

The University of Western Ontario

Department of History

Graduate Student Programs Information



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Introduction

Graduate degrees in history have been granted at Western for more than a century. The department enjoys a high reputation both nationally and internationally for the quality of its faculty, programs and graduates. We invite you to become part of this proud tradition. Our research faculty has particular strengths in many areas of social and cultural history, including business and economics; international relations and conflict; religion; gender; and technology, health and environment, and public and digital history. We have recognized strengths as well in the study of Canada, the United States and the Atlantic World, and a developing research capacity in the history of Asia. We invite applicants for our PhD and MA programs to visit Western, meet the Graduate Chair, tour the library and the Department's facilities and meet possible supervisors and current graduate students. Please contact Ms. Chris Speed, the Graduate Assistant, to make arrangements, and feel free to write or e-mail any faculty member about research plans or interests.

Important Dates

Chair and Graduate Chair Meeting with GTAs/ Markers	September 8th 12:30-4:30pm SSC 9420
Beginning of Fall Term	September 1
International TA Day	September 6 12:00-5:00pm
Graduate Student Conference on Teaching (TA Day)	September 7 9:00am – 5:00pm
Fall Graduate Courses	September 8
Due Date for Fall Term Tuition (First Installment)	September 8
Last Day to Add Graduate Courses	September 16

Autumn Convocation	October 26-28
End of Fall Term	December 31
Beginning of Winter Term	January 1
Winter Graduate Courses Begin	January 9
Convocation in Absentia for PhD Students	February 2012
Last Day to Add Second Term Graduate Course	20 January
Spring Convocation	June (To be Determined)
Course MA Students – Cognate Dates	
First Draft Due to Supervisor for Review	03 July
Final Draft Due to Grad Assistant in Hard Copy And Electronically	02 August
Comments from Supervisor and Reader Due to Student	15 August

Graduate Courses

Course Selection

Regular Courses

Your courses should normally be chosen from the approved graduate course list. Please see the History Department Graduate Studies website for complete course listings.

Directed Readings Courses

Directed Readings Courses, to a maximum of 0.5 courses, may be offered to PhD students at the discretion of the Department Chair and the Graduate Committee. Directed Readings Courses must meet the same criteria as regular Graduate Courses, including an established reading list, regular meetings and clearly articulated standards for evaluation. Normally course syllabi are to be submitted to the Graduate Committee before **July 1**, although given that Directed Readings courses are typically conceived to serve special needs, the deadline for submitting Directed Readings Courses to the Department Chair and Graduate Committee will be set at **September 1** for Fall courses, and **November 1** for Winter Courses. Directed Readings Courses are not available to MA students. However, in cases where no regular graduate course is available in the MA student's research (i.e. cognate) field the student may register in an enhanced senior level undergraduate course. In this case the instructor is required to provide the student and the Graduate Chair with an enhanced syllabus outlining additional assignments and standards for evaluation.

Courses Outside of the History Department

A student may select a maximum of 0.5 graduate courses in another discipline, with the approval of both Departments concerned.

Course Progression

Students should be aware that the dates for completion of course work are firm and that in general no extensions will be granted. In a few exceptional cases, an 'incomplete' (INC) can be awarded if course work is not submitted when due, and if circumstances warrant. When this occurs, the defaulting student may be granted no more than one term to complete and submit all outstanding work. If this work is not submitted before the end of that term, or the work receives a failing grade, the incomplete notation will automatically become an 'F'. No subsequent extension will be considered for any reason other than medical accommodation. Graduate Regulations are emphatic on this point.

Applicants must obtain at least a B (70%) in each course. The graduate committee may require those who fall below this standard to withdraw from the program, or allow them to proceed under conditions.

Course Expectations

Content delivery: The expectation is that students will add to their own knowledge base through active directed reading in highly focused and/or historiographical courses,

through extensive research, and additionally for Public History students, through the practical experience components.

