HANDBOOK FOR HISTORY

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Northern Illinois University

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the NIU History Graduate Program. This handbook describes the procedures you will follow for your graduate study in history and explains the rules and regulations governing our program. We hope you will consult it frequently and give us your suggestions for its improvement.

Our intention is to provide a useful description of the way the program works. This “common practice” is a combination of formal rules set by the Graduate School and the department, guidelines established by the History Graduate Committee, and choices made by students and advisers. Procedures may change and exceptions may sometimes be necessary. Do not, therefore, take this handbook as a legal document or a binding statement of rights and duties. The Handbook does not supercede the Graduate Catalog but it is the definitive statement of departmental policies. Reading this handbook is no substitute for consulting the Graduate Catalog, the History Department’s Director of Graduate Studies, and appropriate representatives of the Graduate School.
I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Graduate History Office
You are urged to stay in close touch with the department. Graduate students may request mailboxes on the sixth floor of Zulauf. Teaching assistants are automatically assigned mailboxes. You should check your mailbox and email often because we frequently send out notices about upcoming events and reminders of important obligations and deadlines. Please be sure to keep the graduate secretary informed regarding any changes to your mailing and email addresses or phone number.

Advising
The Director of Graduate Studies is responsible for monitoring department and university regulations, keeping official records, maintaining contacts with the Graduate School, and issuing permits for courses. Students newly enrolled in a degree program are required to consult with the Graduate Director before registering for courses. Other students must consult the director regularly to secure course permits and to insure proper construction of a program and timely meeting of requirements. In addition to consulting with the Director of Graduate Studies, you will also need to seek regular advice from faculty members in your field of study. Advising by specialists in your field is essential to help you determine which courses, areas, and special skills you should be emphasizing and for identifying promising research topics.

Institutional Structure of the Graduate Program
The Responsibilities of the Graduate Committee include questions and interpretation of policy, advising, daily functioning of the program, relations with the Graduate School and the university, recruitment, publicity, assessment, and the graduate curriculum. Each member—student or faculty—has an equal vote, and decision is by majority ballot. However, matters concerning admissions, financial aid, research grants, and individual graduate students are decided by the faculty members alone meeting in separate session. Major changes to the graduate program must be considered and endorsed by the full faculty of the department in accordance with departmental governance policy.

The History Graduate Program functions under the rules established in the Graduate School by the Dean and the Graduate Council, a university-wide body consisting of elected and appointed faculty members from the various colleges, plus one graduate student member from each college. The student member from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is chosen by the College Student Advisory Committee from the nominees of each department. History nominates its candidate upon the recommendation of the History Graduate Student Association.

The History Graduate Student Association is an NIU-recognized student association composed of all graduate students in the department and involved in the academic and social aspects of graduate study. It meets periodically to choose officers, discuss issues of concern to graduate students, and name or nominate
members of departmental and university committees. It organizes brownbags, student presentations, and social events. Most importantly, it organizes and runs an annual history graduate student research conference. The association is one of the few graduate student organizations at NIU holding voting membership on a departmental graduate committee. Two students serve on the Graduate Committee and three sit on the Lecture-Colloquium Committee, which schedules lectures by visiting scholars.

II. SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID FOR MA AND PHD STUDENTS

The most significant source of financial support for history graduate students is provided in the form of graduate assistantships, described below. Students who do not receive assistantship appointments in the History Department should be alert to the existence of assistantships in other institutional units on campus such as Founders Library, the Graduate School, External Programming, advising offices, and residence halls. These positions often require particular skills, and you apply for them like any job. In addition, History graduate students, depending on their field and expertise, may secure financial support through various affiliated centers such as the Women's Studies Program, the Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. In addition to these centers, we usually place one history graduate student in a two-year paid internship in the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) program at the Regional History Center in NIU's Founder's Memorial Library.

The Graduate History Office usually receives prompt notification of suitable openings available elsewhere on campus and forwards these via email to History graduate students. It is important to keep an eye out for these announcements so that you can take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. The Director of Graduate Studies can also advise you about the availability of fellowships, tuition waivers, and other forms of financial assistance, including the following:

**Graduate School Fellowships** are awarded by the Graduate school to a small number of outstanding students upon nomination by the department. Students interested in being considered for nomination must submit an application to the Director of Graduate Studies in the History Department by mid-January. The awards have no duties attached. Graduate fellowships are limited to master’s students pursuing their first graduate degree. Awardees must enroll in 9 hours of course work each semester.

**Dissertation Completion Awards** are intended for Ph.D. students during the advanced stages of their dissertation work who expect to complete the Ph.D. degree by the end of the year in which they hold the grant. They provide stipends for one year, plus some additional money to cover dissertation-related expenses. These are appropriate grants for students poised to complete the degree.

The application deadline is early in the spring for the following academic year. Applications should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and must be endorsed by the dissertation director and ranked by the Graduate Committee. The
Director of Graduate Studies coordinates the applications, collects the necessary letters, and forwards the completed applications to the Graduate School.

**History Graduate Student Research Funds.** Every year the History Department awards a number of grants to graduate students to help cover summer research expenses. Funds are generated from the contributions of alumni, faculty, and friends of the department. Competitions for these awards (The Hayter-Young and so-called “Large Grant” grants) are announced in early spring and take place during the spring semester. Such internal departmental grants are a good opportunity for students to practice and refine grant-application skills.

**Support for Conference Presentations.** History graduate students are strongly encouraged to present the results of their research at scholarly conferences. To help make this possible, the department uses alumni contributions to offset part of the cost of student travel for such purposes. Requests for such assistance should be directed to the department chair. The Graduate School also has limited funding for graduate student conference travel. For information, consult the “Current Students” page of the Graduate School website.

**Outside Grants.** Ph.D. students should begin exploring possibilities of outside funding at an early stage of their dissertation research. Application deadlines vary and may be set for as much as a year in advance of the beginning of the grant. Listings of available grants can be found in the Graduate History office, in the AHA publication *Fellowships and Grants of Interest to Historians*, and through the Graduate Student Grant and Fellowship Office. In the past, NIU history students have received awards from the Social Science Research Council, the Truman Library, the Fulbright Commission, Fulbright-Hays (US Department of Education), the Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the CIEE Summer Russian Language Program, the International Research and Exchanges Board, the German Academic Exchange Service, and others.

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**III. INFORMATION FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS**

**Application**
Application for an assistantship can be made one a year by filling out the appropriate form available online at [www.grad.niu.edu/](http://www.grad.niu.edu/). Assistantships are awarded for the fall-spring academic year. The departmental deadline for applying for academic year is January 15. (Other units that employ graduate assistants may have different deadlines.)

If you already hold an assistantship in the department, you will receive an email late in the fall semester prompting you to apply for renewal. The application must be completed by January 15 and submitted to the Graduate History Office along with two letters of recommendation, one from a faculty member who can speak to your academic abilities and one from a faculty member for whom you have performed T.A. duties. The renewal application form is available on the Graduate History Program web site under Checklists and Forms.
Initial awards are made by the History Graduate Committee on the basis of excellence of academic record, graduate record exam scores, faculty recommendations, and (for students already in the program) successful progress toward the degree. Incumbents are reviewed in terms of successful performance of previously assigned assistantship duties as well as evidence of normal progress to the degree.

**Duties and Perquisites**

Graduate assistants (G.A.s) are assigned to duties (20 hours/week) that aid the department in fulfilling its mission. G.A.s may be assigned as research assistants. However, the vast majority are teaching assistants (T.A.s) who assist in the department's general education survey courses. T.A.s are assigned to faculty members teaching survey courses and will be expected to attend lectures, grade papers, lead discussion or review sessions, hold office hours, and/or proctor exams. T.A.s may also be invited to give a guest lecture or two. Duties vary according to the preferences and needs of individual faculty members.

Assignments are made each semester by the Director of Graduate Studies in accordance with department guidelines. Most graduate assistants are assigned as graders in sections of History 110, 111, 112, 140, 141, 171, 260, 261, 381, or 382. Priority is given to the professors with the largest classes and to those with the heaviest teaching load. While the fields of study of G.A.s are taken into account when making assignments, it is not always possible to match the assignment with a student's field. Faculty and T.A.s may register their preferences with the Director of Graduate Studies. However, the dictates of enrollments and other considerations make it impossible to honor all requests.

