

Graduate Program Policies

Department of History
Colorado State University

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Admission

The formal application for the graduate programs in History, including Liberal Arts Plan A (thesis track) and Plan B (portfolio track) and CRM/Historic Preservation Plan B (portfolio track), must include a statement of purpose; three letters of recommendation; an academic writing sample; a curriculum vitae (C.V.); official transcripts; and any other materials required by the [CSU Graduate School](#). The Department of History does not require the GRE.

Statement of Purpose

The statement of purpose, sometimes also called a personal statement, should clearly address why the MA in History program at CSU best fits the student's educational and career goals.

Students should be sure to include the following information in the statement:

1. State the program of study (Plan A Thesis track, Plan B Non-Thesis track, or CRM & Historic Preservation) the student is interested in pursuing.
2. Indicate which geographical (United States, Europe, Latin America, Asia, World, etc.), temporal (U.S. to/since 1877, Europe to/since 1850, World to/since 1500, etc.), and/or thematic areas (public history, women's and gender history, environmental history, religious history, etc.) within history the student intends to study.
3. Identify the faculty whose teaching and research aligns with student interests. Applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to those faculty and confirm that an appropriate faculty member is willing to serve as the student's primary advisor and mentor.
4. Explain specifically how the student sees an MA in History from CSU advancing their professional goals. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their previous educational and work experiences as examples of their interests.
5. Articulate which centers and activities at CSU the student is interested in participating in and what scholarly organizations they are a part of or would like to become involved with.

We do not admit students to our program whose interests do not align with the strengths of our graduate faculty and program.

Three Letters of Recommendation

Letters should come from people familiar with the student's work. At least two references must come from academic faculty, preferably historians.

Academic Writing Sample

The writing sample should be an argument-driven historical interpretation, preferably one that uses some combination of archival research and primary sources, existing historical interpretations (secondary sources) and engages some historiography (how other historians have approached the subject). It should feature the best and most polished academic writing and/or the best and most polished public-facing work. It should be free of grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors and include source citation and a bibliography.

A Curriculum Vitae

The C.V. should include the student's education, relevant work experience, internships, awards, honors, publications, presentations, and other relevant information.

Official Transcripts

Students contact their previous institution(s) to request they submit the official transcript to Colorado State University (use CSU institution code 4075).

The Department of History requests that the applicant contact the [faculty member](#) they hope to work with as a primary advisor and mentor before applying. The department requests applicants indicate which faculty they want to work with in the statement of purpose.

Disclaimer

Applicants are advised: “Meeting the minimum CSU or department standards does not entitle an applicant to admission. Meeting such standards only ensures consideration of the application. Since CSU cannot accommodate all who meet the minimum standards, it reserves the right to select individuals for admission on the basis of merit in such a way as to promote the best interests of CSU and the society as a whole and to maximize the potential for individual accomplishment.” ([From the CSU Graduate and Professional Bulletin](#))

Funding

The History Department provides funding for graduate students on a competitive basis through Graduate Assistantships. There are two types of Graduate Assistantships: Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) and Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs). **Graduate Assistantships are renewable for up to four consecutive semesters (see Graduate Assistantships section).**

GTA positions exist to support the university’s All University Core Curriculum (AUCC) courses. GTAs receive [tuition remission](#) funded by the State of Colorado and a [9-month stipend](#) paid monthly with health care benefits. All applicants are automatically considered for a GTA position.

GRA positions are associated with faculty research projects funded by grants and contracts or other departmental initiatives. GRAs receive a [9-month stipend](#) paid monthly with health care benefits. GRAs may be eligible for the [Tuition Premium Program](#). Currently, the Department offers 1 GRA position each year with the *Western Historical Quarterly* (WHQ). The WHQ GRA receives tuition remission and a 9-month stipend paid monthly and two months summer stipend with health care benefits funded by the Office of the Provost, College of Liberal Arts, and the History Department. To be considered for the WHQ GRA position, indicate interest in the position in the statement of purpose.

Further Instructions

Before beginning classes for the first time, admitted students should meet with their advisors and/or the Graduate Studies Committee’s Chair to obtain appropriate orientation and course registration advice.

