

Idaho State University

Department of History

Graduate Student Handbook

Revised August 2023

General Information

- Please note that some of the information on the History Department website is outdated. Please refer to this handbook and the [Graduate Catalog](#) for the most current information.
- Students should familiarize themselves with the [General Information and Policies](#) section in the most recent Graduate Catalog.
- See [Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures](#) in the Graduate Catalog for information on important deadlines.
 - Deadline to apply for graduation, 2023-2024:
 - 9/11/23 (Fall), 2/5/24 (Spring), and 5/17/24 (Summer)
 - Deadline for oral defense, 2023-2024:
 - No later than 11/17/23 (Fall); 4/12/24 (Spring); 7/12/24 (Summer)
 - *Please note that History does not hold defenses in the Summer.*
- Questions regarding degree paths, funding, supervision, course selection, GPA, petitions, graduate defenses, and general items not addressed in this handbook should be presented to the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Stango.
- Questions regarding travel, reimbursement, access to the graduate student office, materials and supplies should be directed to the Department Administrative Assistant, Exko Ramey.
- Questions specific to a course or GTA duties should be directed to the respective professor.

Program Overview

Offered since 2005, the M.A. in History trains students to explore established and emerging historical problems. Students are taught and supervised toward competency in graduate-level subject matter, writing, research skills, and professional preparation. In accordance with current Department outcomes, M.A. students will:

1. Identify major trends, theories, and approaches in the field of History;
2. Analyze and synthesize ongoing scholarly conversations in History and situate their arguments and projects in these contexts;
3. Utilize the range of resources available to historians in producing and presenting research;
4. Outline, pursue, and complete a significant research project, and be able to describe and justify their project in written and presentation formats.

By nature, an MA in History is a generalist degree and does not have a specific focus. You should expect to take coursework and receive training in multiple fields of History. You will, however, have a chance to study your own interests as you work on your Portfolio or Thesis (more information on these two “tracks” later in the handbook).

Department Funding & Resources

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) provide full tuition waivers and stipends for graduate students. These awards are highly competitive and evaluated annually in April for the following academic year. All full-time graduate students are eligible and considered for these awards. GTA recipients need to be registered for at least 9 and no more than 12 credits each semester.

Students working as TAs provide up to 19.5 hours of academically related work to the Department per week. [More information can be found on the Graduate School website.](#) The Director of Graduate Studies determines TA placement each semester. TAs are assigned to a faculty member, who determines the nature of the work the TA performs. We *attempt* to place TAs with different faculty during their time at ISU so that they may gain experience TA-ing different courses and observe multiple styles of teaching. It is not possible for students to request a specific placement.

All full-time graduate students are afforded space in the Graduate Student Office, Liberal Arts Building Room 326. When demand exceeds available space, students are encouraged to observe a fair use policy. Keys to the office may be obtained from the Administrative Assistant.

Coursework and Core Courses

A graduate degree at Idaho State University requires the completion of **30 graduate-level credits**. **At least fifteen credits must be completed at the 6600-level.**

Required Courses	
HIST 6600	Graduate Proseminar (can be taken multiple times)
HIST 6620	Research & Writing Seminar (can be taken multiple times)
Digital/Professional 55XX/66XX	Digital or Professional Development Course*
Elective Courses	
HIST 6605	Introduction to Graduate Studies in History (not currently offered)
HIST 6610	Introduction to Digital History (not currently offered)
HIST 6623	Global Idaho
HIST 6645 <i>or</i> HIST 6650	Independent Research Project (Portfolio) <i>or</i> Thesis credits, for a maximum of 6 credits. **

HIST 6664	Graduate Internship
Elective courses at 5500- or 6600-level	

*Digital or Professional Development Course: Students will take at least one graduate-level course to develop proficiency in the use in **one** of the following areas:

1. Digital research tools (such as a course in geographic information systems, or GIS), *or*
2. A course that will further develop their academic and professional marketability (such as a course in teaching, grant writing, media, or computer programming).

