

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK HISTORY PROGRAM

**Department of History
University of Wyoming**

Updated: Summer 2026

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Important Graduate Contacts

Department Chair: [Jeff Means](#)

Director of Graduate Studies: [Peter Walker](#)

Graduate Committee: [Alexandra Kelly](#), [Melissa Morris](#), [Melissa Hampton](#)

Graduate Committee Chair: [Alexandra Kelly](#)

Graduate Mentor: [Melissa Hampton](#)

Department Administrators: [Clayleen Rivord](#), [Christopher Murray](#), [Reepa Das](#)

I. Application Process: Before applying, prospective students should consider the following important issues:

1. **What area of history most interests you?** Consider geographical area and time period, as well as thematic concentration and approach.
2. **Which faculty member would you hope to work with?** You should contact that faculty member directly and discuss with them your goals and interests. Finding the right graduate advisor is central to your success as an applicant.
3. **Is Wyoming a good fit for your interests and goals?** Explore our website, visit campus, and talk with current graduate students. You should consider whether our program is a good fit for you before you apply.

A. Requirements

Admission to the M.A. program is granted for fall semester only. As the application process is entirely [online](#), please do not mail any documents (transcripts can be sent to the [U.W. Office of Admissions](#)). In addition to the main application, the following supporting documents are required:

GRE Scores

The Department no longer requires GRE scores for MA applications.

Letters of Recommendation

Three letters of recommendation are required, and ideally should come from undergraduate instructors with whom you have had sustained contact. Instructors of seminars and smaller, discussion-based classes will often have the best idea of your skills and interests. Once you have supplied contact information for your recommenders, the Admissions Office will email them with instructions for submitting their letters.

Transcripts

Include transcripts from all institutions you have attended after high school. You may upload unofficial transcripts for coursework in progress, but note that formal acceptance will be contingent upon receipt of official, final transcripts. You do not need to submit transcripts for coursework completed at the University of Wyoming.

Writing Sample

This should be 10 to 20 pages and represent your best and most sophisticated writing. A senior thesis or undergraduate seminar paper would be ideal.

Statement of Purpose

This should tell us about your interests, your reasons for wanting to pursue a graduate degree, and something about your future plans. Use the questions at the top of this page as a guideline. It should be between 250 and 500 words in length.

If you have further questions, please contact [Dr. Renee Laegreid](#), the Chair of the Graduate Committee.

II. Program Structure: the following faculty and staff positions support our M.A. program:

Department Chair: The Department Chair tackles the administrative work of the department, in coordination with staff. These faculty members also represent the Department of History and American Studies to the UW community and administration.

Graduate Director: The Director of Graduate Studies facilitates the structure of the M.A. program. Questions about necessary forms, deadlines, and other program issues are the Director of Graduate Studies' purview.

The Graduate Committee: The Graduate Committee is responsible for Graduate Program policy, admissions, and TA awards.

Graduate Mentoring Coordinator: The Mentoring Coordinator works with the Graduate Peer Mentor to provide training and support for incoming graduate students.

Department Administrators: The staff makes the Department and the Graduate Program work. They perform an enormous range of tasks from student questions to Department budgets.

Main Advisor: A student's Advisor or Committee Chair is the single most important faculty member for each graduate student. A student's main advisor will direct their primary time/place field; help them decide on a thesis topic; and direct their research and writing.

III. Program Logistics

A. Funding

1. **Coursework Funding:** Graduate Assistantships constitute the History Program's primary source of funding for graduate students. Following state mandated guidelines, all Graduate Assistants will have teaching responsibilities as Teaching Assistants. Students receiving financial support must be registered as full-time students and must be making satisfactory progress towards degree completion. Support is not given for more than two academic years. Teaching Assistantships are one-year appointments.
2. **Summer Research Funding:** The History Program offers graduate students the opportunity to apply for department support for archival research in pursuit of their thesis. This funding is competitive and limited. Students will apply for department research funding in Spring of their first year and **must** also apply for other sources of funding.