Enrollment

Graduate students in History receiving tuition remission and/or who hold graduate assistantships must enroll full time. [Full time enrollment](#) is defined by the Graduate School as 5 or more credit hours per semester. Graduate students not receiving tuition remission and/or a graduate assistantship are not required by the History Department to enroll full time. **However, history graduate students should be advised that to graduate in 4 semesters, students should plan to enroll in a minimum of 9 credits per semester for at least three semesters.** The minimum

credit hours required to complete Liberal Arts Plan A (34 minimum credits) and Plan B (34 minimum credits), and CRM/Historic Preservation Plan B (37 minimum credits).

Graduate Assistantships

[Graduate Assistantships](#) provide a stipend in exchange for specified work, such as teaching or research assistance. Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) include payment of tuition on behalf of the student as an added benefit. The full benefits are described on the [Graduate School GTA](#) web page. Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) do not automatically include payment of tuition but may be eligible for the [Tuition Premium Program](#). The WHQ GRA position is eligible for this program. **Graduate Assistantships are competitively awarded and renewable for up to four consecutive semesters. Renewal not guaranteed. Renewal of graduate assistantships is based on available funding and satisfactory progress toward degree completion each semester** (see Satisfactory Progress section). **Graduate students who do not achieve satisfactory progress will be notified before the start of the next the semester about nonrenewal of their funding.**

Coursework

Regular Coursework

The History Department subscribes to the University policy that a student's graduate program consists primarily of "regular course work"—that is, courses other than independent or group studies, open seminars, thesis credits, U.S. travel or study abroad, supervised college teaching, practicum/internship, etc. At present, history regular courses include: 501, 503, 505, 511, 512, 516, 520, 521, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 539, 611, 621, and 640. New courses and experimental courses (500- and 600-level courses ending in -80 and -81) are also considered regular coursework. Non-regular coursework are courses ending in numbers -82 to -99. Additionally, program requires at least 25 credit hours be at the 500- and 600- levels, so no more than 9 credit hours of undergraduate level courses count towards completion of the degree program. Students are encouraged to refer to the appropriate programmatic check sheet available on the department's [Graduate Program](#) website.

Special Coursework

If a student is unable to meet degree requirements with regular coursework, the following policies must be followed (see also Course Substitutions below):

- Only 3 credits of HIST 695 / Independent Study or HIST 697 / Group Study may be counted toward the M.A. degree in history.
- A maximum of 1 credit per semester is allowed for HIST 684, Supervised College Teaching, earned as a graduate teaching assistant. Only 3 credits of HIST 684 may be counted toward the M.A. degree in history. History graduate students may enroll in and apply only 6 total credits of HIST 699, Thesis, to their 34 minimum credit M.A. program. All grades for work in HIST 684 and HIST 699 will be recorded as S or U.

Course Substitutions

The Department subscribes to the University policy that a student's graduate program consists

primarily of “regular course work” (see above), and therefore only in **rare** cases will we approve substitutions for courses required by the student’s program of study.

Students who wish to substitute HIST 695, HIST 697, or who wish to substitute a regular graduate course in History or another discipline for a regular graduate course in History to fulfill degree requirements other than electives must have the substitution approved by the GSC according to the procedure outlined below.

The substitution must be approved by the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) *before* enrolling in the requested substitution course. The petition should be submitted to the GSC Chair at least two weeks *before* the opening day of graduate student registration. The following procedure should be followed for substitution petitions:

- The student must present a written request to the GSC Chair, explaining the specific arrangements of the proposed substitution and reasons for the request. This request should be a formal letter. If insufficient detail is provided, the request will be denied.
- The student must show that a regular faculty member in the Department of History has agreed to provide the HIST 695/697 or other course indicated in the student’s substitution request.
- The student’s written request must be accompanied by a memo from the student’s faculty advisor, indicating his/her support for the proposed substitution and rationale(s).
- Note: It will be the responsibility of the student’s faculty advisor to assure that HIST 695/697 or the other requested substitution course will be comparable in workload and content to the regular graduate course in History for which the course is being substituted. Faculty advisors are encouraged to consult other department faculty as appropriate to help accomplish this.