The departments of Communication, Media & Persuasion; Geoscience; Computer Science; and Education have traditionally serviced this need. HIST 5518: History for Teachers is an acceptable class, as well. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies for guidance.

These are independent study credits you enroll in with your Committee Chair, typically in the final year or semester of the program. Portfolio track students take HIST 6645, and Thesis track students take HIST 6650 (more on these two tracks later in this handbook). **You cannot take both. In a given semester, you may opt for 3 credits or 6 credits of 6645/6650, depending on what your Chair advises. Overall, though, only 6 credits of HIST 6645/6650 can count toward your degree.

The Graduate School is in the process of rolling out DegreeWorks to students. While the system is, at this moment, imperfect, you can monitor your degree progress on DegreeWorks. [Please see this guide to DegreeWorks for more information.](#)

GPA Requirement

A minimum of a 3.0 GPA is required for any graduate degree or certification at Idaho State University. Please note that this is a bare minimum requirement. We generally expect History graduate students to perform at a higher level.

Graduate Curriculum & Coursework Limitations

The graduate curriculum is rotated to allow full-time graduate students to complete the program in two years. See Sample Schedules included at the end of this handbook for reference. As a general rule, you should take HIST 6600-level courses (aside from 6645 and 6650) whenever they are offered to ensure that you can amass enough 6600-level credits to graduate on time.

Students may count up to six credits from outside the Department of History toward their degree, as approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. These must be at the 5500- or 6600-level. In recent years, students have found courses in Political Science, Anthropology, English, Geosciences, and

Education relevant to their needs, but please feel free to search the schedule to find suitable courses in any department.

HIST 6600-level courses are not offered in the summer. In general, History coursework options are limited in the summer, though in recent years we have offered two 5500-level HIST courses during the summer term. Please note HIST 6645 and 6650 cannot be taken during the summer, and that History oral defenses are not scheduled during the summer.

Forming a Committee

All graduate students will be evaluated by a committee of three faculty members. Most importantly, students need to find a Committee Chair who will supervise their Portfolio or Thesis (more on the “Portfolio” and “Thesis” can be found in the next section).

All students have the Director of Graduate Studies, Prof. Stango, listed as their “advisor” on DegreeWorks. This does not mean that she is your Chair. Once you have a Chair in place, you should defer to your Chair’s advice as you complete the program.

Students should begin to think about possible Committee Chairs in their first and second semesters in the program. Full Graduate faculty in History are eligible to Chair committees. Students can and should ask the Director of Graduate Studies for help in selecting a Chair. Students should consider research interests, working relationships, and performance in past coursework determining who to ask to Chair their committee. Faculty may agree or decline to Chair a student’s committee. A Chair should be in place by the end of the student’s second semester.

Once a student has selected a Chair, the Chair can offer advising and support as the student completes the program. The Chair ultimately determines when the student has successfully completed their Portfolio or Thesis, therefore, students should expect to work closely with their Chair to make sure they are on track as they complete Portfolio elements or Thesis chapters. The Chair also supervises the student’s Independent Study courses, HIST 6645 (Portfolio) or HIST 6650 (Thesis).

The Chair will help students determine who the other two remaining faculty members on the committee should be, but it is ultimately up to the student to ask faculty to serve on the committee. A second History faculty member must be asked to serve on the student’s committee (we occasionally call this person the “second reader”). The third committee member must be a faculty member who is *not* in the History Department—this person serves as the Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR). [Please see the Graduate Catalog for more information.](#) Again, faculty may agree or decline to serve on a student’s

committee. The three members of the student’s committee review the student’s material and vote “pass” or “fail” at the student’s oral defense (see the “Oral Defense” portion of this handbook).

