

Department of History

Graduate Student Handbook

2016-17

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Important Dates 2016-17

(See also School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) [Important Dates](#))

1 Sep 2016	Beginning of Fall Term
6 Sep	History Department Graduate Student Orientation
8 Sep	Fall Term classes begin
21 Oct	SSHRC and CGS Doctoral applications due in department
7 Nov	Comprehensive Exams: Major field historiographical essay due (2 nd year Ph.D.s)
11 Nov	Final date to submit Ph.D. thesis to SGPS for Fall Term defense
14 Nov	Comprehensive Exams: 1 st minor field take-home exam due (2 nd year Ph.D.s)
15 Nov	M.A. Cognate / Thesis proposals due, with supervisors selected; deadline to declare 1-year or 2-year M.A. option (M.A. History); deadline to declare 4-term option (M.A. Public History)
21 Nov	Comprehensive Exams: 2 nd minor field take-home exam due (2 nd year Ph.D.s)
Late Nov – Dec	Comprehensive Exams: Oral exams (2 nd year Ph.D.s)
1 Dec	SSHRC CGS Master's applications due
Early Dec	Registration for Winter Term courses
7 Dec	Fall Term classes end
31 Dec	End of Fall Term
1 Jan 2017	Beginning of Winter Term
5 Jan	Winter Term classes begin
16 Jan	Comprehensive Exam field and supervisor selection form due (1 st year Ph.D.s)
29 Jan	OGS applications due
1 Feb	Admission applications due (incoming M.A. and Ph.D. students)
20-24 Feb	Reading Week
17 Mar	Final date to submit Ph.D. thesis to SGPS for Winter Term defense
31 Mar	Dissertation Proposals due (2 nd year Ph.D.s)
7 Apr	Winter Term classes end
Mid April	Dissertation Proposal defenses (2 nd year Ph.D.s)
Mid April	M.A. Cognate symposium
28 Apr	Ph.D. annual reports due (all Ph.D. students)
30 Apr	End of Winter Term
1 May 2017	Beginning of Summer Term
15 June	M.A. Cognate rough drafts due; M.A. Thesis Proposals due
20 July	Final date to submit Ph.D. thesis to SGPS for Summer term defense
1 Aug	M.A. Cognates due
Early Aug	Registration for Fall Term courses
Mid Aug	GTA and RA Assignments for 2017-18
31 Aug	End of Summer Term

Program Regulations

The following guidelines and regulations govern the graduate program in History. They complement and do not supersede [SGPS general regulations](#).

Admission Requirements

Applicants to M.A. programs at Western must possess a four-year degree from an accredited university. Applicants to the M.A. in History or Public History typically have an undergraduate major or specialization in History; however, other applicants who can show evidence of interest in, and aptitude for, historical study may be considered. The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires at least a 70% average across courses taken in the last two full-time years of the undergraduate degree. The Department of History normally requires an average of 78% or higher, though such an average does not in itself guarantee admission.

Applicants to Ph.D. programs at Western must possess a Master's degree or equivalent from an accredited university and provide evidence of research potential. Applicants to the Ph.D. in History must generally have an M.A. in History, or have completed all requirements of an M.A. degree. Applicants from adjacent disciplines who can show evidence of aptitude for, and success in, historical study may also be considered. The department may conditionally accept applicants still completing M.A. theses. In such cases, the applicant must defend the thesis successfully before admission to the program. The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies requires at least a 70% average in all of an applicant's advanced academic work. The Department of History normally requires an average of 80% or higher, though such an average does not in itself guarantee admission.

Course Work

M.A. students in History and Public History take six one-term courses (or the equivalent in two-term courses), normally three during the Fall Term and three during the Winter Term of their first year. Ph.D. students take four one-term courses (or the equivalent in two-term courses), normally two during the Fall Term and two during the Winter Term of their first year. These courses will be chosen from the approved list of graduate courses (9000-level) in History.

Directed Readings Courses and Undergraduate Courses for Graduate Credit

Directed readings courses may be offered to Ph.D. students at the discretion of the Graduate Committee and the Graduate Chair. 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. Syllabi for directed readings courses must be submitted to, and approved by, the Graduate Chair.

Directed readings courses are not available to M.A. students. However, in cases where no regular graduate course is available in an M.A. student's primary research 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 Committee with an enhanced syllabus outlining additional assignments and standards for evaluation.