Assistantship stipends are set by the Graduate Committee within budget constraints and stipend ceilings established by the College and Graduate School. Stipends are differentiated by level: at present there is one rate for M.A. students and one for Ph.D. students. Stipends are for nine months, from August 16 to May 15. In addition to the monetary stipend, G.A.s receive a waiver of tuition. They are, however, required to pay student fees. G.A.s are entitled to a tuition waiver during the summer session either preceding or following the academic year appointment; G.A.s appointed for only one semester are eligible for tuition waivers for the adjacent summer session.

**Credit Hours.** Graduate assistants in the History Department are required to enroll for credit in nine semester hours in each of the fall and spring semesters. Students with summer appointments must enroll in six hours. Additionally, teaching assistants, during their first semester, are required to enroll for one hour of History 695: Seminar in College Teaching of History. Requests to take less than the required load in a given semester should be submitted in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies. Acceptable rationales for course reductions are few and must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Summer Assistantships.** In recent years, the department has only on rare occasions been able to offer summer assistantships. Students needing summer support should seek jobs elsewhere on or off campus, or investigate other kinds of
summer research grants. Occasionally the department hires an advanced Ph.D. student to teach a summer survey course. If opportunities arise, the Director of Graduate Studies will send out a notice to qualified graduate students inviting applications.

**Policy on Renewal of Graduate Assistantships.** Graduate assistantships are awarded annually, but may be renewed subject to the following criteria: Provided the applicant demonstrates excellence in academic work and in discharging the assigned responsibilities, the Graduate Committee generally approves a maximum of two years of assistantship support at the M.A. level and a maximum of four years of assistantship support at the Ph.D. level (for a total maximum of six years of aid for students completing both their master’s and doctorate at NIU). Continuation of these policies is contingent upon the level of funding for assistantships provided by the state of Illinois and must necessarily be reviewed regularly by the Graduate Committee in the light of current financial resources.

Within these limits of two years (M.A.) and four years (Ph.D.), the Graduate Committee is committed to renewing assistants who make normal progress toward their degree and continue to perform at a high level. However, renewal is not automatic and is contingent on positive evaluation of the student’s performance. Evidence of weak performance may take the form of poor grades, multiple incompletes, negative reports from faculty members, failure to proceed with degree requirements at a satisfactory pace or inadequate performance of T.A. duties.

In determining the maximum periods of assistantship aid outlined above, the Graduate Committee normally counts fellowships and other awards initiated by the department or by members of the department on behalf of students as equivalent to assistantship awards. This policy includes graduate school fellowships, assistantships from other cost centers on campus, assistantships funded by faculty members’ outside grants, IRAD internships, and other awards funded from the general revenue funds of the State of Illinois. If a student has had this type of non-departmental funding and been previously highly ranked by the GC for departmental funding, that student shall be considered as part of the renewal pool. This policy regarding maximum years of funding does not include outside fellowships which students apply for independently such as Fulbright awards, Social Science Research Council Fellowships, or grants from private agencies or foreign governments.

The Dissertation Completion Fellowship represents a special case. When the department recommends a student to the Graduate School for this Fellowship, it is with the expectation that the student is in the final stages of finishing his or her dissertation. A student who accepts such a fellowship but does not finish by the anticipated deadline cannot normally expect, at the end of the fellowship year, to receive additional assistantship support from the department, even if the individual would otherwise still have had some eligibility remaining. Exceptions will only be made to meet department staffing needs.

In determining maximum aid, the Graduate Committee considers not only support already received but also the student’s progress in the degree program.
Examples: A Ph.D. student who does not receive an assistantship or similar financial aid during the first year but completes 18-24 semester hours can still apply for financial aid for the second year of the program, i.e. for “second-year aid.” Such an applicant, if successful, could anticipate no more than three years of “normal” financial aid—that is, enough to take the applicant through the fourth year of the Ph.D. program.

An M.A. student who accumulates 9 semester hours toward the master’s degree prior to receiving an assistantship would receive no more than 1 and \( \frac{1}{2} \) years of M.A. aid, since the student is already roughly one-fourth of the way to completing the degree.

Thus when the committee undertakes its annual assistantship deliberations, it groups all renewal applications together into categories such as “second-year M.A. aid” or “second-year Ph.D. aid.” These categories, which determine a student’s maximum period of normal aid, describe the student’s progress in the program, not the number of years of aid the student has actually received. Applicants should be aware of this distinction. Occasionally a student will be “out of phase” with other graduate students and might be applying for, let us say, “first/second year Ph.D. aid”—that is, for the second semester of the student’s first year and the first semester of the second year. (This would happen, for example, if a student begins at mid-year, in the spring semester, and applies for an assistantship for the following academic year.) In cases where the student’s situation is ambiguous, the Director of Graduate Studies may have to make a ruling on where the student is in the program with respect to assistantship renewals. If you have any doubt about how your application will be classified, you should inquire.

Ph.D. Aid Beyond the Normal Limits

In exceptional cases, the Graduate Committee has granted certain students a fifth year of Ph.D. aid (or seventh year of M.A. + Ph.D. aid) to facilitate completion of their degrees. This additional year is not granted routinely, and the Committee uses separate procedures in considering it. No Graduate Committee is bound by the procedures adopted by its predecessors, but for many years the practice described below has been followed.

Students who might be eligible for a fifth year of Ph.D. aid are set aside in an unranked alternate list until new applicants and incumbents within the normal time limit have been accommodated. If money subsequently becomes available, the Committee weighs the relative desirability of funding fifth year Ph.D. aid, other students on the alternate list, or other new applicants. Ph.D. students are granted fifth year aid only after scrutiny of the quality of their work and especially the rate of their progress in the program. To be considered for aid, the Graduate Committee expects fifth year Ph.D. students to have passed their candidacy exams, had their dissertation proposals submitted and approved, and to be in a position to devote the bulk of their time to dissertation research and writing.
**Later Instructorships**
Occasionally the department finds itself in the position of having to hire someone to teach regularly scheduled surveys that cannot be staffed by faculty. In such cases, the department does its best to notify all eligible parties (including recent Ph.D.s and ABDs) and is often able to hire its own students. Only advanced students who are beyond regular assistantship aid would be considered for such appointments, which are not subject to the assistantship policies described in this document. When possible, the department attempts to use such opportunities to provide further financial support to its students completing Ph.D. degrees.
IV. RULES AND PROCEDURES CONCERNING COURSEWORK

The specific requirements for the master’s and doctoral programs and the rules pertaining to them are discussed below. This section contains general suggestions about course selection and rules regarding courses, grades, and credits.

Planning a Program

Field Preparation. The main purpose of course work is to develop substantial knowledge of the areas in which you will be examined on the comprehensive (M.A.) or candidacy (Ph.D.) exams. Aim for good coverage of periods, themes, and faculty approaches. Work with an adviser to determine the appropriate course selections for your fields.

Field Examiners. Each of your fields should be developed in dialogue with your faculty examiner, who is responsible for composing the questions for your individual field exam/paper and participating in your oral examination (see below for details). You will choose your own examiners from among the department’s regular faculty, subject to their willingness to serve and the approval of the department. It is a good idea to identify your examiners well in advance and to discuss with them their expectations regarding the exam and the material under study. Field preparation at the M.A. level, in addition to course work, may require outside reading. Field preparation at the Ph.D. level will require extensive reading above and beyond course work. Therefore, you should consult your prospective examiners as early as possible to find out what they expect. Your choice of faculty examiners is an important part of your program, as is some diversity in your selection of courses. Students should avoid taking too much course work with one or two professors, especially in fields where a number of alternatives is available.