Other possible sources of funding include:

- University of Wyoming (College of Arts and Sciences, Global and Area Studies, Center for Global Studies, Social Justice Research Center, Malcolm Wallop Fund for Conversations on Democracy, etc.)
 - Scholarly Associations (American Historical Association, American Society for Ethnohistory, American Association of University Women, Native American & Indigenous Studies Association, Organization of American Historians, Phi Alpha Theta, History Honors Society, Western History Association)
 - Archives and Research Libraries (individual institutions may offer visiting researcher fellowships or funding)
3. **Student Loans:** The University of Wyoming offers student loans to those students pursuing full-time graduate study without a Graduate Assistantship.
 4. **Conference Travel Funding:** The Department may be able to fund graduate student travel to present papers at conferences (subject to available funds). The Department can reimburse transportation costs, lodging, and food. Contact Department Administrator [Caroline Bragg](#) before travel to inquire about available funds and for instructions.

B. International Students

The History Program encourages applications from international students. Information about the international students community at Wyoming, how to navigate important forms and deadlines, and resources designed especially for international students is available through the Office of International Students and Scholars.

C. Petitions and Forms

All necessary forms are available for PDF download on the [Registrar's website](#). Students should consult their Main Advisor and the Grad Director if they cannot locate any form.

D. Satisfactory Progress

Satisfactory progress in the M.A. program is determined by a student's main advisor. In cases where satisfactory progress is in question, the Graduate Committee will review the student's progress using the following guidelines:

1. Graduate students must maintain a coursework GPA of 3.3 or higher.
2. Graduate students must make appropriate progress toward their thesis, as defined by the main advisor and communicated clearly to the student.
3. Graduate students must attend *all* department events. If a student absolutely cannot attend an event, they must inform their main advisor and the event organizer ahead of time.
4. Graduate students must meet *all* program deadlines (including assembling their committees, submitting their programs of study, presenting thesis proposals, etc.).
5. Graduate students should meet the expectations for professionalism and collegiality described in section IV of this handbook

If at any time a student fails to meet these expectations, they will be placed on probation by the department. Until their progress achieves satisfactory levels, that student will not be eligible for department funding or awards. The student's progress will be re-assessed by the Graduate Committee the following semester. If progress is deemed satisfactory, the student will be removed from probationary status and will again be eligible for department funding and awards. Should a student's progress be unsatisfactory for two consecutive semesters, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Graduate Director, will recommend the student's suspension.

At the end of the Fall semester, the department will meet and to assess the progress of all graduate students as either "satisfactory," "concern," or "unsatisfactory." The DGS will communicate the assessment to all students and will meet with any assessed as "concern" or "unsatisfactory." In the Spring, the department will review the status of any students with "concern" or "unsatisfactory" status.

All graduate students are required to meet with the DGS in the Fall semester to discuss their progress towards completing the degree requirements.

E. Leaves of Absences and Re-Entry

If a graduate student is unable to complete their M.A. degree in History in four consecutive semesters (not including Summer,) the following guidelines will be applied to each student's case pertaining to readmission to the History M.A. program.

1. Graduate students may take one Leave of Absence of up to two consecutive semesters, with the approval of their Main Advisor and the Graduate Director.
2. If a student's Leave of Absence extends beyond two consecutive semesters, they

- must reapply to both admissions and the History Program. Ultimately, the student's main advisor will make the decision to approve or deny readmission.
3. The student may appeal their main advisor's decision to the History Program's Graduate Committee. In these situations, the Graduate Committee will review the student's case and reach a final decision.
 4. After a six (6) year period following the student's final recorded semester, students must petition the University Registrar and the History Program to allow their coursework to count toward their degree.

F. Changing Advisors

It is not uncommon for graduate students to make changes in their topics as they progress through the program. Sometimes, this will require a student to change their Main Advisor to someone whose specialty is closer to their new topic. If this becomes the case, student must discuss this with **BOTH** their present advisor and the person who would most likely become their new advisor. If the change is agreed upon, the student will then email Department Administrator [Clayleen Rivord](#) to make the change and CC both advisors on that message.