Courses in Other Departments

A student may receive credit for a maximum of one one-term graduate course from outside the Department of History, with the approval of both departments concerned.

Satisfactory Progress

Students must make satisfactory progress towards their degree at all times. Deadlines for completion of course work and other academic milestones are firm. In general, no extensions will be granted. In exceptional cases, an 'INC' (incomplete) can be awarded if course work or other requirements are not completed when due. When this occurs, the defaulting student may be granted no more than one term to complete all outstanding work. Note that this may require a student to register for a subsequent term (and therefore to pay fees) while work is outstanding. If outstanding work is not submitted before the end of that term, or if that 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.

The History Graduate program uses the standard [SGPS grading scale](#) in its courses, cognates, and comprehensive exams:

A	80-100%
B	70-79%
C	60-69%
F	00-59%

Students who fail a course (less than 60%) must pass a subsequent course to fulfill program requirements. Students must maintain a cumulative average of at least 70% calculated each term over all courses taken for credit (including comprehensive exams); those who do not meet this standard may be asked or required to withdraw.

Students who do not complete their course work, or who do not meet milestones set by the program (including the M.A. cognate or thesis; Public History internship; Ph.D. language requirement; Ph.D. comprehensive exams; Ph.D. thesis proposal; Ph.D. annual reports; Ph.D. dissertation and defense), or who fail to make satisfactory progress in their research may be asked to withdraw.

Graduate students must maintain continuous registration in the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. Interruptions in registration (e.g., leaves of absence) or changes in status must be approved by the Graduate Committee and the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

The M.A. program should normally be completed in three, four, or six terms, depending on the program stream (see details below). [SGPS regulations](#) state that the maximum registration period for completing an M.A. degree is three calendar years. The Ph.D. program should ideally be completed within twelve terms (four years). [SGPS regulations](#) state that the maximum registration period for completing a Ph.D. degree is six calendar years.

M.A. in History

Students in the M.A. in History program may choose either the **3-term (1 year) cognate option** or the **6-term (2-year) thesis option**. This decision must be made by the middle of November following September admission. The M.A. cognate essay is a research paper of approximately 12,500 words (about 50 pages). The M.A. thesis is a longer work of original scholarship of approximately 25,000 words (or 100 pages), accompanied by a thesis defense.

Students in both streams take six one-term graduate courses during their first two terms of study. Whichever option is chosen, students need to be aware that the M.A. degree is a year-round program—until all degree requirements are completed, they remain full-time students during the Summer and any subsequent terms. Both streams lead to the same degree.

M.A. Cognate (3 terms)

Students in this stream must meet the following requirements:

1. Six one-term graduate courses (or equivalent in two-term courses), completed in the first two terms of study.
2. The cognate essay, a research paper of approximately 12,500 words (about 50 pages).

M.A. Thesis (6 Terms)

Students in this stream must meet the following requirements:

1. Six one-term graduate courses (or equivalent in two-term courses), completed in the first two terms of study.
2. The M.A. thesis, a work of original historical scholarship of approximately 25,000 words (about 100 pages, typed and double-spaced), successfully defended in a formal thesis defense.

M.A. in History Timeline

Year One (all students)

September-October: On their arrival in the program, all M.A. in History students, with the help of the Graduate Chair, will identify a topic and appropriate supervisor for their research.

November 15: Students declare whether they are taking the M.A. Cognate Essay stream or M.A. Thesis stream. Students submit a Cognate/Thesis Proposal Form including a title, a short proposal (approximately 500 words), and a supervisor's signature. Students and supervisors are expected to meet regularly thereafter to discuss their progress

M.A. Cognate (3 Terms)

Mid-April: The graduate program holds a symposium where students present and discuss their cognate essays in progress. Second readers are confirmed.

June 15: Students submit rough drafts of cognate essays to their supervisor for review and feedback.

July 1: Supervisors must provide feedback on the cognate rough drafts to students by this date.

August 1: Final drafts of cognate essays are due to the supervisor and Graduate Assistant in hard copy and electronic versions.

August 15: Grades and feedback due to Graduate Assistant from supervisor and second reader.

August 31: End of program.

M.A. Thesis (6 Terms)

Mid-April: The graduate program holds a symposium where students present and discuss their proposed thesis research. Second readers are confirmed.

June 15: Students submit detailed thesis proposals (approx. 2500 words, not including bibliography) to their supervisor and second reader.

July 1: Supervisors and second readers must provide feedback on thesis proposals by this date, either approving proposal or requiring revisions.

