

**MANUAL FOR M.A. STUDENTS**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON**

**2009**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **The Master of Arts in History: Goals and Guidelines**

The Master of Arts in History is an advanced degree requiring study deeper, broader, more sophisticated, and more coherent than is expected at the undergraduate level. While the B.A. program encourages students to sample a wide variety of historical topics and chronological periods, the goal of the M.A. is to focus students' attention in a few areas so that they may develop substantial knowledge in those fields. M.A. study should also lead to an awareness of a variety of research methods and interpretations, and it should enhance skills in research, analysis, and writing. For most who pursue it, the M.A. represents the most challenging and difficult stage of formal education, an enrichment of knowledge beyond undergraduate work that will contribute to their success as teachers, as historical practitioners, as journalists, law students, business and government decision-makers, and as citizens. For a few, the M.A. serves also as preparation for study towards the Ph.D., the terminal degree in the discipline of history that demands even more research and writing. M.A. work is significantly more difficult than that which one encounters as an undergraduate, and is best suited to those who, having already acquired a substantial background, are prepared to invest considerable time and energy in historical studies.

A Master of Arts is expected to have a broad knowledge of selected areas of history as well as of the methods and interpretations of historians in those fields, and a capacity to analyze diverse conditions and complex issues. To develop these skills, the M.A. program challenges students to read widely in the historical literature, consider various approaches and viewpoints, articulate ideas both orally and in writing, and subject their arguments to critical evaluation by others. These activities require interaction with fellow students, faculty, and visiting scholars in seminars, colloquia, informal discussions, and lectures. An important part of the program for every Masters student is the undertaking of one or more original research projects in seminars. Those who desire additional training in independent research and writing, in particular those intending to do doctoral work, often also prepare a Masters thesis. Finally, students must demonstrate their qualifications for the M.A. by passing rigorous examinations in their chosen fields.

The Master of Arts in History at The University of Akron is a structured program of lecture courses, seminars, colloquia, individual tutelage, and examinations, concentrated in those fields in which the faculty has expertise. The regulations that follow set forth the basic requirements and procedures for study toward the M.A. at the University of Akron.

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

Students applying for admission to the M.A. program must have a minimum undergraduate grade point average of 3.0. The applicant's average in history courses should be substantially higher. Applicants must also have completed at least 24 semester or 36 quarter hours in history courses at the undergraduate level.

An application to the M.A. program consists of the following:

1. An application form.
2. A letter of intent, stating the applicant's reasons for wishing to pursue graduate work and the fields of history which the applicant intends to study.
3. Scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), General Aptitude Test.
4. A writing sample, preferably a research paper from a history class.
5. Three letters of recommendation, preferably from faculty who know the applicant well.
6. Applicants whose native language is not English must also score at least 550 on the Test of English as a Written Language (TOEFL), at least 240 on the Test of English as a Spoken Language (TSE), and take the Test of Written English (TWE).

The applicant must send the application form (1) to the Graduate School. All other materials (2-6) are submitted directly to the History Department.

The Graduate Committee may grant provisional admission to applicants whose qualifications do not warrant full admission, but whose academic records indicate promise of successful performance. When these students have completed 15 semester credits with a 3.0 average or better, the Director of Graduate Studies will petition the Graduate School to grant full admission.

Students whose undergraduate work falls well below the minimum standards of admissions but who believe they have the ability and ambition for graduate work may demonstrate their capability by taking upper-level undergraduate courses. As post-baccalaureate students, they may apply for Provisional Admission after having completed twelve credit hours of history with a 4.0 average or sixteen credit hours with a 3.0 average.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

All students must complete:

1. 30 graduate credit hours, of which 23 must be 600-level courses, including Historiography (3400:689)
2. The Option I, Option II, or Option III requirement

All full-time M.A. students (those taking 9 hours per semester) should enroll in at least one graduate seminar each semester (excluding summer school).

M.A. students must complete all requirements within six years after beginning graduate-level course work at The University of Akron. The Dean of the Graduate School may grant an extension of up to one year in unusual circumstances. The students must request such an extension in writing and have the endorsement of the Director of Graduate Studies.