The GSC will review the student’s request and render a decision, taking into consideration the following criteria:

- The reason(s) for the student’s request for a substitution.
- Support from the student’s faculty advisor for the requested substitution.
- Evidence that a regular faculty member in History has agreed to provide the HIST 695/697 if the substitution is approved, or that any other course requested as a substitution is being offered and has the capacity to accommodate the student’s request.
- Impact on enrollments in regular graduate courses in History if the substitution is approved or denied.
- Impact on the regular faculty member’s workload and effort distribution to provide the HIST 695/697 if the request is approved or denied.
- Impact on the student’s timely progress toward degree completion if the substitution is approved or denied.

The GSC’s decisions about substitutions will be given in writing to the student and the student’s

faculty advisor, along with the rationale(s) for the committee's decision. A copy of the written decision will also be kept on file by the GSC Chair until the student graduates.

It is expected that a substitution approved by the GSC will be completed according to the terms of the request. Any changes in the specific arrangements for a substitution after it has been approved should be communicated to the GSC as soon as possible for the committee's further review.

Students who wish to substitute a regular graduate course in History or another discipline for a regular graduate course in History to fulfill degree requirements other than electives must have the substitution approved by the GSC according to the procedure outlined in points 1 through 5 above.

Incomplete Grades, Continuous Enrollment, and Degree Completion Limit

The History Department encourages students to complete all work on time. However, when unforeseen circumstances prevent on-time completion of work, students should be aware of the following policies.

Incomplete Grades

The grade of "I" (incomplete) is a temporary grade awarded when, for unanticipated reasons, a student cannot complete a course. When an "I" is assigned, the instructor shall specify in writing the requirements that the student must fulfill to complete the course. According to the [CSU Academic Standards and Policies for Grading](#): "At the discretion of the instructor, a temporary grade of "I" may be given to a student who demonstrates it is not possible to complete the requirements of a course due to circumstances beyond the student's control and not reasonably foreseeable. A student must be passing a course at the time an Incomplete is requested unless the instructor determines there are extenuating circumstances to assign an Incomplete to a student who is not passing the course."

After one year, or at the end of the semester in which the student graduates (whichever comes first), an "I" will automatically be changed to an "F" (failure) unless the incomplete requirements are satisfied, and the instructor submits a grade change. Students must clear all grades of incomplete before taking their final examination recorded on the GS form 24.

Continuous Enrollment

According to the CSU Graduate School's Graduate & Professional Bulletin (H.2.7): "All students admitted to a graduate degree program are required to be continuously enrolled in their degree programs in the fall and spring semesters. This policy applies from the time of first enrollment through the graduate term. Students should contact their advisor if they do not plan to register for at least one credit of course work or research. Students graduating in the summer term are required to be registered for at least one credit or Continuous Registration (CR). Students registering for CR will be assessed a fee for each semester of CR registration.

Degree Completion Limit

There is a ten-year limit for completion of the M.A. degree. Courses to be applied toward fulfilling degree requirements, including any graduate level courses transferred from another institution,

“must have been registered for and completed within the ten years immediately preceding the date of completion of requirements for the degree.” (Graduate and Professional Bulletin)

Satisfactory Progress

All Graduate Students

All students must make “satisfactory progress” throughout their graduate program, which includes the following:

1. Meeting the [Scholastic Standards](#) outlined in the [Graduate and Professional Bulletin](#).
2. Maintaining a 3.00 grade point average (GPA) overall, in regular and non-regular coursework, in the program of study. **Students should not that maintaining a 3.00 GPA requires achieving a B or better in all coursework.**
3. Achieving a B- or better in individual regular and non-regular coursework. **History graduate students will not receive credit toward the M.A. degree for any course where the grade is lower than a B-.** To maintain an overall 3.00 GPA, grades lower than a B must be offset by grades higher than a B.
4. Taking classes directly relevant to the program of study.
5. Selecting an advisor by October 15 if their first enrollment is the fall semester and March 1 if their first enrollment is the spring semester.
6. Fully participating as a community member in the M.A. program, the History Department, and as a student at CSU more broadly, including adhering to [CSU’s Principles of Community](#) and the [Student Conduct Code](#). Being a good academic citizen and developing professional skills is fundamental to student success.
7. Completing the assigned duties and performing satisfactorily as Graduate Assistant (if applicable).