Primary source skills: Extensive and sophisticated engagement with published and archival primary sources is expected. For Public History students, this engagement occurs mainly through History 9801G Public History – Group Project which requires use of local and provincial archives to produce an original project.

Secondary source skills: Students are expected to be familiar with the historiography of the field, to expand upon this knowledge through courses, directed reading, and to engage it directly in their own research and writing.

Research skills: Students are expected to develop their own research questions in consultation with faculty (and for Public History students, with their community partner institution if applicable), and pursue them through all available and appropriate primary and secondary sources. Students are expected to strive to produce original research, some of which may be worthy for submission to a refereed publication.

Writing skills: The development of a complex and sustained historical argument properly supported with evidence from primary and secondary sources. The presentation of that argument in clear, correct and compelling prose. Public History students are additionally expected to be able to write and present research in non-traditional academic formats which may include digital media, museum exhibits, popular publications, historic site reports, press reports, and policy reviews.

Participation and communication skills: Engagement with peers in discussion of both source material and the process of writing history. The clear and effective presentation of the student's research and the ability to defend that research. Effective peer review of other students' research. Public History students are additionally expected to be able to engage with the community and to negotiate between academic and public communities.

Analytical skills: Students are expected to be able to think critically about secondary and primary sources and about historiographical arguments. Public History students are additionally expected to be able to examine critically public presentations of history.

Language Requirement

Applicants for the M.A. and Ph.D. must demonstrate a reading knowledge of a language other than English. In general, this language will be French. To that end, enrolling in French 9005 will be mandatory for all incoming M.A. students. Ph.D. students who have not previously satisfied or been excused from the requirement must complete it before entering their third year.

The requirement can be waived for students in the following categories, at the discretion of the Graduate Chair:

-those who provide evidence of having previously passed a History graduate second

language competency exam, or
-those who provide evidence of having received at least a B (UWO 75%) in a university-level language course involving a significant amount of translation and grammar, or
-those whose first language is not English, or
- those students who can demonstrate that, for the purposes of their research, proficiency in a language other than French is more relevant. These students will make arrangements with the Graduate Chair to take and pass a second language course or competency exam in that language prior to completion of the first year of study.

The MA Program (Course)

The M.A. program consists of three basic elements:

- a. Three two-term **Graduate Courses** (or equivalent in one-term courses), including a mandatory half-course in 'Historical Methods'. **Please see Section 3a above.**
- b. **Second Language Credit** (normally French 9005) to be completed before the end of the Winter Term. **Please see Section 3d above**
- c. **Cognate Essay** (History 9900) - a research paper of approximately 10,000 words about 50 pages), to be completed during the Summer Term.
Cognate Essay Characteristics

Students need to be aware that the MA degree is a **12 Month** program, and that they are expected to devote the Summer Term to completing the Cognate Essay. This should be regarded as a **Full Time** occupation extending from early May to the end of July.

A cognate essay is the final test of an MA student's abilities, and the best indicator of suitability for further graduate education. The cognate essay is a MA student's 'masterpiece' – the essay should represent the best work of which the student is capable at time of writing, providing evidence of their mastery of material and methods learned to this point and of future promise.

In general, a cognate essay should be comparable to a paper published in a scholarly journal. It should:

- should be about 12,500 words in length,
- be characterized by polished presentation (well organized, clearly, concisely and elegantly expressed, free of grammar and syntax errors etc.),
- consider the critical published work, and,
- employ as much primary source material as is reasonably available. 'Reasonably available' means that a student should be aware of, and adeptly employ in their essay materials drawn from all relevant sources, locally available. In most cases, travel and archival work will not be required.

While the cognate essay may be based on work previously submitted for a course grade, it

should show considerable revision and improvement, representing one term's consistent endeavor. In cases where the cognate essay is based on previous work, **the foundation essay will be submitted with the cognate for comparison.** It is a grave mistake to think that a paper submitted for course credit can be hastily, easily brushed up and become a successful cognate essay.