## **FIELDS OF STUDY**

In consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, the student will select three fields of study. Two of these fields must be chosen from among the following:

Ancient  
Medieval  
Europe, Renaissance to 1815  
Europe, 1750 to the Present  
America to 1877  
United States since 1877  
Latin America  
East Asia  
South Asia  
Africa  
Middle East  
History of Science  
World History  
Public History

The third field may be chosen from the above history fields or from a cognate discipline approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

The student must pass a written examination in two of the three fields (See "Comprehensive Examinations," section). The third field requirement will be met by at least seven credit hours of work at the graduate level. The student must achieve a GPA of 3.0 in courses taken to satisfy the third-field requirement.

## **COURSE WORK**

### Five-hundred-level Courses

These courses are taught in conjunction with advanced undergraduate (400-level) courses. Although M.A. students attend classes with the undergraduates, they are required to do more work and work of substantially higher quality. Examples of the more rigorous requirements for graduate students include a greater reading load and additional research and writing. Many faculty also periodically meet separately with the graduate students in tutorial sessions.

### Individual Reading

This course permits a student to study a selected topic intensively with a faculty member. No more than six hours of Independent Reading may be counted toward the 30 hour minimum required for the degree.

Students should take note that faculty members are not compelled or encouraged to agree to an independent study with a student who has not already taken a reading seminar with him/her.

### Seminars

The seminar is the core of graduate education. Here students study and master the analytical and research skills of historical scholarship in small groups of graduate students and faculty. Seminars in the History Department take two forms. The reading seminar emphasizes the historiography of a particular topic or era. The writing seminar builds on the foundation of the reading seminar to which it is linked by requiring the student to write a substantial paper based on original research.

Students must take at least 16 hours of seminar work, and are encouraged to take more. Four of their seminars must satisfy one of the following course distribution patterns:

- Option I. Three reading seminars, one followed by a writing seminar, with the writing seminar paper read and approved by two faculty members.
- Option II. Two reading-writing seminar sequences under different professors, with the writing seminar paper of the student's choice read and approved by two faculty members.
- Option III. Two reading seminars, one writing seminar, and a thesis which must be read and approved by two faculty members.

Students intending to go on to doctoral work should select Option II or III, preferably Option III.

## **GRADES**

All graduate students must maintain a minimum 3.0 average. Those students whose GPA falls below 3.25 will not be considered to be making satisfactory progress toward the degree. Any student whose grade-point average falls below 3.0 is no longer in good standing with the Graduate School and will be placed on academic probation. Such a student must raise their GPA to 3.0 within two semesters of full-time academic work (or 15 hours) or face expulsion from the M.A. program.

The Dean of the Graduate School, with the approval of the Chair of the History Department, may dismiss any student who accumulates six hours of C+ work or below. Four hours of "F" entails automatic dismissal. Students dismissed from the Graduate School may not be readmitted for one calendar year. Readmission to the Graduate School will be granted only upon presentation of strong evidence for improved performance.

The grade of I (Incomplete) may be given when the student cannot complete the work required in a course within the semester. An incomplete must be completed during the next semester the university is in session or it is converted to an "F" grade. Students accumulating 12 hours of incomplete may not register for additional classes until the incompletes are made up.

The grade IP (In Progress) may be given in Research and Thesis courses where work is on a continuing basis. At the time work is completed, the IP is changed to a letter grade. An I (Incomplete) or IP (In Progress) may, upon application by the student or instructor, be changed to a PI (Permanent Incomplete) when the instructor is satisfied that, for reasons beyond the student's control, the course cannot be completed. The change from I or IP to PI must be approved by the department Chair and the Dean of the College.

## **COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

Students take comprehensive examinations in their two major fields of study. As early as possible in their M.A. work, students should notify the faculty members with whom they wish to take the exams, so that together they can begin planning a course of study to prepare students for the exams. Students are expected to take at least one reading seminar in each of their major fields, and preferably a reading-writing seminar sequence.

Comprehensive exams are taken during the last two weeks of July, the first two weeks of November, or the first two weeks of April, although they may also be taken at other times of the year by arrangement with the faculty. Exams will last approximately four hours for each field. Students will consult with the faculty examining them to schedule their exams. The exams for both fields need to be taken within a single two-week period.