Mixture of Seminars and Lecture Courses. Your program should be based primarily on graduate seminars. These are intended to be the heart of the graduate program. Reading seminars (600-level) emphasize reading in the professional literature and analytical discussion of interpretive material. Research seminars (700-level) help students develop essential investigative, interpretive, and writing skills. Reading and research seminars are the best place to meet and interact with other graduate students. The 500-level lecture courses are useful to acquire basic knowledge of a field; in some cases they are essential to cover specialties not covered in seminars. However, because these are primarily undergraduate classes, they should be used sparingly in your graduate program. In the M.A. program, no more than 12 of the 30 hours can be taken at the 500-level. In the Ph.D. program, no more than 18 hours of course work (including applicable M.A. credits) may be earned in 500-level courses. Within the 500-level category, Special Topics courses (Hist 598) are limited to 9 hours for the M.A. program and 6 hours (above applicable M.A. credits) for the Ph.D.
Policy on Independent Study Courses (History 736 and 756)
The department limits the use of independent study courses (History 736) to circumstances where they are necessary for a student’s program and when no reasonable alternative exists. The reason for this policy is the necessity of maintaining regular course offerings as well as belief in the importance of encouraging an atmosphere of intellectual exchange among students.

It is important to note that 736 may NEVER count toward the minimum 30 credit hours for the MA degree under any circumstances. MA students may only take independent studies if they complete more than 30 credit hours, for example in the case of Graduate Assistants whose full time enrollment requirement causes them to take 36 credit hours across the two years of their assistantship. (See Course Load, below.) The other typical case when an MA student may take 736 is when they have completed the minimum 30 hours but need to enroll in an additional term in order to satisfy their comprehensive examination requirement. Students in this case usually enroll in a single credit hour of 736.

Keeping these limitations in mind, the department nevertheless recognizes legitimate uses of 736 work, particularly in preparing Ph.D. students for their field examinations. Students contemplating taking a 736 class should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies and then obtain the agreement of the faculty member in question. If both are favorable, a permit will be issued. Guidelines are as follows:

1. Independent study should not be scheduled when a regular class—either in the same semester or soon after—can serve as a viable alternative.

2. Independent studies should not be used as a solution to students’ time-scheduling problems, nor are they appropriate simply because a given professor is not available in a given semester.

3. Within these parameters the following are the most common reasons for scheduling independent studies:

   A. The student needs further course work in a field in which no courses are being offered or in which he or she has already taken what is offered.

   B. An advanced student needs special work in a sub-field not otherwise covered.

   C. The Graduate School requires that a student be registered for at least one-hour of coursework during the semester in which she or he takes comprehensive or candidacy examinations.

History 756 (independent research) is used to fulfill formal research requirements at the M.A. or Ph.D. levels, in accordance with the procedures discussed below. See “Research Credits” in section V and “Ph.D. Research Requirement” in Section VII.
**Course Load**
The Graduate School defines a normal full-time load as 9 hours per semester (fall or spring). Students without assistantships may take course loads between 3 and 15 hours. Because of the demanding requirements of history graduate courses, we recommend that full-time students in our program register for 9 credits per semester.

Graduate students on assistantships in the History Department are required to enroll for credit in 9 hours of graduate level course work each fall and spring semester. This requirement is more stringent than the minimum required by the Graduate School. A summer graduate assistantship requires registration for 6 hours.

**Underload**
In special cases, reductions of up to 3 hours may be requested in writing, with accompanying justification, such as personal circumstances necessitating a lower course load. Graduate Assistants may apply for one underload in a term in which they are preparing for their comprehensive or candidacy examinations. Such requests must be approved, in advance of the start of the term for which the reduction is being sought, by the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Incompletes**
Certain research courses, notably History 699 (master’s thesis) and 799 (doctoral dissertation), receive automatic grades of incomplete every semester until a final grade is received for the entire research project.

In all other cases you are expected to complete your course work and receive a final grade by the end of the semester. If special circumstances prevent this completion, the instructor may, at her or his discretion, grant a grade of I (“incomplete”) and file an Incomplete/Reversion Grade Form in the Graduate History Office indicating what work still needs to be completed, the deadline for completion of the work, and the grade that will be awarded if the student fails to meet the deadline.

You must complete this work within 120 days of the final day of examination week of the term in order to receive a grade in the course. If you fail to complete the work by the designated deadline, the incomplete (I) will be converted to an F or to the reversion grade stipulated on the form. If no reversion grade is recorded, the grade of F will be awarded at the conclusion of 120 days. **Please note the following important rules:**

1. You are expected to remove an incomplete within 120 days. The instructor may elect to assign a grade based upon work performed by the student thus far. An unresolved incomplete becomes an F.

2. The Graduate Committee considers that a student who begins to accumulate incompletes is not making adequate progress toward the degree. For a graduate assistant, such a record will jeopardize assistantship renewal.

3. A temporary incomplete (I) on your record could render you ineligible to graduate.
Student-at-Large and Transfer Credit
If you are enrolled as a student-at-large before being admitted to the History program, you can, with department permission, count up to 15 hours of graduate course work taken as an SAL towards your M.A. and/or Ph.D. degree, provided the courses fit your program and the Graduate Committee determines that remedial work is unnecessary. If you transferred from another school you can count up to 15 hours of graduate course work, provided it fits your NIU program. However, the combined total of student-at-large hours and transfer hours may not exceed 15. The same rules apply to Ph.D. students except that they can count 30 applicable hours from their master’s degree towards their Ph.D. degree. Thus for Ph.D. students the 15 allowable transfer or SAL hours are beyond the master’s degree.

To remain in good academic standing you have to maintain a 3.00 GPA in all graduate course work. This includes courses taken as a student-at-large but not work transferred to NIU from other institutions. Please note that this includes all graduate courses taken at NIU regardless of when they were taken and regardless of whether they were needed for your history program. Thus if you took a graduate course in nursing before you entered the history program and received a grade of C, you would have to earn an A in the same number of hours to maintain your B average.

If you fail to maintain a 3.00 average the Graduate School will send notification that you have been placed on academic probation. You must then bring your GPA back up to 3.00 by the time you have completed 9 additional hours of graduate work. If you fail to do this, you will be academically dismissed. Academic dismissal is also automatic if you receive 6 semester hours of D, F, or U (Unsatisfactory, for courses graded S/U) or WF (Withdrawal/Failing).

If you are enrolled in a graduate degree program and interrupt your enrollment for two years or more (that is, are not enrolled during 24 consecutive months), you must reapply for admission to the Graduate School and will be subject to the program requirements as they stand at the time of readmission.

Revalidation of Expired Coursework
Graduate students are required by the Graduate School to complete their programs within a set amount of time. For M.A. students, this is six years from the date of first enrollment. For Ph.D. students, this is nine years. Courses expire once these time limits have elapsed. If a student fails to complete the degree requirements within the stipulated time period, the Graduate School requires that she or he will either take new courses to substitute for the expired courses or petition to revalidate expired courses in order to graduate. If you find yourself in this position and wish to revalidate an expired course, you must inform the Director of Graduate Studies and submit your request to the relevant faculty member by the third week of the semester in which you intend to graduate. You will be asked to demonstrate current knowledge of the subject matter of the original course topic through one of several methods. These include, but are not limited to, an annotated bibliography, historiographical essay, or oral examination reviewing the significant works in the field written in the past decade. The length, format, and due date of the revalidation requirement will be determined by the faculty member in discussion with the student.
Research Skills Options
Both the M.A. and the Ph.D. have research skill requirements that are described in the sections on those degrees. This section explains how the requirements are met.

1. Average Proficiency in a Foreign Language
   You can demonstrate average proficiency in a foreign language by passing a translation examination. You will need to make arrangements for the exam through the Office of Testing Services in Adams Hall 128. Please note that a fee (currently $45) is charged for this service. You should anticipate an interval of approximately six weeks between registration and availability of the test and another two weeks between administration of the test and the reporting of results.
   Exams are available in languages taught by the faculty of the NIU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Some fields of study may require demonstration of proficiency in languages not available through the NIU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. In those cases, arrangements must be made with your history faculty adviser.

   For the translation examination you select a history book (or a series of articles) of at least 200 pages in the language. Bring it to the Director of Graduate Studies who will issue a form certifying that it is an appropriate selection for your discipline. Then deliver the book and the form to the Office of Testing Services and apply to take the exam. They will submit the book to an anonymous examiner from the Foreign Languages Department, who will copy a passage of approximately 600 words and return the book to you. At the exam, you are asked to translate the passage into acceptable English, using a dictionary, in a period of 90 minutes. The exam is graded pass or fail, and you are notified by mail.