August 31: Thesis proposal must be approved by this date to continue in program.

Year Two (Thesis option only)

January 15: Student and supervisor submit M.A. Thesis Progress Report.

April 15: Students submit rough drafts of thesis to their supervisor for review and feedback.

June 15: Final drafts of M.A. theses are due to the supervisor and Graduate Assistant.

July-August: M.A. Thesis Defenses are held.

August 24: Last possible date for M.A. Thesis examinations.

August 31: End of program.

M.A. Cognate Essay Guidelines

The cognate essay should be a high-quality research paper, comparable to an article published in a scholarly journal, which develops and sustains a significant historical argument. It must be:

- approximately 12,500 words (about 50 typed, double-spaced pages) in length
- characterized by polished presentation (well organized, clearly, concisely and elegantly expressed, free of grammar and syntax errors etc.)
- based on primary source material, and
- set in the context of the critical published work.

While the cognate essay may be based on work previously submitted for a course grade, it should show considerable revision and improvement, representing at least one term's consistent endeavor. In cases where the cognate essay is based on previous work, the foundation essay must be submitted with the cognate for comparison.

Cognate essays are normally read and graded by two readers: the cognate supervisor and a second reader, selected by the Graduate Chair. Both readers should provide a percentage grade and written comments. The final grade for a cognate paper will be the average of the grades assigned by the two markers. If there is a disparity of 10% or more, or if one reader has failed the paper and the other has not, then the paper will also be graded by a third reader. The final grade will be the average of all three grades.

The [SGPS grading scale](#) applies: A: 80-100%; B: 70-79%; C: 60-69%; F: 59% or lower. A grade of 85% or higher is excellent, indicating that a student has considerable talent for academic work and might well consider progression to a Ph.D. program. A grade of 80% or higher could be taken to indicate that potential for further graduate education exists. A failing grade (less than 60%) will result in failure of the M.A. program. In exceptional cases, students may be given one chance to revise and resubmit a failing cognate; they will be required to register for a subsequent term (and therefore to pay fees) while work is outstanding. No extensions of greater than one term will be considered for any reason other than medical accommodation. Graduate regulations are emphatic on this point.

M.A. Thesis Guidelines

The M.A. thesis should be a substantial piece of original historical research, comparable in quality to a scholarly article or monograph, which makes a contribution to historical knowledge. It must be:

- approximately 25,000 words (about 100 typed, double-spaced pages) in length
- characterized by polished presentation (well organized, clearly, concisely and elegantly expressed, free of grammar and syntax errors etc.)
- based on primary source material, and
- set in the context of the critical published work.

While the thesis may draw on work previously submitted for a course grade, it should show considerable revision, improvement, and expansion. In cases where the thesis is based on previous work, the foundation essay must be submitted with the thesis for comparison.

M.A. Thesis Defense

Thesis examinations are organized and overseen by SGPS; see its [detailed regulations](#) on thesis format, submission, and examination procedures.

In preparation for thesis submission, students must submit a penultimate draft to their supervisor, who will judge if it meets the recognized scholarly standards for the discipline and department, and advise the candidate if revisions are recommended or required. It is the student's responsibility to allow sufficient time for the supervisor to examine and return the dissertation draft, while allowing the three weeks reading time required for examiners, and (particularly in the Summer Term) to account for faculty and staff vacation periods and other leaves. These drafts must be submitted by June 15 in the student's sixth term.

When a student's M.A. thesis is judged ready for examination, the Graduate Chair arranges a thesis examination by organizing a thesis examination board and setting a proposed date. The examination board consists of two program examiners (Department of History faculty members) and one university examiner (a Western faculty member from outside the Department of History). The student's supervisor attends the oral defense but is not part of the examination board. The M.A. thesis defense is normally a closed event.

M.A. in Public History

Students in the M.A. in Public History program may choose either the **regular 3-term (1 year) option** or a **4-term cognate essay option**. This decision must be made by the middle of November following September admission. Both streams lead to the same degree.

The regular 3-term M.A. program in Public History consists of three elements:

1. Three mandatory one-term courses in Public History, which are: History 9800A: Public History: Theory, History and Practice; History 9801B: Public History Group Project; and History 9808A: Digital History, completed in the first two terms of study.
2. Three additional one-term graduate courses (or equivalent in two-term courses), completed in the first two terms of study.
3. 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. This is a full-credit course, graded on a pass/fail basis.