Cognate Grading Guidelines

General graduate grading guidelines apply. The following thresholds are to be kept in mind. 70% is a pass, equivalent to a 50% for undergraduate work. 75% is a 'fair pass', and when a grade in this range is assigned this should be taken to signify that a student probably does not have the aptitude for further graduate education. 78% is a 'good pass' and the student might have the ability to be considered for progression. 80% indicates a 'good paper' and this result should be taken to indicate that some potential exists. 85% or better is an excellent result, indicating that a student has considerable talent for academic work, and might well consider progression to a PhD program.

The final grade for a cognate paper will be the average of the grades assigned by the two markers. A grade disparity of more than 10% will be adjudicated by the Graduate Chair. Students and markers are reminded, once again, that the cognate paper should be the best work of which a student is capable, reflective of one term's consistent effort. This being so, a submission which does not meet the characteristics indicated above, should be failed. In the event that a cognate paper is failed, the MA program is failed. Otherwise, markers are advised to keep the thresholds indicated above in mind in assigning grades. Students are asked to remember that the grade they receive should be as objective an evaluation as possible, and that it is never a judgment. Both markers and students should bear in mind that unmerited high grades are no favour, particularly in that they tend to encourage students to take further steps toward an unrealistic (and probably unrealizable) future.

Appeal procedures are as indicated in the Graduate Regulations. Essentially, as first step, a student should feel free to discuss a result with the Graduate Chair, who might elect to have the paper reviewed or remarked. Should a paper be remarked, the revised grade will be substituted for that initially assigned. Further appeal procedures are indicated in regulations.

Cognate Essay Progression

The dates for submission of Cognate papers are firm, and under normal circumstances extensions will not be granted. In exceptional cases, an 'incomplete' (INC) can be assigned when the cognate is not submitted when due, and if circumstances warrant. When this occurs, the defaulting student will be required to register for a subsequent term (and therefore to pay fees) while work is outstanding. Following the end of the second term, an incomplete notation will automatically become an 'F'. The change is automatic. No subsequent extension will be considered for any reason other than medical accommodation. Graduate Regulations are emphatic on this point.

The terms "incomplete" and "in progress" shall be assigned only with the written authorization of the Chair of the Department or Departmental Graduate Studies Committee, except for theses and language requirement courses.

Any departure from the above regulations shall require the authorization of the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

The Public History Program (MA)

Overview

The M.A. program in Public History consists of 4 basic elements:

1. Three one-term, mandatory Public History courses, which are History 9800A Public History: Theory, History and Practice; History 9801B Group Project; and History 9808A Digital History.
2. The equivalent of 1.5 courses of your choice, either from the Public History options courses or from the regular program. Please see section 43 above for details.
3. Language Credit (normally [French 9005](#)) to be completed before the end of the Winter Term. Please see section 3d above for details.
4. History 9802 Public History Internship, consisting of 12 weeks of full-time paid or unpaid work, under a Public History professional, completed during the Summer Term.

For details on the Public History Program please see the program Website:

(<http://history.uwo.ca/gradstudies/publichistory/index.html>)

The PhD Program

Overview

The PhD program consists of five basic elements:

1. Two two-term **Graduate Courses** (or equivalent in one-term courses). Please see Section 3a above.
2. Language Requirement. Please see Section 3d above.
3. Comprehensive Exams
4. PhD thesis dissertation proposal
5. Dissertation
6. Dissertation Defense

Comprehensive Examinations

i. PhD students are required to take three fields, two traditional (minor) comprehensive exams and a third major field which includes both comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal components.

ii. Students are required, with the assistance of the graduate chair, to select examiners for their minor fields and a supervisor for their major field / dissertation proposal. They then have to obtain signatures on forms (Appendices A and B) which must be submitted to the department no later than **January 15th** of their first year in the program. Students are strongly urged to find field supervisors as early as possible in their first academic term. Note that the form for the major field (Appendix A) specifies both a broad historiographical field and a more narrow dissertation topic.