   Alternatively, you can satisfy the average proficiency foreign language requirement by successfully completing one of the intensive eight-week summer courses in reading French, German, or Spanish offered by the NIU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. They are offered as two consecutive half-session courses of four weeks each, and enrollment is by permit only. Although intended only for graduate students, they carry undergraduate course numbers (e.g., FLFR 381 and 382 Reading Expository French I and II, for the French sequence) and hence cannot be taken for graduate credit for inclusion in a degree program. Their purpose is merely to demonstrate a skill. The grading system is S/U (satisfactory or unsatisfactory). A student achieving a grade of S in the first course is allowed to take the second course. The Graduate School deems any student who achieves a grade of S for the second course as having demonstrated average proficiency in the language.
You cannot fulfill the proficiency requirement by having taken a two- or three-year sequence of undergraduate language courses. Occasionally, a course similar to the summer courses for graduate students offered at NIU—one that is intensive in format and emphasizes the development of reading proficiency—can be substituted. In this case, the History Department, NIU's Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, and the Graduate School must evaluate the course and agree to the substitution.

2. **High Proficiency in a Foreign Language**

   The procedure for setting up an examination for high proficiency is the same as for an average proficiency translation exam, described above. But the content of a high proficiency exam is different in several respects: The exam (which currently costs $65) is three hours in length instead of 90 minutes, and it consists of two parts. The first part is a short (150-200 word) passage that you are asked to translate rather literally. The second is a much longer extract of perhaps 3-5 pages, for which you are asked to provide a “substantive summary” in English, i.e., the gist of it, rather than a literal translation. (At the evaluator’s discretion, the substantive summary may be an overall summary or a paragraph-by-paragraph summary). The text that serves as the basis for the exam should be more demanding. Whereas a survey text would be appropriate for an average proficiency translation exam, a specialized historical monograph or scholarly historical journal (200 pages or more) should be selected for the high proficiency exam. Indeed, the exam is formally described as a test of your ability to read foreign-language scholarly journals in your field of study. A dictionary is allowed.

   Students who are native speakers of a language other than English and who have evidence of fluency in their native language may petition the Graduate Director for a waiver for the foreign language requirement. Such students must have the written support of their PhD advisor in order to be allowed to fulfill the research skills requirement in this way.

3. **Research Proficiency in Quantitative Methods**

   Currently the Graduate School requires that students pass two graduate-level courses in quantitative methods. For graduate students in History, this would typically include earning a grade of B or better in History 601 Quantitative Methods for Historical Social Analysis (which has as its prerequisite STAT 208 or STAT 301 or consent of department) or an approved graduate-level course that has a significant component in SPSS. Due to lack of demand History 601 has not been taught for several years and will not be taught in the foreseeable future. If you are considering using average proficiency in quantitative methods to meet a skills requirement, consult with the Director of Graduate Studies to determine relevant courses.
High proficiency in quantitative methods is a theoretical possibility that has never been tried in the History Department. The criteria for meeting such a requirement will be established by the department on an individual basis when and if the need arises. The option is appropriate only for an exceptional student planning extensive use of quantitative methods in research, and it would have to be approved by the student’s advisers and by the Graduate Committee.

**Academic Integrity**

Your work in your degree program should reflect the highest professional standards of academic integrity. The standards by which professional historians conduct themselves are found in the American Historical Association’s “Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct”, a free publication available on the AHA website (www.historians.org). You should familiarize yourself with this publication, which includes the following definition of plagiarism: “The expropriation of another author’s work, and the presentation of it as one’s own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship.” The Graduate Program of the Department of History enforces the standards of academic integrity. The procedures and sanctions in cases of violations of these standards are found in the Graduate School Catalog.

**V. THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE**

The master’s program offers broad field preparation for students interested in extending their undergraduate knowledge, seeking jobs in historically-related fields like archival work, museum work, editing, or consulting, and seeking teaching positions at the secondary or community college level. The degree consists of at least 30 hours of course work divided between a primary field (18-24 hours) and a secondary field (6-12 hours). The Graduate History Office has posted a checklist of requirements and a tracking sheet for recording your course work to its web site so that you can monitor your progress as you go along. (See “Checklists and Forms”)

**Admission**

In considering admission, the Department takes a broad look at all available evidence of the applicant’s ability to do graduate-level work in history. Grades in relevant subjects, scores on the General Test of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), letters of recommendation from university professors, language skills, and the student's statement of objectives and writing sample are carefully reviewed. The application essay that describes the preparation and motivation for graduate study in history along with geographic and thematic interests is a crucial part of the application, for a major consideration aside from raw ability will be whether the History Department has faculty expertise in the proposed field of study.

**Fields**

The primary and secondary fields are offered in the histories of ancient, medieval, early modern and modern Europe (including Britain); Russia and Eastern Europe;
Africa; Asia; the United States; and Latin America. Global history has also been approved as a field of study. The secondary field may also be an approved field outside of history; however, not more than 6 hours of the required 30 can be devoted to courses outside the department.

Master’s students devote most of their work to the **primary field**. This is the field in which you will do your research projects and write your comprehensive examination essays. Choosing it is therefore of central importance because your choice will determine what courses you will take and what research and historiographical skills you will have to master.

The **secondary field** is defined as 6 to 12 hours of course work in a field other than the primary field, completed with a grade of B or better. There is no examination in the secondary field.

It is your responsibility to inform the Director of Graduate Studies as to which are your primary and secondary fields, in order for the Director to enter these fields into the program tracking software, MyNIU. This is essential for reporting of satisfaction of degree requirements for graduation. (See MyNIU Degree Progress Report below)

**Research Credits**
The program requires all students to take 9 hours of master’s research and to complete a “master’s essay” which is placed on file in the History Department Graduate Office. Six of those 9 hours are to be in formal research seminars which are topical, thematic, or methodological in nature. The remaining three hours of the research requirement will be satisfied through independent research (HIST 756) under the guidance of the student’s primary adviser, in which the student will expand and revise one or both of the seminar papers (in the latter case if the topic is the same) to produce the final "master's essay." The latter is expected to be of publishable length – between 35 and 40 pages, including footnotes. The length is a guideline only and is up to the discretion of the primary adviser.

A formal master’s thesis is not required, but students who need to undertake a thesis for a PhD program at another institution may do so. The difference between a master’s essay and a thesis is that the essay is thought of as comparable to a publishable article in length, whereas a thesis is usually longer and divided into chapters. In addition, the thesis is drawn up in accordance with the monitored guidelines set by the Graduate School, and is bound and placed in the library. The essay, in contrast, is monitored solely by the History Department. Getting a thesis approved is thus a longer, more complicated process comparable to the submission of a doctoral dissertation. Either research project must result in a polished, well-organized statement making an original contribution to knowledge based on rigorous primary research.

You should discuss the timing of your research with advisers as soon as possible. As a general rule, formal research work should commence as soon as practical, commensurate with the student having demonstrated the necessary special proficiencies.
Summary of M.A. Credit Hour Requirements
*At least 30 credit hours total  
*18-24 credit hours must be in the student’s primary field, with  
  9-15 hours of coursework and 9 hours of research  
*6-12 hours must be in student’s secondary field (with a grade of “B” or better)  
*0-6 hours may be in approved coursework outside of the primary and secondary fields  

NOTE: No more than 6 of these hours may be taken outside the department. At least 9 of the 30 hours must be in History reading seminars (any field). No more than 12 of the 30 hours may be in 500-level courses.

Language and Research Tool Requirement
M.A. candidates are required to demonstrate average proficiency in either an approved foreign language or quantitative methods. The tool selected should be consistent with the student’s research interests and must have the approval of the appropriate advisers. The various ways of fulfilling this requirement are described above on pages 16-17. The only exception is those with primary fields in United States or British history who do not intend to pursue graduate study beyond the M.A. degree.

This skills requirement should not be taken lightly. Progress toward fulfilling this requirement is one of the major criteria considered by the Graduate Committee in deciding whether a student applying for assistantship renewal is making “normal progress” toward the degree. Admission to the Ph.D. program is contingent on prior demonstration of at least average proficiency in one skill.

M.A. Comprehensive Examination
Successful completion of the M.A. comprehensive examination is a requirement of the degree. That examination takes the form of two historiographical essays in the primary field which is defined broadly in temporal and geographical terms. Each student will have two examiners/ advisers from their primary field: a main adviser, who will also direct completion of the Master's essay, and a secondary adviser. It is the student’s responsibility to identify appropriate faculty members in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies and ascertain their willingness to serve on that committee. Please notify the Director of Graduate Studies of your intention, indicating which two examiners you would like to have on your committee. The Director of Graduate Studies has the right to approve or modify your choices.