Typically, the Chair reads drafts and discusses the work with the student. You should expect to meet somewhat regularly, particularly in the semester you plan to finish. The role of the “second reader” in History is more nebulous—you should ask your second reader *if* and *how often* they would like to see drafts of your work before your defense. Some second readers will want to read some of your work as you work on it, and others will not want to read anything until the final version is ready just prior to the defense. Usually, the GFR does not read anything until the final version, but be sure to clarify this with your GFR.

Paths to the Degree

In addition to completing 30 graduate credits and core requirements, students prepare a capstone project, demonstrate their competency in a public talk, and successfully complete an oral defense overseen by their faculty committee.

Capstone Options (Portfolio or Thesis)

All new students enter the program on the Portfolio path. Students must apply to write a thesis (see “Thesis,” below).

Portfolio

The Portfolio path showcases competency across several categories. Students submit a professional portfolio of their work prior to their defense. In addition to two required elements, students select three additional elements, chosen and prepared in consultation with their Committee Chair.

Required Elements	Students choose three additional elements
Historiographical Essay & Research Paper	A professional resume or curriculum vitae (C.V.)
	A cover letter or letter of intent
	A primary, secondary, or college-level lesson plan
	A grant or funding proposal
	A book review adhering to the standards of an identified journal in the student’s subject field

	A digital presentation of research and interpretation. This may take the form of a story map, timeline, website, podcast, or other digital tool. It should be publicly accessible online.
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The student will submit their Portfolio in a digital format (typically PDF) to their Committee Chair for distribution amongst their committee.

General Parameters of Portfolio Elements

The Committee Chair has full authority over the Portfolio Elements and determines *if* and *when* a student's work is acceptable. However, the Department has agreed on these general guidelines for the two required elements:

Historiographical Essay

The Historiographical Essay must be at least 20 pages in length and discuss a minimum of 8 scholarly sources. It should conform to the most recent Chicago Manual of Style.

Research Paper

The Research Paper must be at least 20 pages in length and based on original research using primary sources. It should conform to the most recent Chicago Manual of Style.

Thesis

The thesis path requires students to produce an original manuscript of at least 15,000 words based on the student's original primary source research. We recommend that students seeking to pursue a PhD complete the Thesis track.

Students pursuing the Thesis track must write a thesis proposal. Students will submit the proposal to the Director of Graduate Studies and their Committee Chair (see "Forming a Committee," above) by the end of their first year.

The proposal must contain the following elements:

- Thesis title
- Overall thesis abstract (250-500 words)
- List or description of provisionary primary and secondary sources
- Discussion of methodology
- Outline of potential chapters (150-200 words each) that include arguments, cohesion statements, and general themes

The Director of Graduate Studies and the Committee Chair determine a student's request for transfer to the Thesis path within two weeks of its submission. If accepted, the Committee Chair and the

student will devise a timeline for chapter submissions, meetings, and feedback. If denied, the student may revise and resubmit.

Theses are completed under the supervision of the Committee Chair. The Committee Chair has full authority over the Thesis and determines *if* and *when* a student's work is acceptable. Students should be in regular contact with their Chair to receive feedback on their work.

Thesis students should be aware that their thesis must conform to the ISU Graduate School's requirements. The Graduate School is very stringent about these requirements. Please refer to the Graduate School's Thesis and Dissertation Manual ([available as a PDF on their website](#)). The thesis must be submitted to the graduate school within two weeks of the defense (see "Oral Defense" in this handbook).

Preparing to Graduate

Deadlines

Please note the deadlines a) to apply for graduation and b) to hold the oral defense. The "[Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures](#)" section of the most recent catalog contains these dates.

NB: The Portfolio or Thesis must be submitted to the Chair for circulation among the Committee at least **two weeks** before the defense date.

Oral Defense

During the semester that they graduate, students will give a public presentation and an oral defense. Committee Chairs will determine whether a student is ready for the oral defense and schedule it with the Graduate School. Again, it is crucial that you work with your Chair as you work on your Portfolio or Thesis.