iii. The students then prepare for their major and two minor fields. The details of this process will be left mostly in the hands of the supervisor and examiners, with the understanding that each of the three fields should have a minimum of sixty books.

iv. The major field will consist of a broad historiographical essay (5000 words, not counting the bibliography) which deals with their major field in a synoptic way. The major historiographical paper is submitted on the first Monday of November, the first minor field will be a seven day take home exam submitted on the second Monday of November, the second minor field will be a seven day take-home exam submitted on the third Monday of November, and the Orals will be scheduled in the last week of November/first week of December. During Orals Week, each student is examined by a committee consisting of a chair, the supervisor, and the two minor field examiners. This oral exam can be no longer than 3 hours, but may be shorter. Each of the three examiners considers the student's written and oral performance as a whole. The supervisor and two examiners each give the student a numerical grade marked out of 100 for their respective exam. All three grades will appear on the student's transcript. Grade ranges have the following understood meanings:

85 or higher	Pass with distinction
79-84	High Pass
70-78	Pass
69 or lower	Fail

If one exam has been failed, the examining committee sets the terms and timetable for revision of that exam. If two exams have been failed, the student has failed the comprehensive examination process and will be asked to withdraw from the graduate program.

The Dissertation Proposal

v. Having completed the oral exams, the student has now completed the requirements for both minor fields. He or she now rewrites and expands the broad historiographical essay to create a dissertation proposal (approximately 7500 words in length, not counting the bibliography). The dissertation proposal must be **must be submitted no later than March 31 of the student's second year in the program.** The supervisor will work closely with the student to ensure that the dissertation proposal is as strong as possible. There is an assumption that the student will have begun work on the dissertation proposal before

completion of his or her comprehensive exams, and that the topic has been chosen in consultation with the supervisor prior to the comprehensive exams dissertation proposals will be examined in the week following March 31.

vi. Proposal Week will take place between **January 15TH** and **January 30th**. The graduate chair selects two readers from among the faculty (other than the supervisor) to read each student's dissertation proposal. The student will defend his or her proposal before a committee consisting of a chair, the two readers and the supervisor. This exam is graded on a pass/fail basis. If the student receives a failing grade from one or both of the readers, the committee sets the terms for revision of the proposal and another examination. If required, this second exam must occur before **May 1st**. A student who fails the proposal by one or both of the readers a second time will be asked to withdraw from the program.

vii. Having successfully defended the dissertation proposal, the student is free (in consultation with the supervisor and the graduate chair) to form a dissertation committee. These people may or may not have served on committees in the comps process so far. The student must obtain the necessary signatures on a form (Appendix C) and submit it to the department by **April 30th** at the latest.

i. Guidelines for the Dissertation Proposal

Length: 7,500 words, exclusive of bibliography. The ideal proposal varies by the subject of research. A useful manual is Wayne C. Booth, *et al*, *The Craft of Research* (1995). The questions listed below may prove useful.

ii. What is your Historical Problem (or Question, or Object of Investigation)?

An organizing *problem* is narrower than a *topic area* (e.g., *the history of radio in the United States*). Finding your question is the most important, and commonly the most difficult, stage of a thesis project. Search for problems in the literature and your own writing for the topic area. Talk to anyone (faculty, graduate students, relatives, and friends) who shares your interests.

iii. Why Does Your Subject (Solving your Problem or Answering your Question) Matter?

How can the problem (or question) that intrigues you be made interesting to others? How will its resolution revise conventional wisdom (i.e., the literature) about the subject? What possible research findings have implications beyond the object of investigation itself? Does the problem arise from *concerns of your historical actors* or from prompts in our present?

iv. What is Your Theory (or Expectations or Predictions) for the Research Findings?