The 4-term cognate essay stream adds one additional element:

4. The cognate essay, a research paper of approximately 12,500 words (about 50 pages).

For more details on the Public History program, see the [M.A. in Public History website](#). For details on the cognate essay, see [M.A. Cognate Essay Guidelines](#), above.

M.A. in Public History Timeline

Year One (All Public History Students):

November 15: Students choosing to take the 4-term cognate essay option must submit a Cognate Proposal Form including a title, a short proposal (approximately 500 words), and a supervisor's signature. Students and supervisors are expected to meet regularly thereafter to discuss their progress.

Mid-April: The graduate program holds a symposium where students introduce and discuss their cognates in process. Second readers are confirmed.

May-August: Public History Internship and submission of report.

Year Two (4-term Cognate Students Only):

November 15: Rough drafts of cognate essays are due to supervisors for review and feedback.

December 1: Supervisors should provide feedback on the cognate rough drafts to students by this date.

December 20: Final drafts are due to the supervisor and Graduate Assistant in hard copy and electronic versions.

January 7: Grades and feedback due to Graduate Assistant from supervisor and second reader.

Ph.D. in History

Ph.D. students in History must meet the following requirements:

1. Four one-term graduate courses (or equivalent in two-term courses), normally completed in the first two terms of study.
2. Knowledge of a second language relevant to the student's program.
3. Comprehensive exams, normally completed in November of the second year.
4. History 98xx: Professional Development, normally completed in the second year.
5. Ph.D. dissertation proposal and defense, normally completed in April of the second year.
6. Ph.D. dissertation and dissertation defense.

Language Requirement

To meet the standards of the discipline, historical research often requires the use of primary and secondary sources written in languages other than English. As such, Ph.D. students are required either to possess a working knowledge of a second language relevant to the subject of their studies at the start of their program or to acquire a working knowledge of it during their program.

Ph.D. students may meet this requirement in a number of ways:

- taking and passing a full-year second language course at Western (such as French 9005, Japanese 1036, or Latin 1000). See SGPS Regulation 6.07 with regard to graduate students taking undergraduate courses.
- providing evidence of having previously taken and passed such a course at Western or elsewhere, or having previously passed a second language competency exam as a graduate student.
- being a native speaker of, or demonstrating mastery of, a relevant non-English language. Such students may be required to take and pass a translation exam, or otherwise demonstrate competency in the language.

Ph.D. students are encouraged to go beyond than these minimum requirements by continuing to improve their existing language skills and by learning new languages.

Comprehensive Exams

Comprehensive exams are taken in November of the second year. The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to expand and deepen students' historical knowledge, provide them with the tools to conduct research in history, and prepare them to teach in a variety of fields.

Ph.D. students are required to prepare three fields: a major field, which includes both comprehensive exam and dissertation proposal components; and two minor or supporting fields. Students are urged to select fields and find field supervisors as early as possible. They must submit forms listing their fields and supervisors and obtain signatures from all three supervisors by January 15 of their first year in the program.

Students then prepare for their major and two minor fields. The details of this process will be left mostly in the hands of the student and their supervisors, with the understanding that students should be expected to read between sixty and eighty books in each of their three fields. Within each field, an encyclopedic knowledge of detail is not required, but the student should demonstrate mastery of the basic literature and familiarity with the important problems in each field.

The written portion of the major field is a historiographical essay (of 7,500 to 10,000 words, not counting the bibliography) which surveys the literature of that field in a broad, synoptic way. This essay is due on the first Monday of November. The written portion of the first minor field is a seven-day take-home exam (of 5,000 to 7,500 words) due on the second Monday of November. The written portion of the second minor field is a seven-day take-home exam (of 5,000 to 7,500 words) due on the third Monday of November. Late exams will not be accepted.

The Graduate Chair and Graduate Assistant will schedule all exams, including determining the order of minor fields. The format of the take-home exams will be left largely in the hands of the examiners.

Oral examinations will be scheduled in late November or early December. Each student will be examined by a committee consisting of a chair, the major field supervisor, and the two minor field supervisors. This oral exam should be two to three hours in length. Each of the three supervisors will question the student and then consider and grade the student's written and oral performance as a whole.

The [SGPS grading scale](#) applies, and all three grades will appear on the student's transcript. A grade of 85% or higher constitutes a Pass with Distinction. If one exam field is failed (less than 60%), the examining committee sets the terms and timetable for reexamination of that field. If two or more exam fields are failed, or if the student fails one field at both examination and reexamination, the student has failed the comprehensive examination process and will be withdrawn from the graduate program.