Failure to meet satisfactory academic progress and/or perform satisfactorily as a Graduate Assistant may result in the loss of funding. Graduate students who do not achieve satisfactory progress will be notified before the start of the next the semester about nonrenewal of their funding.

At the end of each semester, the Graduate Studies Chair will:

1. Complete the Duties and Evaluation (DEV) form for GTAs and GRAs and secure signatures.
2. Audit graduate student course grades and report overall GPAs below 3.00 and grades below a B- to the primary advisor.
3. Document graduate student attendance at department events.
4. Survey Graduate Teaching Assistant professors and Graduate Research Assistant supervisors as to Graduate Assistant performance.
5. Complete the Graduate Assistant Appointment and Certification Form (GAAC) for each GTA and each GRA to renew Graduate Assistant positions.

6. Alert students before the start of the next semester who have not achieved satisfactory progress that their funding will not be renewed.

First-Year Graduate Students

In their second semester, advisors of all first-year graduate students, instructors of record in all History graduate classes, GTA professors, GRA supervisors, and the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) will formally evaluate first-year graduate students to determine if they are making satisfactory academic and professional progress. The evaluation shall consider the measures listed in the previous section as well as the students' performance in specific graduate classes. Evaluations should address both student strengths and concerns about the academic and professional performance of any first-year students. The GSC will compile and read evaluations to determine if students are making satisfactory progress in the graduate program. If the committee decides that a student is not making satisfactory progress, the committee, together with the student's advisor, will create a progress plan for the student, as outlined in the "Scholastic Standards" section of the Graduate and Professional Bulletin. The student has the right to appeal these decisions (see "Graduate School Appeals Procedure: Adopted by Faculty Council, October 5, 1999"). The GSC Chair will meet with the students who are not making satisfactory progress in order to discuss their individual progress plans; the GSC Chair will notify all students who are making satisfactory progress in a formal letter.

Committee Requirements

After completing 12 semester credits appropriate to the student's graduate program OR by the end of the second term of enrollment as a graduate student (whichever occurs first), the graduate student must formally establish a Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC) by completing the GS6 form. The student must meet with their primary advisor and/or the Graduate Studies Committee Chair for guidance in completing this document and obtain signatures from faculty who agree to serve on the committee. The GS6 form is accessed electronically through RamWeb and the Graduate School provides [instructions for the GS6 form](#). Graduate School rules stipulate that students who fail to complete the GS6 form will not be permitted to register for subsequent graduate classes.

Composition of Committees

The Graduate School [requirements for committee members](#) can be found on the Graduate School website. Please note special requirements in the Department of History for advisors. Teaching Professors and Instructors listed are not eligible to serve as primary advisors but may serve as a co-advisor along with an [eligible faculty member](#). The Graduate School requires that the committee include an advisor or co-advisors, additional committee members, and one outside field member. In practical terms, History GAC committees must include at least two members of the History Department (a primary advisor and a committee member) and one representing an outside field, that is, a faculty member not affiliated with the History Department. Except in special circumstances, History graduate committees do not include co-advisors. In addition to these criteria, the History Department also requires that the faculty serving on a student's GAC committee include specialists in the student's fields of study. The fields of historical study will be based on reading seminars and readings completed in other history

courses taken at Colorado State University and will be in World, Europe, U.S., and Public History.

Theses, Portfolios, Examinations, and Forms for Graduation

At the beginning of the graduation semester, the student must complete GS25 form, stating the intention to graduate and noting academic program changes that differ from the GS6 form. Please refer to the Graduate School [Deadlines webpage](#) for current dates.

Liberal Arts Plan A (Thesis)

A thesis, defined as a work of original historical research, is required of all graduate students on Plan A during the semester in which they apply for graduation. The thesis should contain multiple chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. Students should consult their primary advisor and recent theses produced by History MA students available through [Mountain Scholar](#) for examples. Students should follow the [Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Policy](#) and ensure the thesis is properly formatted using the CSU thesis and dissertation [formatting guidelines](#).