IV. M.A. Program Requirements

Candidates for the Master of Arts degree in History are required to complete a minimum of 31 hours of graduate (5000) level credit. Students must complete 27 hours of coursework, with at least 24 hours in history. This will include:

1. History 5880, History Theory.
2. 12 hours of history course work in 5000-level, non-dual-listed courses (excluding HIST 5880).
3. 4 hours of thesis research (HIST 5960).
4. Students must demonstrate a reading knowledge of a foreign language appropriate to their research. In special cases, other relevant historical tools may substitute for the language requirement upon approval of the thesis adviser and the Graduate Coordinator. Generally, either of the following options may meet the language requirement:
 - a. Passing a language exam administered by the Department of History. This must be completed by the end of the first year with the appropriate faculty.
 - b. Completing the equivalent of the fourth semester of a language as offered at the University of Wyoming. All courses must be passed with a grade of C or better (may be taken pass/fail).
5. In the spring semester of the first year, typically in early February, as scheduled by the Department Chair, the student will publicly defend his/her thesis proposal, which must include a written research prospectus and bibliography.
6. The student will successfully defend the final thesis draft before the Graduate Committee.

Graduate students are expected to take 9 credit hours per semester, unless otherwise

authorized by the student's main advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

Graduate students will identify two "fields" of study, in consultation with their main advisor: one time/place field (such as Modern U.S. History), and one thematic field (such as Environmental History), both of which correspond to the student's thesis research.

A. Other Requirements:

Thesis Proposals: In the second semester, students will give presentations on their thesis at the Thesis Proposal Symposium. Thesis Proposals are due to the Graduate Director one week prior to the Symposium.

Thesis Proposal Guidelines:

1. Identify your project. What is your topic? What are your central research questions? Why is this project important? What historical methodologies and schools of thought will you draw on in the thesis?
2. How does your project engage with the existing historiography? Identify the scholarship that shapes your thesis project, and how your thesis will contribute to the field.
3. How will you conduct research for your project? What types of sources will you examine, and what research methodologies will you use to analyze them? Identify the archives and specific collections you plan to use, and outline your plans for summer research.
4. What is your proposed timeline and budget for your research?

Format: Each presenter will have 10 minutes to present, followed by 5 minutes of questions from the audience. Students should make use of appropriate audiovisual aids in their presentation (e.g., a PowerPoint presentation). Student should take notes on audience questions and suggestions, as they will help to strengthen the thesis project.

Thesis: Students will complete an independent thesis in their second year, representing a substantial piece of original scholarship contributing to existing knowledge in the historical field of their choice.

The thesis must engage at a professional level with existing scholarship, employ relevant theoretical frameworks, contain original archival research, and make a compelling and new contribution to the field.

Theses vary considerably in length and format; this should be determined in close consultation with a student's Main Advisor. An average thesis contains an introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion. An average length is between 90 and 125 pages. Past theses are available through UW Libraries.

Thesis Defense: The student will defend the final thesis draft before their thesis committee in the spring semester of their second year. This will be arranged by the Main Advisor,

when they feel the student's thesis is ready to be defended.

V. Graduate Assistantships

A. Expectations: Graduate Assistantships are designed to offer financial support for a maximum of two years (four semesters). Graduate Assistantships provide the student with a stipend in addition to covering the cost of tuition, fees, and a health insurance plan. Assistantships also provide teaching experience that strengthens professional skills for further graduate work at the doctoral level and other career paths.

Graduate Assistants (GAs) will meet the following basic expectations:

1. Attending mandatory university-wide GA training
2. Attending course lectures
3. Preparing discussion section materials and assignments
4. Teaching two 50-minute discussion sections per week
5. Holding 3 hours of office hours per week
6. Grading assignments and exams for students in their discussion sections
7. Participating in department training and professional development programs

Graduate Assistantships are subject to the following History Program Regulations:

1. Individual graduate assistantships are awarded for one academic year. Graduate assistantships can be held for a total of four semesters.
2. Students seeking graduate assistantships for their second year must submit an application, to be submitted on or before the due date established by the Graduate Committee (usually around February 1).
3. All graduate students (including GAs) must maintain satisfactory progress in the program. Any GA failing to maintain satisfactory progress will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee. The Graduate Committee will evaluate the individual case and may decide to allow the student to continue the assistantship on a probationary basis, or to terminate the award.
4. Graduate Assistants must follow the guidelines for shared office space posted in all graduate office spaces. Failure to follow these guidelines will result in removal from graduate assistant office space.

B. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Ethical Grading

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is the University of Wyoming's standard for grading ethics, and it is each graduate student's responsibility to understand and obey the dictates of this federal law.

Some general guidelines that will apply directly to graduate students' work as a GA include:

1. Grades must be transparent. Document your process of grade-calculating, and be sure you can demonstrate where those grades came from and their appearance in the course syllabus.
2. Student grades are private. Do not leave final exams or papers out where others can see them. Do not post grades publicly unless you have established prearranged codes known only to you and the individual students. Do not discuss student grades, even with the student in question, where others can hear you.
3. Resist the temptation to release teaching stress by complaining about your students. This is especially true on campus, where all spaces are public.
4. Parents do *not* have the right to information about their child's grades or academic performance.

See also <http://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/ferpa/index.html> for a more in-depth discussion of FERPA guidelines, or contact the Office of the Registrar for guidance at 766-5724. Faculty members are also happy to discuss FERPA guidelines with graduate students, and to help tackle any difficult situation.

VI. Professionalism and Collegiality

Graduate students are expected to behave professionally and collegially at all times; they represent this program, and this university. Guidelines include:

Course Expectations

- Graduate students are present and on time for all classes. If a graduate student absolutely must miss a class, they contact the instructor ahead of time to explain.
- Graduate students do all readings, and come to class prepared to actively discuss readings.
- Graduate students complete all assignments on time and at a high level. Graduate students seek to improve their critical reading, writing, and discussion skills every semester, to broaden their historical understanding and knowledge, and to respond positively to all feedback they receive from all instructors.
- Graduate students actively seek out guidance. Graduate students make use of faculty office hours to ask questions and seek guidance in areas of interest, as well as areas in which students have limited expertise.

Time Management

- Graduate students keep every appointment they make. Lateness and no-shows are unacceptable.
- Graduate students attend all History events and practice courteous listening. They are on time, do not leave early, and participate actively in event discussions. If a graduate student *absolutely must* miss a department event or leave early, they are expected to contact the event's organizer well ahead of time.
- Graduate students submit all forms by the appointed deadline. Missing deadlines means missing opportunities and also damaging your professional reputation with faculty and staff.
- Graduate students provide faculty they have asked to write letters of recommendation with *completed* proposals/applications *at least two weeks in advance*. Provide faculty with all necessary instructions, deadlines and links.
- Graduate students work with their main thesis advisor to create a timeline for writing their thesis. Graduate students are expected to meet all chapter deadlines with their main advisor and recognize their advisor's work in reading their thesis and helping them to develop this important project.

Self-motivation and Work Ethic

- Graduate students seek out opportunities. Investigate, research, and talk over possible internships, funding, and research opportunities with faculty and fellow students. This is your responsibility; do not expect to be automatically informed about opportunities.
- Graduate students go beyond expectations. You should never aim to simply meet minimum requirements. Push yourself to learn things that are difficult for you. Take seminars outside your area and actively apply what you learn to your own research.

Professionalism

- Treat all staff with respect: librarians, office associates across campus, custodians- everyone here contributes to your success. Staff professionals understand things that you do not. They make your work possible, and you should recognize their hard work to facilitate what you do in this program.
- Treat faculty with respect. Note that all instructors can teach you different things; strive to learn from all, not to identify "favorites" and dismiss others. Your job is to learn as much as you possibly can from all faculty, who have already succeeded in the goal toward you are currently striving.
- Emails: always use proper grammar and professional tone when writing emails in a professional capacity. Ask for help if you are unsure of what this means.
- Honor the structure of the Department by obeying proper procedure. Your ability to navigate department and university structures reflects on your professionalism. Do not go over anyone's head; learn who is most appropriate to approach to deal with problems and practice transparency and professionalism even in situations of interpersonal tension or other conflicts.

Collegiality

- Treat your fellow graduate students with respect. Remember that this is a professional degree, and behave with professional dignity.
- Cultivate supportive and respectful relationships with all of your fellow students.
- Be a good citizen of the academic space you share by working hard and collaboratively.

Teaching (Graduate Assistantships)

- Keep your relationships with undergraduate students professional. The Department does not allow dating or sexual relationships with undergraduate students, whose grades you are responsible for, or who may be responsible for in the future.
- Dress professionally when you teach; ask faculty or experienced GAs for guidance if needed.
- Think carefully about social media use with students, or in places that students can access. Carefully manage your digital identity in forums like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. This kind of publicly available information can erode your authority in the classroom and even your professional reputation among fellow graduate students and faculty.