These two professors on the examination committee will prepare your essay topics or questions and evaluate your essays. The field essays might ask you to evaluate how historians have addressed a particular question or to review a body of work more generally. The general topic and reading list for each essay will be determined in consultation between the student and the field examiners no later than the third semester of the full-time student's program of study or after 15 hours of coursework for the part-time student. Students can expect to read approximately 20 books and/or articles for each essay and to write essays of 15-20 pages each. These are meant to be guidelines only. Some of these readings may have been introduced previously in
reading seminars, although that it not a requirement. Individual examiners may assign different work loads in both field preparation and essay length.

The historiographical essays are to be submitted electronically to both examiners no later than week 9 of the student’s final semester in the program. The two examiners will read both historiographical essays, consult with each other, and arrive at a joint assessment of the student's overall performance. The examination/papers will be judged as “pass,” “fail,” or “pass with a recommendation for admission to the Ph.D. program.” A candidate who fails the examination may, with the consent of his or her committee, will have an opportunity to rewrite the papers. A second failure is final.

Note that the Graduate School regulations specify that a student must be registered for one or more credit hours during the semester in which a comprehensive examination is taken for any graduate degree.

**Oral Exam.** At the discretion of either the examining committee or the candidate, the written portion of the comprehensive exam may be followed by an oral exam of approximately one hour, to be scheduled about one week after the evaluation of the written exam has been conveyed to the candidate. If held, the oral exam may range over the material presented in the field essays and may include reference to the research paper or thesis.

**Waiver of Ph.D. Qualifying Examination**
If an M.A. candidate receives a recommendation from the comprehensive examining committee for admission to the Ph.D. program and is actually admitted, the M.A. comprehensive exam will, if the examination committee so stipulates, serve as the Ph.D. qualifying exam.

**MyNIU Degree Progress Report**
NIU has instituted an electronic tracking program to review your progress toward completion of your degree. It is your responsibility to monitor your Degree Progress Report periodically. It will show how your courses have been applied to the degree requirements for the primary and secondary field courses, research requirement, foreign language requirement, and comprehensive examination requirement. When the time comes, you will also apply to graduate via MyNIU. The Director of Graduate Studies will help students resolve any issues or problems that arise with the DPR.

**Application for Graduation**
Between ten and seven months before you intend to graduate, you must submit a form applying to graduate along with a non-refundable graduation fee (currently $35). This is done online via MyNIU. **The deadline for applying falls seven months before graduation.** It is listed each semester in the Graduate School Calendar. If you fail to graduate that semester, your application and fee are extended automatically to the next graduation date.

**Deposit of Master's Research Paper**
Before graduating, all master’s candidates are required to deposit a clean copy of their master’s paper or papers in the Graduate History Office. The major adviser will submit a written evaluation of the final paper directly to the Graduate History office.
Students completing master’s theses should consult the Graduate School procedures for completion of this requirement.

**Limitation of Time**
You must fulfill all requirements for the degree within a period of **six consecutive years** from the first course on your graduate program of courses, including transfer courses. (Example, a student taking the first course in fall 2008 would have to graduate by August 2014.) **This time limit is carefully monitored by the Graduate School.** If a course does not fall within the six-year period you may retake it, with departmental approval; substitute another course of equivalent semester hours; or discuss with the Director of Graduate Studies the possibility of having the course “revalidated,” a process by which you demonstrate current knowledge of the material to the satisfaction of appropriate faculty.

**VI. MASTER OF ARTS WITH A CONCENTRATION IN PUBLIC HISTORY**

This concentration is designed to meet the needs of students seeking special preparation for careers in public and private historical agencies, archives, museums and historical societies, and research and consulting firms. A student pursuing this program must complete 24 of the usual 30 semester hours from the traditional M.A. degree in history classes, but is not required to complete a 6-hour secondary field in a second geographic or temporal historical field. Instead the 12-hour public history concentration shall serve as their secondary field. The 12 hours shall normally be distributed as follows:

**Required courses (6-9 hours):**
- HIST 600, Internship in Public History (3-6)
- and either
- HIST 592, Introduction to Public History (3)
- or
- ART 565, Introduction to Museum Studies (3)

**Elective Courses (3-6)**
- **Recommended Electives**
  - HIST 597, Oral History (3)
  - ANTH 562, Museum Methods (3)
  - ART 654, Museum Administration (3)
  - ART 655, Curatorial Practice (3)
  - ART 656, Museum Exhibitions and Interpretation (3)
  - ART 657, Museum Education (3)

- **Other Available Electives:**
  - ART 593, History of Architecture III: From 1900 (3)
  - ART 598, History of Architecture II: 1400-1900 (3)
  - ART 696, Studies in American Art (3)
  - COMS 557, The Documentary Tradition (3)
Students in the M.A. degree program taking the Concentration in Public History must satisfactorily complete a written comprehensive examination (fulfilled by two field essays) in their primary field and complete a master’s essay in their primary field (fulfilled through the course HIST 756). In addition, Public History students must complete a report or project related to the internship and have it approved by the department’s Director of the Concentration in Public History. For information about the requirements of the comprehensive examination, see pages 20-21.

VII. THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

The doctorate is the highest degree available to students of history and, ordinarily, their entree into the historical profession. The doctorate is an appropriate degree for students seeking teaching, administrative, or research positions in universities, colleges, and community colleges, foundations, government agencies, and major libraries and archives. It is appropriate for those who want to develop their historical understanding to the fullest in a rigorous professional atmosphere.

Admission

Because of the length of time and the high level of knowledge and analytical skill necessary to complete the doctoral program, the Graduate Committee scrutinizes Ph.D. applications very carefully. Students enrolled in the master’s program in History at NIU are not automatically admitted to the Ph.D. program upon completion of their master’s degree. If you are in the master’s program at NIU and wish to be considered for admission to our doctoral program, you will need to complete a new application form and submit it to the Graduate School along with three new letters of recommendation and an application essay. You are not required to submit a new transcript or GRE scores because these are already on file.

It is possible, indeed desirable, to apply to the Ph.D. program while you are still completing your master’s work. A good time to get your application in order is the semester you are taking your comprehensive examinations. Course work taken this last semester beyond the minimum M.A. requirements may be applicable to your Ph.D. program, so make a point of taking appropriate courses. Identify faculty with whom you would like to work and talk to them about your interest in the Ph.D. program. This is also a good time to work on language skills. Students who earn an M.A. at NIU must satisfy applicable foreign language requirements before being considered for admission to the Ph.D. program. For NIU students with an MA in US history or other English language part of the world, this means that average proficiency in one language or average proficiency in quantitative methods is a requirement for admission. You must complete this requirement before you enter the Ph.D. program. The Graduate Committee may admit you based on projected satisfaction of M.A. degree requirements, but you will only enter the Ph.D. program once they are satisfied.

Your early application will facilitate the earliest possible decision on admission, but the Graduate Committee may not act on your case until the results are in from your
master’s work. In addition to the formal requirements listed in our application literature, several factors are important for admission:

The recommendation of your M.A. comprehensive examination committee regarding your admission to the doctoral program. However, a positive recommendation by the committee does not in itself guarantee admission.

The success of your M.A. research. Your M.A. research paper will be reviewed by the committee and its quality will be an important factor in admission.

The state of your language or quantitative methods skills. Students will be expected to have passed at least one skills requirement and provide explanation of how they intend to fulfill the remaining skills requirements. Weakness in this area will jeopardize your chances of admission.

Your proposed fields of study and the probable area of your dissertation. A crucial consideration will be whether the History Department has faculty expertise in your proposed field of study. Relevant faculty members will be consulted for their appraisal of your application and Master’s level work. Furthermore, your ability to master any additional required research skills (e.g., Russian language proficiency for Russian history) will be considered.

Course selection/Credit hours/Limit on 500-level courses:
Doctoral students complete 72 hours of course work, including 30 hours from the master’s program. Of the 42 hours beyond the M.A. degree, a maximum of 18 hours may be counted for dissertation writing and research (History 799); the rest are spent in graduate reading and research seminars, directed readings courses, and/or applicable 500-level courses. A minimum of 24 credit hours in these courses is required for the Ph.D.

