



MASTER OF ARTS (MA) IN HISTORY

GRADUATE HANDBOOK

Department of History, World Languages, and Cultures, Central Michigan University

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DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Degree Requirements

The degree requirements summarized here come from the [Graduate Bulletin](#), which students should **consult early and often when planning their program**.

OVERVIEW

A minimum of **30 hours** of graduate credit is required for the MA in history. In most cases it will take at least 18 months to complete the necessary work. The department recommends a full-time MA student take **9 hours per term**. Many factors can influence the time to degree, however most full-time students should expect at least three semesters plus one additional summer study or semester course to complete the degree. The department makes every effort to ensure regular graduate offerings in a range of fields but not all courses can be offered each year, which can also impact program plans. Since course offerings depend on several factors—including student interest and enrollment, or faculty availability—the department encourages students to discuss specific course plans with their advisors and **sign up for any classes they intend to take as soon as possible to help ensure adequate enrollment**.

COURSE SELECTION

Most students will not be able to plan their whole course of study before starting classes, so it is important to make sure each selected course counts towards the student's degree requirements. The [Graduate Bulletin](#) and [student's individual degree progress report](#) **are the authoritative sources for degree completion requirements** but the department highlights the following:

- All student hours must be in graduate courses—that is, at the 500-level or higher.
- The department recommends new MA students consider enrolling in one 500-level course, one 600-level course, and one 700-level course during their first semester (a total of 9 hours).
- 500-level courses are mostly for undergraduates but are available to graduate students as well. They will generally feature more undergraduates than graduate students and often have a similar structure to advanced undergraduate history courses. 600-level colloquia are MA-only courses that will have substantially more reading and writing requirements (such as reading a book per week). 700-level seminars consist of students designing and crafting their own research projects based on primary historical sources.
- While some courses can fill fast, others may be cancelled by the university due to low enrollment. To avoid this, **students are strongly encouraged to enroll in courses as early as possible** (students can always unenroll later at no cost before the drop/add deadline for that semester).
- Students are required to take both HST 600 and HST 601 once each. In addition, they may take HST 601 up to three times (9 hours) with different instructors. **HST 600 is generally only offered in the fall and students should take it as early as possible in their program.**

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- At least 20 hours must be in history (HST) courses. This means that up to 10 hours of coursework may come from cognate disciplines such as anthropology, economics, English, philosophy, and religion, **with advisor approval**. Students are not required to take any cognate (non-history) courses.
- Students must take at least one 700-level graduate research seminar in history (3 hours) with “Seminar” in the title, as well as at least two 600-level history colloquia with “Colloquium” in the title.
- At least 18 hours must be at the 600-level or higher. In other words, no more than 12 hours (4, 3-hour courses) may come from 500-level classes.

PLAN A & PLAN B

There are two research paths to the MA. Plan A involves writing an MA thesis, while Plan B requires two substantial (article-length) research papers instead of an MA thesis. **Most students choose Plan B.**

Plan A (Thesis)

Students who choose to do an MA thesis should make arrangements with a faculty thesis director as soon as possible in their first semester of graduate work. In fact, the department recommends that students consult two or three members of the graduate faculty in the general field of interest before deciding to do a thesis and choosing a director. The thesis director and MA candidate choose two additional members of the thesis committee. Students will enroll in at least six hours, and up to nine hours, of HST 798. Students should register for this thesis credit in the final stage of the degree.

Other important points about Plan A and the MA thesis:

- An MA thesis is a rewarding—yet challenging and time-consuming—project. The department recommends it only for exceptional students, including those intending to pursue doctoral (PhD) programs in history. A thesis often requires some travel for research.
- Students may not register for more than 3 hours of thesis credit (HST 798) until the research prospectus has been approved by the department and Office of Graduate Studies (see the [Prospectus form](#)). Timely submission of the prospectus is particularly important. The Office of Graduate Studies may deny or invalidate a project undertaken prior to final approval of the prospectus and the student will have to start the process again.
- Students must make the finished thesis available to members of the thesis committee at least three weeks before the required oral exam on the thesis is scheduled. The thesis director is responsible for scheduling the oral exam.
- One member of the committee may be from a department other than history, or from outside CMU entirely—but that member may not serve as chair. All committee members must have graduate faculty status as defined by the Academic Senate’s Graduate Education Policy. Students can check their prospective committee members’ status by contacting the Office of Graduate Studies. If an

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original member of a thesis committee withdraws, a replacement may be selected by the thesis director, with the approval of the chair.