Representing the Department

- When you attend on-campus lectures and colloquia, and also when you travel to a conference, you represent the Department and the University of Wyoming. Behave professionally and respectfully. Remember that you are cultivating your own professional reputation, and also contributing to the standing of this program. Bad behavior reflects badly not only on you, but also on your colleagues and on the faculty who offer you their time and support.
- Do not complain about the program. If you have a concern or a problem, do not hesitate to bring it to the attention of the appropriate faculty or staff, but resist the temptation to simply complain about it to friends or colleagues. Remember that this is a professional program, and you harm yourself, your colleagues, and this University by bad-mouthing the program that is educating you.
- Remember that campus is public space. Do not conduct conversations you believe to be private anywhere on campus. You cannot control who overhears you, and you should be conscious at all times that when you are on campus, you represent this program and this university.

VII. Timeline: History M.A. Program

This timeline offers a model for what graduate students in History should be doing each semester of their graduate study, in order to successfully graduate after two years.

Year 1

Fall

- History Program Graduate Orientation events (August).
- Select Main Advisor, notify Graduate Director by October 1.
- Identify a thesis topic. Begin readings in secondary literature and primary sources.
- Content knowledge: sit in on lecture courses in your field(s).
- Meet regularly with your advisor. Submit a thesis proposal to advisor by end of first semester.
- Begin seeking out funding opportunities – for archival research and coursework funding – at UW and beyond. These deadlines come up quickly, so begin this process as soon as possible.

Spring

- Select all Thesis Committee Members in consultation with main advisor. Submit **Committee Assignment Form** to Grad Director by May 1. [Form available online via Office of the Registrar.](#)
- Thesis Proposal Presentations (February).
- Submit application for History Program research funding to Chair of Scholarship Committee in February (deadline will be announced each year).
- Identify your fields of study --- major field and comparative/thematic field. Make this decision in consultation with your main advisor.
- Content knowledge: sit in on lecture courses in your field(s).
- Continue seeking out funding opportunities for archival research and coursework funding.
- Prepare a literature review for your thesis topic, in order to conduct field research with a mastery of the historical content and historiography of your topic.
- Prepare for archival research. Identify archives and collections for your research. Contact archivists and learn archival policies, hours, when archivists will be on vacation, etc. Practice archival document analysis, time management, technology use, etc. at AHC. Plan travel and accommodations.
- Language Exam (complete by August 15).

Summer

- Conduct archival research. Begin analyzing your archival sources and brainstorming a chapter outline for your thesis.
- Be in close touch with your advisor and plan to submit a chapter outline for your thesis by September.

Year 2

Fall

- Complete your **Program of Study Form** in consultation with your main advisor. [Form available online via Office of the Registrar.](#)
- Write a full draft of your thesis by January (or by the deadline determined by your advisor). Create a writing schedule with your advisor.

Spring

- By March, revise all thesis chapters, in response to advisor comments.
- This is an ideal revision schedule to graduate on time, assuming an April 30 Thesis Defense date:
 - March 15: send fully revised thesis to advisor. Advisor will either require additional edits or give student permission to send full thesis to committee readers.
 - April 1: send full thesis to all committee readers. Readers require 2 weeks to give feedback.
 - April 15: receive comments from committee readers, make needed revisions.
 - April 20: send “final” draft of thesis to all committee readers to secure “green light” for defense.
 - April 30: Thesis Defense.
- As soon as possible in your final semester, you must submit your **Anticipated Graduation Date** to the Office of the Registrar as soon as possible in your final semester. [Log in to WyoRecords to declare your Graduate Date.](#)
- Pay graduation fee to Cashier’s Office.
- Order MA regalia (early spring)
- Ask faculty member to hood you at graduation.
- Thesis Defense.
- Submit **Report on Final Examination Form** (thesis defense form) to the Office of the Registrar. [Form available online via Office of the Registrar.](#)
- Deposit thesis with UW Libraries.
- Turn in keys and remove your belongings from the graduate offices and department.
- Graduate!