Students will present and discuss their thesis with their GAC in an oral examination/thesis defense. Students should work with their GAC to schedule a final oral examination/thesis defense in accordance with current Graduate School deadlines. The final oral examination/thesis defense may take up to two hours and will be built on the material presented in the student's thesis. At the end of the oral examination/thesis defense, the student's committee will excuse the student and then decide by majority vote if the student has failed or passed. A student who fails the final oral examination/thesis defense may be required to take extra course work or to complete additional readings, as determined by the GAC. A second unsatisfactory performance may constitute grounds for academic probation or dismissal from the program.

When scheduling the oral examination/thesis defense, the student and her or his GAC must keep in mind [form and graduation deadlines](#). The student and GAC should schedule a sufficient interval between delivery of the thesis and the oral examination/thesis defense to allow the GAC time to evaluate the thesis, provide guidance to the student for the oral examination/thesis defense, and allow the student time to prepare for the oral examination/thesis defense (typically 1-2 weeks).

Before the final examination/thesis defense, the student should prepare the GS24 form. Immediately following successful completion of the oral examination/thesis defense, the student's GAC members will sign the GS24 form attesting to satisfactory completion of the oral examination/thesis defense. The student and committee must submit the GS24 form to the Graduate School according to the date stipulated on the form. Plan A Thesis also requires submission of the GS30 form attesting to the submission of the thesis. All Graduate school forms and instructions are found on the Graduate School's [webpage for Forms](#).

Liberal Arts Plan B (portfolio) and CRM/Historic Preservation Plan B (portfolio)

A professional portfolio, defined as a body of work that serves as evidence of mastery of the graduate curriculum, is required of all graduate students on Plan B during the semester in which they apply for graduation. Most elements in the professional portfolio are produced through graduate coursework. The professional portfolio should contain the following sections:

1. Front Matter

- a. Title Page
 - b. Copyright Page
 - c. Table of Contents
 - d. Acknowledgements [no more than one page]
2. Section 1: Job Application Materials
 - a. Cover Letter – The cover letter should summarize your program and showcase the work you have done intellectually and in the field. It should point at the type of job you are qualified to do (collections, interpretation, public programing, etc.).
 - b. Resume and CV
 - i. Federal resume (or other professional resume as appropriate, including USAjobs.gov resume builder).
 - ii. Academic CV
3. Section 2: Historiography – Students will complete two historiographic essays representing their approved major and minor fields of study. In consultation with their Graduate Advisory Committee, students will determine the thematic focus, guiding questions, and scope of each field, including the approximate number and types of scholarly works to be covered. Reading lists should primarily draw from works encountered in graduate coursework, though committees may recommend additional works where appropriate. Expectations should reflect graduate-level breadth and depth while remaining appropriate to the student’s track and professional goals. As a general guideline, major field essays typically engage more works than do minor field essays. The agreed-upon scope, expectations, and reading lists for each historiographic essay must be documented in writing and approved by the Graduate Advisory Committee prior to drafting.
 - a. Major Field Essay
 - b. Minor Field Essay
4. Section 3: Research – These essays should be works of history that demonstrate competencies in thematic historical fields and historical methods beyond historiography, such as:
 - a. Traditional research products that demonstrate original historical research based on interpreting primary sources, etc. such as a traditional academic article. These products are likely to have been produced during coursework.
 - b. Applied research products that demonstrate historical research based on synthesizing secondary sources, etc. for a particular purpose or client, such as a historical context or administrative history. These products may be those produced during classes and/or internships.
 - c. Public history research products that demonstrate historical research based on the techniques of public history to convey historical research to public audiences, such as an interpretive/exhibition pan, grant proposals, preservation forms and statements of significance, digital history projects, community/oral history projects, archival finding aids, collections accession records and catalogs, etc. These products may be those produced during classes and/or internships.
5. Section 4: Professional Statement(s) – The statement(s) articulates professional practice from the perspective of potential job interviews. They should encompass critical methods

and practices that are germane to the types of positions students seek. The statement(s) should be crafted in consultation with the student's committee.