- Final preparation of the thesis should be done carefully in consultation with the thesis director and meticulously following the guidelines required by the Office of Graduate Studies. Questions on the format should be directed to the Office of Graduate Studies since that office must pass on final acceptance. Students are responsible for additional costs related solely to preparation of the thesis, including duplication, binding, and copyright registration. These fees are assessed at the time of thesis clearance.
- A thesis is approved by the department when a majority of the thesis committee indicates its approval in writing. The chair of the thesis committee must file the thesis and appropriate forms with the department office. The department office will then forward the original to the Office of Graduate Studies and file a copy in the student's permanent department record. It is important to be aware of deadlines related to submission and graduation ([Graduate Student Deadlines](#)).
- There are no formal requirements for the length of an MA thesis in history but a general range is 18,000 to 32,000 words.
- Students who use charts, graphs, maps, or other forms of illustrations must obtain copyright authorization from the original source before submitting the thesis to the Office of Graduate Studies.
- As part of the Office of Graduate Studies' procedures, the student and faculty advisor are required to review the iThenticate report for the thesis and take care of any copyright or other issues before submitting to Graduate Studies.

Plan B (Two Research Papers)

Most students choose Plan B, which requires them to submit two shorter research papers as evidence of scholarship. Papers must be well-written and presented in a proper scholarly format. Their conclusions must rest on the interpretation of a substantial body of primary sources. A minimum length of 6,000 words per essay is suggested.

These papers ordinarily originate in 700-level research seminars. **Please inform your instructor if you intend to use a future paper from a particular course for your Plan B.** You and the instructor can then begin a dialogue about specific expectations.

Each Plan B paper must have first received a minimum grade of B in the corresponding course. **The student will then revise the paper after the end of the course (even if it earned an A, expect revisions) to qualify as a Plan B paper.** After revision, each paper must be accepted by the professor responsible for the course as satisfactory for permanent filing.

Once a professor has approved the revisions and format of a Plan B paper, the student should submit it to the department for final clearance and filing. The department will then submit the appropriate paperwork to the Office of Graduate Studies.

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A Plan B paper can be filed at any time during or after a student's coursework but it is recommended to revise any research paper and submit it to the department as soon as possible. Both Plan B papers also need to be approved and on file prior to performing a degree audit in preparation for graduation.

DEGREE TRACKS

Degree Tracks

The History MA requirements are flexible enough for students to shape their own degrees. When choosing courses, students might think about potential “tracks” that uniquely reflect their degree emphasis and individual interests. Many of these options include incorporating graduate elective courses from other university departments (the program allows up to 10 hours from outside history). Ideas could include:

- Incorporating a [history graduate study abroad](#) experience into their History MA.
- Emphasizing public history and museum studies by incorporating Museum Studies (MST) courses.
- Emphasizing historical documentary filmmaking by incorporating Broadcast and Cinematic Arts (BCA) courses.
- Emphasizing art history by incorporating Art History (ART) courses.

Dedicated tracks partnering with MST, BCA, and ART can also include satisfying a Plan B project with a research project in these other units. Interested students should contact their advisor.

ADVISING AND ADVISORS

Advising & Advisors

Graduate advisors assigned at the time of admission to the program in history serve as the starting point for guidance through the graduate program, and students are welcome to reach out to their advisors any time. In addition, students are also welcome to seek out direction from other faculty they find helpful—including within the history faculty and across the university.

It may well be the case that a student will wish to change advisors. This is perfectly acceptable and students can contact the department to do so.

CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT

Contact and Engagement

Graduate programs feature smaller, more intimate cohorts and unique opportunities for engagement.

- **Students should regularly check their university email and make sure they are signed up to the official history MA email list and receiving messages from hstgrads@cmich.edu.** The department will communicate all important and timely updates or announcements—including opportunities for engagement, graduate student scholarships or awards, and calls for GA applications (when available)—via the official email list.
- The department regularly hosts scholars and guests of national and international renown, including annual endowed lecture series in American historical biography, the American Civil War, and US Constitutional history. History MA students play a critical role in helping host and highlight these events, which often feature unique professional and personal networking opportunities—such as dedicated lunches, dinners, and workshops with speakers. **In graduate school, professional engagement and networking outside the classroom are often as important and valuable for students as their academic work.** The department encourages students to engage, have fun, and help contribute to a robust scholarly cohort!

Funding

Unfortunately, the department does not offer funding to incoming MA students. On rare occasions, the department may be able to offer current students an opportunity to apply for Graduate Assistant (GA) positions. If available, the department will announce these opportunities and provide application instructions to all currently enrolled students in the program.

MA students may also be eligible to apply for research and travel funding. In addition, the department has competitive financial awards for study abroad and an endowed “outstanding graduate student” award. These opportunities will also be announced to actively enrolled students. Finally, small grants for research, publication, and presentation are available on a competitive basis from the [Office of Graduate Studies](#).

OTHER INFORMATION

Other Information

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The Department of History, World Languages, and Cultures expects the highest standards of academic integrity throughout the university community. The department will strive to enforce the standards of conduct and academic honesty for students as set out in official university publications such as the Academic Integrity Policy for Graduate Students published in the [Graduate Bulletin](#) and the university's general [Policy on Academic Integrity](#).

In addition to the above, the department has established the following procedures for dealing with questions of academic integrity in the graduate program:

- The department will follow the established [university grade grievance policy](#) for handling disputes arising from the assignment of a student's grade or status in a specific course.
- In other cases where a violation of academic integrity is alleged, the essentials of the case shall be reported first to the department chair. If the chair agrees that a violation of academic integrity has occurred because of the conclusiveness of the evidence, or because the student admitted to the violation, the chair shall authorize a letter to the student outlining the allegations and proposing a sanction. The letter shall also offer the student the option of a meeting on the matter with the department's Graduate Studies Committee. If the student does not admit to the violation, the Graduate Studies Committee will schedule a meeting at which time the student will be present to discuss the allegation. The committee will review all evidence and recommend an appropriate sanction.
- The conclusions of the chair in the absence of a Graduate Studies Committee meeting—or the conclusions of the Graduate Studies Committee's meeting, if such is required—shall be forwarded to the student complainant and to the Office of Graduate Studies with the recommendation for appropriate sanctions.
- If a decision and recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee are unfavorable to a student complainant, the student shall be reminded of the further appeals process available in the Office of Graduate Studies.

TIME TO DEGREE COMPLETION, INCOMPLETE GRADES, AND ACADEMIC PROBATION

Students should acquaint themselves with CMU policy on incomplete and deferred grades, and academic probation and dematriculation (located in the bulletin), as well as [the Office of Graduate Studies forms](#) for extension of time, course repeats, and leaves of absence.

- Students become inactive in the program after three years of non-enrollment.

OTHER INFORMATION

- Students receiving low or failing grades can repeat a course up to two times to improve their grade. Regardless of the grade, the grade received from the final attempt to take the course is used when calculating an overall MA GPA.

HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

If student research requires oral history, interviews, or surveys, students are required to follow the guidelines of CMU's [policy on Human Subjects in Research](#). Among other things, this policy requires that students submit their research proposals and all explanatory information to either the departmental review committee (via the department chair) or the university Institutional Review Board. It is critical that students follow procedures for human subject research, or they risk having their work disqualified for academic credit. Full details are available from the [Office of Graduate Studies](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Information

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