Both Portfolio and Thesis path students give a public presentation, typically held in person and on Zoom. You may invite family, friends, etc. to this presentation. Students will provide an oral defense of their work, which has three components:

1. An informative public talk that includes the following elements:
 - a. A 30-45-minute presentation. In the case of the Portfolio, the presentation may touch on one or several elements and may be tailored to the student's research or professional goals, i.e., the presentation of a lesson plan.
 - b. Visual complement or interactive demonstration aligned to the research.
2. Questions from the audience, after which the public is asked to leave.

3. Questions from the Committee, after which the candidate is asked to leave and the Committee votes “pass” or “fail.” The candidate then returns and is given the Committee’s decision, after which the defense is concluded.

Thesis students must submit their thesis to the Graduate School within two weeks of their defense. Please refer to the Graduate School’s Thesis and Dissertation Manual ([available as a PDF on their website](#)).

Portfolio students do not need to submit their work to the Graduate School.

Additional Opportunities

Research, Conferences, & Travel Funding

Conferences

Graduate students are expected to develop and present their work at graduate-level or early career-level conferences, and professors are available to advise in these matters. ISU’s annual Graduate Research Symposium and the annual Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) history society conference are most applicable. Contact the Graduate School or History Department PAT advisor for details. Students should link themselves to conference networking sites for updates on conference opportunities. See networks.h-net.org for details.

Travel Funds

Graduate students may request aid for travel expenses to present conference papers at regional or national meetings. Such requests should be presented only after a paper has been accepted by the official sponsoring organization. Funds for such purposes are very limited, and only modest requests are likely to be funded.

Students should request information about applying for funds sequentially from the following contact points:

1. Graduate School
2. Office for Research
3. Academic College (College of Arts and Letters)
4. Academic Department (History)

When submitting written requests to the Office of Research for travel funds, a breakdown of expenses for registration, lodging, travel, and per diem is necessary. See the [Office for Research website](#) for details.

Geotech Certificate

In addition to coursework leading to the M.A. in History, students may pursue a Graduate Certificate in Geotechnology, or Geotech Certificate. Students must complete an additional 14 credits and 5 credits of elective course work. [For further details see the Graduate Catalog.](#)

Sample Schedules

Please note that these are *sample* schedules intended to be a guide. Actual course offerings may vary.

Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies if you have questions about your schedule.

Remember, at least fifteen credits must be completed at the 6600-level. You can only count 6 credits of HIST 6645/6650 toward your degree.

Sample Schedule, Full Time Status (9 credits per semester) = Total 36 credits

Students who need to maintain full time status (for example, while holding a GTA position) can use this sample schedule as a guide. While the MA program only *requires* 30 credits of coursework, students who need to be enrolled full time each term will graduate with more credits than required.

Fall Year 1

HIST 6600: Graduate Proseminar (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

Spring Year 1

HIST 6620: Research & Writing Seminar (3 credits)

Digital or Professional Development Course (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

Fall Year 2

HIST 6600: Graduate Proseminar (3 credits)

HIST 6645/6650: Independent Research Project or Portfolio (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

Spring Year 2

HIST 6620: Research & Writing Seminar (3 credits)

HIST 6645/6650: Independent Research Project or Portfolio (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

Sample Schedule, Part Time Status (3-6 credits per semester) = Total 30 Credits

This sample schedule assumes the student is taking 3-6 credits per semester.

Fall Year 1

HIST 6600: Graduate Proseminar (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

Spring Year 1

HIST 6620: Research & Writing Seminar (3 credits)

Digital or Professional Development Course (3 credits)

Fall Year 2

HIST 6600: Graduate Proseminar (3 credits)

HIST 55XX Elective (3 credits)

Spring Year 2

HIST 6620: Research & Writing Seminar (3 credits)

Fall Year 3

HIST 6600: Graduate Proseminar (3 credits)

HIST 6645/6650: Independent Research Project or Portfolio (3 credits)

Spring Year 3

HIST 6645/6650: Independent Research Project or Portfolio (3 credits)