IMPORTANT: Students should consult with their primary academic adviser before each semester to discuss the appropriate course selections for their program.

For students who take all of their graduate courses (both M.A. and Ph.D.) at NIU, the total of 500-level courses applied toward the Ph.D. cannot exceed 18 hours. For students who apply transfer credit toward the doctoral degree, the sum of credit for NIU 500-level courses plus one half of the number of hours transferred may not exceed 18 semester hours.

It is expected that a substantial part of the students’ training will be autonomous. In addition to formal course work, students are expected to pursue their chosen interests through sustained and systematic reading of relevant literature. Doctoral students will establish their ability to conduct original historical research in their dissertations. They will demonstrate through their candidacy exams that they have acquired the knowledge needed to teach at the college level or to function as a professional historian in other contexts.
Ph.D. Qualifying Exam
In some cases, students are conditionally admitted to the Ph.D. program. These students may be required to take a qualifying examination before the end of their first semester of coursework at NIU. The purpose of the qualifying examination is to assess a student’s preparation for doctoral-level work, especially dissertation research. Students who received their M.A. degree from NIU will normally be exempt from the qualifying examination unless their M.A. examination committee stipulated that they should be required to take it. The Director of Graduate Studies also frequently waives the qualifying examination requirement for students who earned their M.A. degrees elsewhere. This decision will be based on your previous academic record, your performance in your first semester of doctoral work, and the recommendation of your adviser.

The examination, if required, is normally conducted by a committee of three faculty members representing potential candidacy examination fields. The examination is oral and lasts for approximately an hour. The committee may question you broadly on topics related to these fields and their literature and more closely on topics you have studied or researched in your previous graduate work. The committee may also ask about your plans for a dissertation topic. This is not considered a “field” exam, but rather an assessment of your scholarly aptitude, capacity for critical analysis, and historical knowledge to date. Following the examination, your committee will consult and reach a decision. The committee chair will inform you of the outcome at that time.

Academic Adviser
The Graduate Director will act as your provisional academic adviser when you first enter the Ph.D. program. As soon as possible, however, you should identify your primary field adviser. This adviser will be a member of the graduate faculty and will be responsible for guiding your selection of courses, Ph.D. fields, and field examiners (see next section).

Choosing Ph.D. Fields (The following is a description of the revised program in effect for doctoral level students who have entered the program since 15 May 2007. If you entered the Ph.D. program in AY2006-2007 and opted for the transitional program, see the requirements for the transitional program on the department's website. If you are pursuing the Ph.D. under older requirements, consult the catalog under which you entered the program and the Director of Graduate Studies to determine what remains to be done to complete your degree.)

Doctoral students admitted since 15 May 2007 choose three fields in which they will gain mastery and be examined. Students must pass written and oral candidacy exams. The selection of fields is crucial because it determines your course of study, the type of historian you will become, and ultimately the kinds of jobs for which you
will be able to apply. It will also strongly influence which research skills you will need to acquire.

Students are encouraged to discuss field selection with their primary field adviser and with appropriate faculty members upon entering the program and to make selections early enough to plan a coherent program of coursework. You should make at least a tentative decision regarding fields before the end of your first semester in the Ph.D. program.

In selecting examination fields, you are choosing not a set of courses but rather a subject matter over which you will be examined by a specific faculty member. The choice of a field also involves the choice of an examiner or examiners. Your choices are limited by the availability of appropriate faculty. For some fields there will be only one possible examiner; for others, you may have to choose among several possibilities. The two of the three members of the candidacy committee must be senior members of the graduate faculty.

A proposed list of fields and examiners should be prepared by the student in conjunction with the provisional adviser according to the guidelines for field distribution listed below. The Graduate Committee plays an advisory role with regard to field selection. Any departures from these guidelines must be justified in writing.

The exact character of each field will be determined on an individual basis, following consultation between the student and the proposed examiner. No faculty member is obliged to agree to a field desired by a student. No one faculty member can examine a student in more than one field. There are no specific courses or hour requirements attached to any of these fields. Students and their examiner will determine the appropriate means of preparing for each examination.

No later than the beginning of the student’s third semester of full-time Ph.D. study (and preferably by the end of the second semester), students are required to submit a list of their proposed exam fields and examiners in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies. (A form for this purpose is available on the History Graduate Program website under “Checklists and Forms.”)

A member of the examination committee will become your principal adviser and chair of your examination committee. That faculty member will typically be the prospective dissertation director and must be a senior member of the graduate faculty. Where there are more than two specialists in a given field, a major field may have co-directors. Your provisional adviser may, but does not have to be, a member of your examination committee.

**Guidelines for Field Selection**

Your three fields should not only make sense intellectually but also be conducive to success in your chosen career. Field preparation and evaluation are meant to help students to develop a breadth of knowledge of the literature in their chosen fields. Doctoral students are expected to master a deep knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their primary field of specialization. They
are expected to master a **competent** knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their secondary fields. Together, the fields prepare the student for close investigation into a particular historical question when developing the dissertation prospectus. Primary and secondary fields should be complementary to afford the student the best possible preparation for original research in their chosen area. Criteria for field selection are as follows:

The primary field must be a recognized field of study in the profession.

The two secondary fields must represent recognized fields of study within the profession. One may be closely related geographically, chronologically, theoretically, and/or thematically to the primary field. One **must** be distant from the primary field, either geographically or chronologically. Either (but not both) of the secondary fields **may** be outside the field of history, but that is not a requirement.

**Ph.D. Candidacy Examination**

1. **Written Exams**
Ph.D. students must pass written and oral candidacy examinations. These examinations require you to demonstrate professional competence in three fields. The written examinations are in the form of field essays and a teaching portfolio.

**Field Essays**
Students can expect to read approximately 60 books for the essay(s) in their primary field and between 25 and 35 books for each of their secondary field essays. These are guidelines only; some advisers may require different amounts of work to prepare students for each of their essays.

Essay topics are to be determined in consultation with the field examiners, but are typically historiographical essays asking the candidate to synthesize the literature around a major question or debate in that field. The primary field essay will be substantial, as much as 50 pages in length. The goal is to ensure that students are broadly trained. Each secondary field essay will typically run about 20-25 pages in length. These are guidelines only; essay topic and length are determined by field examiner.

Essays may be written over a period of time and should be revised and updated as students' mastery of the field develops. It is the expectation that students will work on these essays until the field director is satisfied with the quality of the essay. It is possible, however, that a student fails to achieve the standards set by the examiner. A student who fails a field essay will normally be permitted to revise and resubmit the essay. A second failure will ordinarily be final and result in termination of the student from the program. There are a limited number of circumstances in which a student who has twice failed to satisfy the essay requirement of an individual examiner field examination may substitute a different field. Under no circumstances, however, will any student who has failed two different field essays be allowed to continue in the doctoral program.
Once the examiners are satisfied with the essays they directed, students will submit electronic copies of all three essays and the teaching portfolio to all examiners in anticipation of the oral examination, which is to take place within one month of the submission of the essays. This should normally take place by the beginning of the 5th semester after a full-time student has entered the doctoral program.

Teaching Portfolio
The portfolio will include two sample syllabi – one for an upper-division course in the student’s area of expertise in the major field and the other for a lower-division survey course in the student's major field; a teaching philosophy statement; as well as supporting material such as a paper assignment, a book synopsis assignment, or an examination. The survey for the lower division course could easily be developed in one of the student's TA experiences. The portfolio demonstrates how you approach teaching both philosophically and practically. A Powerpoint presentation on the elements of a teaching portfolio is on the History Grad web site under Program Information, Ph.D. program.

2. Oral Exam
When all the field essays and teaching portfolio have been completed, there will be a two-hour oral examination, which should normally be taken no later than the fifth semester after a full-time student has entered the doctoral program. Graduate School regulations specify that a student must be registered for one or more credit hours during the semester in which a comprehensive exam (including the Ph.D. oral candidacy exam and oral defense of dissertation) for a graduate degree is taken. Therefore it may be necessary to register for one hour of History 636 (Independent Study) during the semesters in which you take your exams or have your defense. Because of the complexity involved in scheduling a Ph.D. oral candidacy examination, the department’s policy is to discourage students from taking the exam in the summer, when few faculty members are likely to be available.