Dissertation Proposal and Defense

Having completed their comprehensive exams, students now rewrite and focus their broad historiographical essay to create a dissertation proposal (approximately 7,500 words in length, not counting the bibliography). The dissertation proposal 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.

Dissertation proposals will be examined in the month of April. The graduate chair selects two readers from among the faculty (other than the supervisor) to read each student's dissertation proposal. The student then defends 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 a student receives a failing grade from one or both readers, the committee sets the terms and timetable for revision of the proposal and another defense; if the student receives a failing grade from one or both readers in the subsequent defense, he or she will be withdrawn from the graduate program.

Doctoral Progression

Upon the student's successful completion of the dissertation proposal stage, a Thesis Supervisory Committee (see SGPS [Thesis Regulation 8.1.3](#)) is formed, consisting of the student's supervisor and one other faculty member (typically, one of the two readers of the proposal), chosen by the Graduate Chair in consultation with the supervisor. This Committee will oversee the student's progress through the remainder of the dissertation.

Doctoral students and their supervisors must complete and file an annual progress report each January. The student, the supervisor, the second member of the Thesis Supervisory Committee, or the Graduate Chair may request a meeting to discuss the student's progress at this time.

Students who fail to make satisfactory progress towards their degree may be asked or required to withdraw from the program.

Ph.D. Dissertation

Students and supervisors must follow SGPS's detailed [regulations regarding thesis format and submission, and timelines](#). All non-thesis degree requirements must be completed before a Ph.D. thesis or dissertation can be submitted for examination. Students must also be in good standing with the University regarding fees and any other dues.

In preparation for thesis submission, students must first submit a penultimate draft to their Thesis Supervisory Committee, who will judge if it meets the recognized scholarly standards for the discipline and department, and advise the candidate if revisions are recommended or required. It is ultimately at the discretion of the supervisor when the thesis is ready for examination, at which point they will inform the Graduate Chair.

A student may choose to submit their thesis for examination without the approval of their supervisor. In such cases, the supervisor must state in writing why his or her approval is withheld. The Graduate Chair signs the Doctoral Thesis Supervisor Approval form and provides the candidate with a copy of the supervisor's stated reasons for withholding approval.

It is the student's responsibility to allow sufficient time for the Thesis Supervisory Committee to examine the dissertation draft, to allow for the six weeks of reading time required for examiners, and (particularly in the Summer Term) to account for faculty and staff vacation periods and other leaves.

When a student's Ph.D. thesis is judged ready for examination, the Graduate Chair arranges a thesis examination by setting a proposed date and organizing a thesis examination board. The examination board consists of two program examiners (Department of History faculty members), one university examiner (a Western faculty member from outside the Department of History), and one external examiner (a faculty member from outside Western). The student's supervisor attends the oral defense but is not part of the examination board.

The student must submit their thesis to SGPS for examination six weeks before the approved date for the oral defense. Once a Ph.D. thesis has been officially submitted for examination, it cannot be withdrawn except by the permission of the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

Thesis Examination and Public Lecture

Thesis examinations are organized and overseen by SGPS; see its detailed [regulations on examination procedures](#).

Students are required to present a public lecture on their dissertation research, normally within twenty-four hours before their oral defense. The lecture is open to all members of the community. The examiners should ideally attend the public lecture, but it is not formally part of the dissertation defense. The dissertation defense is normally a closed event.

Ph.D. in History Timeline

Year One

Fall and Winter Term: Students take four courses (two per term) and fulfil language requirement if necessary.

January 15: Students submit form identifying 3 comprehensive exam fields and supervisors.

April 28: Students and 1st year advisors submit Ph.D. Annual Reports.

May 1: Comprehensive exam supervisors should provide reading lists by this point.

Summer Term: Students prepare for comprehensive exams.

Year Two

Fall Term: Students prepare for comprehensive exams.

November: Students write and sit for comprehensive exams (see details above).

Winter Term: Students take History 98xx: Professional Development and prepare Dissertation Proposal.

April 1: Students submit Dissertation Proposal.

April: Dissertation proposal defenses.

April 28: Students and dissertation advisors submit Ph.D. Annual Reports.

Language requirements should generally be fulfilled by the end of Year Two.

Year Three and After

Students research and complete dissertations. Students, dissertation advisors, and second readers submit Ph.D. Annual Reports every April.