appointed as a Graduate Instructor Advisor each year. Working with the Director of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Advisor prepares an introductory workshop for all graduate students about to enter the classroom for the first time as instructors. We also offer an innovative “Teaching Proseminar” during Fall semester. This is a graduate level course devoted to learning how to teach history to undergraduates effectively, including how to have lively discussions, how to get students involved in small group projects, and how to use the new instructional technology to motive students and to help them learn to think historically. We learn how to think about teaching and learning, and hence how to improve our teaching skills over time. We also learn how to bridge the supposed gap between ‘teaching’ and ‘research’ by bringing our excitement about our own research interests and methods to our students.

In conjunction with the position of Graduate Instructor Advisor, the Department has also started a History Writing Center staffed by senior graduate students. Undergraduates who want to improve their writing in history papers work one-on-one with a Writing Center Assistant. This experience benefits both the undergraduates and the graduate student as they learn about effective writing.

A friendly and supportive academic community:
The faculty, staff and students of University of Iowa’s History Department take care to maintain open and easy communication between everyone in our community. There is a high level of mutual respect and understanding that persists through our most heated intellectual debates and sustains critical thinking both in and out of the classroom. In addition to talks by visiting speakers, three to four times a year faculty in the department present their current research in Faculty Workshops. The Graduate History Society (to which all graduate students in History automatically belong) also sponsors colloquia for graduate students to present the results of their dissertation research to each other. Finally, the faculty and senior graduate students regularly put together mini-workshops on professional issues, such as preparing a curriculum vitae for job applications and how to give effective presentations at academic conferences.

A renovated space for the History Department:
In the summer of 1997, the History Department moved back into Schaeffer Hall, one of the historic buildings on the University of Iowa Pentacrest. First opened in 1902, Schaeffer Hall reopened after being superbly renovated with an eye to preserving its original architectural details. It now houses the entire Department for the first time in many years, as faculty all have offices in the building and all of our graduate assistants have desk space there. Many classrooms are equipped with the latest in instructional technology, including projection of computer images and direct access to the internet. Smaller seminar rooms, however, still have the original slate blackboards and chalk to use for more spontaneous records of discussion. Nearly all History courses are given in the building and hallway conversations about history can be quite lively; students and faculty can be heard carrying their discussions on as they walk to nearby restaurants for lunch and to coffee houses for late afternoon stimulation.

An excellent faculty:
The History Department spends a great deal of time and energy when searching for scholars to join the faculty. We are a “reading” department, and just as the admissions committee reads the essays that every applicant to the graduate program sends us, we also read what every applicant for one of our positions sends us to demonstrate his or her scholarly abilities. Every search committee has a graduate student as a member, moreover, and candidates always meet with our graduate students when they come for a campus interview. As demonstrated in the list of faculty and their publications which closes this Guide, we hire historians whom we know will challenge our graduate students in seminars and will guide them through successful dissertations.

FACULTY CVs are available on our Department Website https://clas.uiowa.edu/history/people
Whom to contact for more information

If this Guide has not answered all the questions you have about our graduate program, please contact us. The following list contains numbers for you to call and addresses for email.

Graduate Admissions 1-319-335-1525

Graduate Admissions tracks the status of your application. The staff there can also help you with general questions about applying to the University.

History Department
Staff

Pat Goodwin  (319-335-2309)  patricia-goodwin@uiowa.edu
Sheri Sojka  (319-335-2308)  sheri-sojka@uiowa.edu

Pat Goodwin, the Department’s Administrative Assistant, answers all sorts of questions about degree requirements, questions about qualifications and academic standings, and is a resource regarding most anything in the History Department.

Sheri Sojka is the Graduate Program Coordinator in the Department. She handles the processing of graduate student applications, and can update you on the status of your application materials, serve as a resource for questions, and/or direct you to the appropriate person for additional information.

Faculty

Prof. Elizabeth Heineman  Chair of the History Department
(319-335-2303)  elizabeth-heineman@uiowa.edu
Prof. Jennifer Sessions  Director of Graduate Studies, History
(319-353-2199)  jennifer-sessions@uiowa.edu

Employment questions

Payroll 1-319-335-2381  http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/payroll/index.html
Staff Benefits 1-319-335-2676  http://www.uiowa.edu/hr/benefits/index.html

Payroll and Staff Benefits can answer questions about being employed by the University as a Research Assistant or a Graduate Instructor, including questions about the health insurance plan available for graduate student employees.