At the conclusion of the oral examination the examination committee will decide whether the student has passed the candidacy examination as a whole. Upon satisfactory completion of the candidacy examination, the student will be certified to the Graduate School as a candidate for the Ph.D. degree. Such certification is contingent, however, upon prior completion of all course requirements listed on the student’s program and completion of the research skills proficiency requirement.

Ph.D. Language and Research Tools Requirement
Doctoral students must demonstrate ability in foreign languages or research tools. At minimum, the various options are: (1) average proficiency in two approved foreign languages; (2) high proficiency in one approved foreign language; or (3) average proficiency in one approved foreign language and average proficiency in quantitative methods. Students with an M.A. in History from NIU will have already met one of the language and research tool requirements. The various ways of fulfilling these requirements are described above, pages 16-17. The language and research tool option selected must be relevant to your fields of study and consistent with the requirements of your proposed dissertation research. It should be fulfilled as early as
practical during your Ph.D. work, and must be fulfilled in order to be admitted to candidacy.

**Ph.D. Research Requirement**

Doctoral students are required to take a minimum of six hours of research during the course of their Ph.D. program beyond the M.A. Normally, this requirement should be fulfilled by taking two formal research seminars. These seminars are organized topically, thematically, or methodologically. They are required to ensure that Ph.D. students have well-developed research skills when they eventually conduct their field research. While the seminars may not always appear to be directly related to an individual Ph.D. student’s research interests, they are valuable opportunities to explore aspects of potential dissertation topics and to develop elements of the candidate’s dissertation prospectus. Beyond the seminars, students are encouraged to take HIST 756 (Directed Research) with their dissertation adviser to work on their dissertation prospectus.

**Goals to Keep in Mind**

In planning your program, keep two goals in mind: develop knowledge of historical problems and literature in each examination field sufficient for teaching college-level courses; and develop as early as possible of an interesting, important, and feasible dissertation topic, along with the language, quantitative and other research skills needed to pursue it. Both goals are important. If your aim is to publish scholarly works and teach in a research-oriented, graduate-level institution, then the attractiveness of your dissertation subject and its ultimate potential for publication will be of great importance in getting a job, although fields and teaching skill will also be very important.

**WRITING A DISSERTATION**

1. **Dissertation Topic and Director.** You should have been thinking about a possible dissertation topic throughout your Ph.D. course work, and you will have completed a couple of research papers that lead you in that direction.

   As soon as you identify the general area of your topic and a faculty expert in the area willing to serve as your adviser, you can consult with her or him to work out the parameters of a viable topic and determine what sources and methods will be needed to complete it. If you are not at this stage, either because previous explorations have not proved fruitful or because your interests have changed, then you should proceed immediately to identify a new topic and talk with the faculty member who can direct it.

   In order to complete a dissertation you must have a faculty director qualified in the field in question who is willing to serve as your director. Most faculty members will be pleased to discuss this matter with you. However, a professor may decline to direct your work if he or she does not feel qualified in that area; does not consider the topic viable; does not have confidence in your ability to complete it satisfactorily; or already has so many advisees that s/he does not have sufficient time to provide you
will appropriate direction. The department cannot guarantee you a director and cannot necessarily supply the expertise for any topic you may choose, even a viable one. It is your responsibility, therefore, to find a topic that is tenable within the resources available in our program and to convince a director that you have the talents to complete it. The chances are that you will not have any difficulty doing these things, since most faculty members are interested in directing good dissertations. The Director of Graduate Studies will be happy to discuss any problems with you and to put you in touch with appropriate faculty members.

Once you have a potential topic and prospective director, you will need to discuss the proposed topic with other faculty members who might become part of your dissertation committee. You will need to assemble a committee of your director and two additional graduate faculty members to approve your dissertation topic. The prospective director will serve as chair of this committee. The other members should be faculty who will likely serve on the subsequent dissertation defense committee. It is in your interest to enlist the best possible faculty experts -- in terms of both methodology and topic -- so that you will have the benefit of well-informed and productive criticism. These same faculty members can provide guidance and advice if you encounter problems in your research.

There are no formulas for finding a good dissertation subject, and in the last analysis the search is up to you. Keep in mind that the dissertation should be based principally on primary sources and must represent a substantial contribution to knowledge based on original scholarship. Remember that your subject should meet your professional needs in terms of job applications and future publications. It should also be something that interests you deeply because you will be devoting years of your life to its successful completion. The more you discuss possibilities with faculty experts and fellow students, the better. To get ideas and to avoid wasted effort, you should frequently consult the American Historical Association's List of Doctoral Dissertations in History (www.historians.org/pubs/dissertations/index.cfm).

2. Dissertation Prospectus. Once you have decided upon a topic and acquainted yourself with the relevant secondary literature, you will present a dissertation prospectus that will be read and discussed by your committee. There is no prescribed format for the prospectus, but it should define the topic concisely, provide justifications for the topic's periodization, present the dissertation's methodological approaches, place the topic within its historiographical framework, delineate the archival sources and other major primary source collections that will serve as the foundation for the dissertation, and provide, if possible, a tentative chapter outline. The prospectus will necessarily be a general statement, but it should be as precise as your present state of knowledge will permit. It is understood that at this stage you cannot know exactly where the sources will lead you and you will likely make modifications as you pursue the project. Major changes of topic will have to be approved by the committee.

3. Prospectus Defense. With the help of the Graduate History Office, your director will arrange a meeting of an hour or so at which the committee will discuss the prospectus with you. They will offer suggestions and constructive criticism. They may require revisions. When the proposal has been approved, the Director of Graduate
Studies will formally nominate your director to the College and Graduate School. Approval by the deans is contingent upon the director's senior membership on the graduate faculty. Students normally register for HIST 756 Directed Research in this term, however they may enroll in HIST 799 Doctoral Dissertation (see below) as long as they have passed their candidacy exams. You can find samples at these links:

http://history.fas.harvard.edu/programs/graduate/program/dissertation-prospectus.php
http://plaza.ufl.edu/edale/Notes%20for%20dissertation%20prospectus%20writers.htm

4. Ph.D. Research Requirement: History 799. Once you have completed your course work and passed your candidacy exams, you should begin enrolling in History 799 (Doctoral Dissertation). You may do this for the first time in the semester in which you defend your dissertation prospectus, or you may choose to wait until the term after the prospectus defense to enroll in 799. By the time you graduate, you must fulfill two requirements with respect to this enrollment:

   a. complete the number of hours needed to make 72 total hours in your program (including 30 hours accepted from your master's degree and a minimum of 24 additional credit hours in course work), and

   b. enroll continuously in at least one hour of 799 every semester following your initial enrollment in Hist 799. Continuous registration is required by the Graduate School in the summer as well as in the fall and spring semesters. Since you can take anywhere from 1 to 15 hours of 799, it is to your advantage, if you are a graduate assistant, to take a heavy load of it while you are still on an assistantship tuition waiver. Otherwise you may want to spread the hours out over several semesters.

Remember, however, that you cannot avoid meeting these two requirements of 72 hours and continuous enrollment. All History 799 hours receive a grade of I (incomplete) until the dissertation is accepted, at which time a grade is substituted for the accumulated incompletes. The incompletes given for 799 are not subject to the regular rules regarding IN (permanent incomplete). When you have taken enough 799 hours to meet your 72 hours, you must still continue to register in it each term, including summer terms, for at least one hour until the dissertation is completed and approved. Beyond 18 hours, History 799 is taken as audit.

5. Limitation of Time. Writing a dissertation often takes longer than expected, so it is wise to be aware from the beginning of how much time you have to finish your degree. The Graduate School requires you to finish all requirements for the Ph.D. degree within a period of nine years immediately prior to your graduation. The Graduate School takes this limit very seriously. This time limit applies to all 72+ hours of graduate work on your Ph.D. program of courses. Your candidacy examination too must fall within the nine-year limit. However, the department may declare up to the oldest 30 hours exempt from the time limit, which commonly covers.
the bulk of the master’s degree. Also, coursework taken to complete language or research-tool requirements is typically exempted as well.