6. Section 5: Additional Elements – Products created throughout the student's program, such as major and minor field reading lists/bibliographies, evidence of GIS competency, historic preservation field work (spatial data collection and site forms), Section 106 documentation, NEPA compliance, annotated syllabi and bibliographies, conference presentations, guest lectures and anything else that complements the previous body of work elements.

Students will present and discuss their professional portfolio with their GAC in an oral examination. Students should work with their GAC to schedule a final oral examination in accordance with current Graduate School deadlines. The final oral examination may take up to two hours and will be built on the material presented in the student's professional portfolio. At the end of the oral examination, the student's committee will excuse the student and then decide by majority vote if the student has failed or passed. A student who fails the final oral examination may be required to take extra course work or to complete additional readings, as determined by the GAC. A second unsatisfactory performance may constitute grounds for academic probation or dismissal from the program.

When scheduling the oral examination, the student and her or his GAC must keep in mind [form and graduation deadlines](#). The student and GAC should schedule a sufficient interval between delivery of the professional portfolio and oral examination to allow the GAC time to evaluate the professional portfolio, provide guidance to the student for the oral examination, and allow the student time to prepare for the oral examination (typically 1-2 weeks).

Before the final examination, the student should prepare the GS24 form. Immediately following successful completion of the oral examination, the student's GAC members will sign the GS24 form attesting to satisfactory completion of the oral examination/. The student and committee must submit the GS24 form to the Graduate School according to the date stipulated on the form. Plan B Portfolio and CRM/Historic Preservation Plan B Portfolio also requires submission of the GS40 form attesting to the completion of the portfolio requirements. All Graduate school forms and instructions are found on the Graduate School's [webpage for Forms](#).

Language Requirement

Historical research and practice is increasingly transnational and often requires the use of multiple languages. Being able to at least read, if not speak, another language opens up a window onto other societies, cultures, and worldviews that cannot be gained by other means. A professional understanding of the broader social frame of other societies through language is part of the academic study of history and the engagement of diverse audiences in the public sphere. All graduate students should have some exposure to multiple languages, but students on the Master of Arts in History, Liberal Arts Plan A degree at Colorado State University are required to demonstrate reading knowledge of a foreign language appropriate for the student's historical studies.

Students on the Plan A Thesis track should work closely with their advisors to complete the foreign language requirement. For students with little experience in a language other than English, we

suggest starting work on this requirement in the first semester at CSU, because language acquisition is a gradual process. This requirement may be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

1. A language exam.

The language exam shall require the student to translate one or more passages of a primary historical document or secondary work of history from the selected language, totaling approximately 250 to 300 words, into English. The translation must be completed within one hour. The student's use of a print dictionary is permitted. The text to be translated may be chosen by a faculty member of the Department of History or the CSU Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures (LLC). The student is not permitted to participate in the selection of the text and will not be given the text before the exam. Students are strongly encouraged to contact the faculty member who will administer exam during their first year in the MA program. The faculty member and student may agree to a practice exam at any time to gauge the student's progress in the language, but the text will not be repeated on a later exam used to fulfill the requirement. Students who fail the exam may repeat it after waiting at least two weeks. Students who dispute a failing grade on the exam may appeal the grade to the History Department chair, who will select another faculty member from the History or LLC Departments to regrade the exam. Individual exemptions or modifications to this policy may be granted by the Graduate Studies Committee, subject to approval by the department chair, if circumstances warrant (e.g., due to faculty availability, the nature of the language included in the exam, student accommodations specified by the Student Disability Center, etc.).

2. Completion of a language course.

- A grade of B or better in a college language course at the second-year level (L 200 series) or above offered by the Colorado State University Department of LLC. Students must also earn a grade of B or better in any first-year level (L 100) courses taken at CSU to meet pre-requisites.
- A grade of B or better in an upper-division course offered by the Colorado State University Department of LLC on the culture and literature associated with the language selected (L 300, L 400 series). The work in this course must be primarily in the foreign language, not in English.
- A grade of B or better in a fourth semester (2nd year) college level language course at another academic institution.

Students should email the Graduate Studies Committee Chair upon completion of the translation or coursework to ensure the requirement is noted in the student file.