M.A. students are not required to enroll in more than one reading seminar taught by a particular faculty member in order to be comprehensively examined by that faculty member. Students cannot be required to be examined by more than one faculty member per comprehensive field, though this may be considered an option if desired. Students should take note that faculty members are not compelled to examine a student who has not taken a reading seminar with him/her.

If a student does not pass the examinations “unconditionally” (an average of B+ or better for all parts of the exam), the examining faculty members will require the student to take the exams over. Exams may be repeated only once.

### **THE OPTION PAPER**

Students may obtain a second reader’s approval of an option paper at any time during study for the M.A. The student, in consultation with the faculty member for whom the seminar paper was written, selects a second reader, and then asks that person to read the paper. The student should expect that both professors will require that the paper be revised. When the readers have accepted the paper, they will notify the Director of Graduate Studies in writing. The student will then prepare three final copies of the paper, with a title page to be signed by both readers (see attached sample). Each reader receives a copy of the paper, and one is deposited in the History Department files.

Should an irreconcilable disagreement occur between readers, the Director of Graduate Studies will choose a faculty member to arbitrate the disagreement.

### **THE M.A. THESIS**

Students intending to go on to doctoral work should seriously consider writing an M.A. thesis, for the thesis is the most impressive evidence one can offer to a doctoral admissions committee of one’s fitness to pursue the Ph.D. The writing of such an extended piece of scholarship also prepares the student for work on a doctoral dissertation.

The student will write an M.A. thesis under the supervision of a professor with expertise in the subject. The candidate’s thesis committee will consist of the major professors and one other faculty reader. The student must submit a final draft of the thesis to those faculty readers at least three weeks before the deadline set by the Graduate School for receipt of thesis. It is advisable to submit preliminary drafts to the readers well in advance of that time, for the student will probably be required to do substantial revision.

The student should consult [A Manual of Style](#) (the most recent edition) by the University of Chicago Press for guidance in technical aspects of thesis writing. Useful supplementary information as well as Graduate School requirements (style, number of copies, etc.) may be found in the brochure, “Guidance for Preparing a Thesis or Dissertation,” available in the Graduate School office.

Should an irreconcilable disagreement occur between readers, the Director of Graduate Studies will choose a faculty member to arbitrate the disagreement.

After the thesis is approved, the student submits two copies to the Graduate School. These copies must be signed by major professor, the faculty reader, department head, and college dean. In

addition, the student will pay the thesis binding fees at the Cashier's office. It is a courtesy to provide the thesis director with a final copy as well.

## **FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND RESEARCH SKILLS**

The professor with whom the student is working may require an appropriate foreign language or other research skill. The student should remember that a reading knowledge of a foreign language is desirable, and may be necessary for admission to a doctoral program.

The language requirement is satisfied by passing the language examination given periodically by the Department of Modern Languages. If the student has completed the second year of a foreign language with grades of B or better within two years prior to beginning graduate study, this is acceptable evidence of proficiency to the Graduate School and normally to the History Department.

## **DEADLINES**

Students are responsible for meeting deadlines set by the Graduate School and for preparing appropriate forms.

### Advancement to Candidacy

Degree candidates should apply for Advancement to Candidacy after completing approximately half of the 30 required credit hours. The deadline for May graduation is September 15; for December graduation (January conferral) the deadline is May 15. Before completing the Advancement to Candidacy form, students shall consult with the Director of Graduate Studies.

### Graduation

To be cleared for graduation, a student must have completed required course work with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better; met all relevant department and Graduate School requirements; filed an Application for Graduation with the Registrar; and paid all applicable fees. If a thesis is required, two copies, properly prepared, are due in the Graduate School office by the deadline set by that office.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

The University annually awards a number of graduate assistantships to qualified students. These positions carry stipends and provide for the remission of tuition. The deadline for application is February 1. Assistants normally conduct discussion sections and in other ways assist in the history survey courses. Some serve as research assistants to members of the Department. For information and applications, see the Director of Graduate Studies.

Information on student loans can be obtained from the Office of Student Financial Aid.

The University of Akron  
Department of History

TITLE

AUTHOR

A seminar paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History

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Reader

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Reader

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Director of Graduate Studies

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Date