In measuring your time, remember that you will need most of your final semester for getting readers’ comments, making corrections, and producing final corrected copies of your dissertation. The writing on your dissertation will have to be completed considerably earlier than the actual deadline. Extensions of time are granted only by the Dean of the Graduate School upon petition of the department. They are not easy to get (and may involve retaking or revalidating coursework or even, in extreme cases, retaking the candidacy exams). You should not count on having more than the nine years to finish your work. (See “Sample Ph.D. Progress Toward Degree” on the History Graduate program web site under Program Information, Ph.D. Program.)

6. Registration with the AHA. In an effort to help Ph.D. candidates determine how much overlap or duplication there may be in a proposed title, departments are asked by the American Historical Association to register new dissertation titles with that organization. The titles are published in the List mentioned above. You should be sure to check the AHA List to make sure your topic does not duplicate any other and, later, to make sure your entry has been published.

7. Researching and Writing the Dissertation. This, the hardest part of completing the degree requirements, has the fewest instructions. Give free rein to your ingenuity, methodological skill, and imagination. You should remember to keep in touch with your faculty committee and make regular progress reports to your director. Some directors prefer to read chapters as they are written; others do not. The more you consult with appropriate experts, the better off you will be. You should also take time to study the Graduate School’s Manual for Theses and Dissertations, available on the Dissertation and Thesis Office page of the Graduate School Web Site. Your finished work will have to conform to stringent formal requirements, and you can save a lot of time by being conscious of these as you take notes and write sections. If your research involves human subjects (e.g. depends upon questionnaires or interviews) you are required to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board for the project before data collection begins.

8. Dissertation Colloquium Requirement. Within three years of approval of your dissertation topic, you will be required to give a public presentation on the dissertation in progress. That presentation will typically be in the form of a conference paper or a colloquium presentation in the department’s “Brown Bag Colloquium Series.”

9. Dissertation Defense Committee. When your work is nearing completion you should consult with your director and the Director of Graduate Studies about setting up a dissertation defense committee. Your committee will consist of four or five members: your director as chair, and two or three other history faculty members. You are encouraged when appropriate to include one member from outside the
department, chosen for her or his interest or expertise in some aspect of the dissertation topic. In addition, the Dean of the Graduate School or a designate of the Dean will serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member. The committee must be approved in advance by the Dean. A majority of members of the committee must be senior members of the graduate faculty; no more than one member may be without NIU graduate faculty status. The history members will probably include those who served on your dissertation prospectus committee, although changes may be made as circumstances require. The Department nominates the defense committee and the Dean of the Graduate School approves it. Nomination cannot take place until the proposed members have signed a form indicating that they have read the dissertation and consider it ready to defend. Therefore the formal approval of the committee takes place only shortly before the defense. However, you can and should work out in advance who the members are likely to be.

10. **Deadlines and Application for Graduation**. It cannot be stressed too strongly that completing and defending a dissertation is a long, complicated process that cannot be undertaken only a few weeks before the proposed graduation date. Plan ahead and have a draft completed at least several months in advance because you will need that much time for the revisions. No later than the beginning of the semester during which you plan to defend, ask the Graduate History Office for dissertation-related deadlines of the Graduate School and History Department. Arrange to submit all dissertation versions and related materials in plenty of time to meet those deadlines.

On these matters study the Graduate School’s Manual for Theses and Dissertations carefully. As you approach the end of your writing, you will have to do a number of things within a short time. First, you will submit copies to your committee members who will determine whether you are ready to defend. Second, you must apply to graduate by a deadline that comes 8-11 months before the semester you wish to graduate. Fill out the required form on MyNIU and pay the fee. You must then arrange for and pass the defense of your dissertation. Third, in order to set up the defense you must submit one copy of the defensible version of the dissertation and the “Request for Oral Defense” form to the Graduate School, Office of the Dean, at least three weeks prior to the dissertation defense. This is the version of the dissertation that will be given to the dean’s designee on the oral defense committee and is the version upon which the student will be examined at the oral defense.

11. **Oral Presentation and Defense of Dissertation**. The department requires the candidate to make a brief presentation of the dissertation at the beginning of the defense and to answer questions from the audience at the end. Both presentation and defense are open to the public. The actual defense is an oral examination of approximately two hours in length. The candidate should be prepared to discuss questions relevant to the dissertation, including its thesis, organization, sources, scholarly contribution, and relationship to other work in the field. The committee may suggest or require changes.
12. **Preparation of Final Version of Dissertation for Submission to the Graduate School.** After you have successfully completed your oral defense, you will have to prepare a post-defense version that incorporates any substantive or stylistic changes required by the defense committee. One electronic copy of the post-defense version of the dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School, Office of the Thesis and Dissertation Advisers. This version reflects all substantive revisions required by the examining committee. No further changes can thereafter be required by the department or initiated by the student. The Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Advisers will not examine draft copies of dissertations. However, they may be consulted prior to the submission of a dissertation on the interpretation and application of matters in The Graduate School Manual for Thesis and Dissertations.

After the Graduate School has reviewed the post-defense version and all errors identified by the Graduate School have been corrected, you must then submit one electronic copy of the corrected version to the Graduate School, Office of the Thesis and Dissertation Advisers. The Office of the Thesis and Dissertation Advisers will examine this copy and either declare it accepted or return it for correction and resubmission.

Plan to submit your dissertation well in advance of the relevant deadlines since the revision process can be time consuming.

**VIII GRADUATE LEARNING EXPECTATIONS**

The NIU Graduate Program in History seeks to develop in our students specialized knowledge and skills in the discipline of history. Building on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students possess, the history graduate program trains students to create and communicate original contributions to their chosen fields of historical expertise.

At the **master’s level** students should be qualified to teach introductory courses in their primary field at a community college or to employ their research, writing and analytical skills in secondary education, Public History, and other non-academic positions. Students demonstrate this ability through completion of two historiographical essays that serve as the comprehensive exam for the MA degree. In addition to acquiring a broad understanding of the major questions, debates, and approaches in their primary field, MA students also learn how to conduct original research. Research seminars are exploratory and introductory for MA students. They provide MA students with the skills to produce a paper that makes a contribution to knowledge in the form of the master’s essay. The master’s essay should demonstrate a student’s ability to produce and effectively communicate new knowledge in the primary field. The master’s essay is the primary assessment instrument for the MA degree. For MA students preparing for doctoral work, acquiring a research tool (either average proficiency in a foreign language or proficiency in quantitative methods) demonstrates their mastery of a specific skill that will aid them in contributing to the discipline of history.
At the **doctoral level** students should be qualified to teach introductory and advanced courses in their primary field and introductory courses in their secondary fields of study at the university level. Students are trained in the research and writing skills of the professional historian to make their own original contribution to historical scholarship. Research seminars require PhD students to conduct original research in primary sources that engages major questions of historical interpretation and grapples successfully with existing historiography, while perfecting the art of clear and coherent prose. Doctoral coursework builds mastery of the historiographies of their fields and prepares them for qualifying exams, which a deep knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their primary field of specialization and a competent knowledge of the major questions, debates, and historiographical traditions in their secondary fields. The teaching portfolio assesses the PhD student’s ability to design and organize coursework. For PhD students, fulfilling the Graduate School’s research tool requirement includes demonstrating either average proficiency in two foreign languages, high proficiency in one foreign language, or average proficiency in one foreign language and proficiency in quantitative methods. This demonstrates their mastery of specific skills that will aid them in contributing to the discipline of history. The dissertation prospectus assesses student preparation for dissertation research and writing by having the student explain concisely the dissertation’s topic, periodization, methodology, historiographical framework, and primary sources.

The dissertation, a book-length work of original scholarship, is the culmination of advanced study through coursework, advanced training in historiography, and extensive practice in research methods, is the primary assessment instrument of the PhD student.

The Ph.D. program in History trains the student to undertake original research in order to produce a substantial contribution to the field. This contribution takes the form of the doctoral dissertation. The dissertation demonstrates mastery of the research, analytical, and writing skills of the professional historian. It is based upon primary sources, engages major questions of historical interpretation, grapples successfully with existing historiography, and consists of clear and coherent prose. It displays creativity, insight, and the ability to conduct independent research. There is no set length for a dissertation, although it is in effect the “first draft” of a publishable scholarly book. The dissertation may not have been published previously, and the research must be successfully defended in an oral examination.