What is your *model*, your *argument*, your hypothetical set of statements to explain your historical problem?

Where do you get your theory (e.g., the literature your assumptions about humans)?

Is your theory *historical* (sensitive to time and place), or does it assume that historical actors are pretty much like us?

Is your model *dynamic or static*? Does your model allow for differences across space and over time, or for population differences (e.g., by social class, sex, ethnicity, and age)?

v. Your Evidence.

What are the primary source materials for the study?

Where are they held? Are locally-held records sufficient for your project?

vi. Methodology.

Do you plan to use evidence used to *test* your model, or *prove* it (i.e., mining the sources for confirming evidence)?

Is your evidence for quantitative statements (“a lot”, “typically,” “a majority,” “public opinion was”) *quantitative or anecdotal*? If anecdotal, what is your logic for generalizing from it? – Does the evidence speak directly to your theory, or *provide proxy information e.g., occupational category for social class*)?

vii. Bibliography.

Do your references include pertinent materials in your second language?

Depending on your research question, is the scope of the pertinent literature international?

Dissertation

Dissertation Defense

Professional Development

The Department of History considers professional development to be an integral part of the graduate program, and students are encouraged to be active in the department culture through participation in the full range of activities sponsored by the department.

a) Professional Development Seminar

Post-graduate study focuses on mastering a subject of study, often quite narrowly defined. But an academic's job is multifaceted, including lecturing to large classes, leading small group discussions, marking assignments, giving conference papers, publishing articles and books, and applying for grants and jobs. It is often the case that graduate students learn about these things implicitly or through trial and error. There are other ways to learn. The Professional Development Seminar examines different parts of the scholarly profession. Several members of the department lead individual seminars, thus bringing a variety of experiences and perspectives to bear and creating a more extensive and diverse network between students and faculty.

b) Public History Professional Development Seminar

This series includes guest lectures, site visits, and hands-on workshops by practicing public historians, and offers a chance to network and build career contacts. This series is mandatory for Public History students, but others are welcome to attend by contacting

mhamilt3@uwo.ca. Click [here](#) for more information.

c) McCaffrey Graduate Lecture Series

The Bruce McCaffrey Memorial Graduate Seminar meets on selected Thursday afternoons at 4:00 p.m. The students organize and present these presentations. Faculty members and interested undergraduate students are welcome.

d) Department Lecture Series

The UWO History Department Seminar Series meets on selected Thursdays at 12:00 noon to 1:15 p.m. It features work in progress by scholars pursuing promising innovative research. It draws presenters from the History Program; other Programs, faculties, and colleges at Western; and guest scholars from other North American universities. Graduate students are welcome.

e) Others Lectures

- Smallman Lecture Series
- Goodman Lecture Series
- Graduate Speaker's Fund

f) Committees

Graduate students in history have representatives on each of the GTA Union, Appointments, Graduate, and Library committees. The graduate students elect two representatives to meetings of the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS), the main organization of Western graduate students.

Funding Opportunities

The basic funding package is a combination of Graduate Teaching Assistant salary (which requires being at the university during the academic year) and the supplementary WGRS (Western Graduate Research Scholarship). This is provided to all MA students maintaining a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 78%, and to all PhD students who have not acquired outside funding, and who maintain a GPA of 78%. PhD students should be aware that the university and the Department of History cannot offer funding beyond the fourth year. All students are encouraged to apply for Ontario Graduate Scholarships (OGS) and Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grants. PhD students in particular are expected to apply for these scholarships, not merely because of the financial advantage but also because grant-writing is an essential part of academic training, and success in acquiring grants will be essential to finding employment in the highly competitive academic job market.

The Department of History is also pleased to be able to provide a range of scholarships to support research. These awards are competitive within the department and will be awarded to students who have demonstrated academic excellence and devotion to research, and have demonstrated their commitment to applying for external grants. Please see the History Department Graduate Website for details.