

PhD Degree in History, Graduate Student Handbook, 2026-2027
The University of Montana, Department of History

Department Chair, [Jeff Wiltse](#)
Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), [Anya Jabour](#)



Doctoral students in History must complete several preliminary requirements—including coursework, research papers, demonstrated competence in a foreign language, and comprehensive examinations—before defending a dissertation proposal. Once advanced to candidacy (ABD), students proceed to research, write, and defend a doctoral dissertation. Each student enters the program with a designated advisor, who oversees the student's course of study in consultation with the department's Graduate Committee.

GRADUATE SCHOOL INFORMATION & POLICIES

Graduate School information, policies, and forms are on the following websites:

- [University of Montana Graduate School Homepage](#)
- [Graduate School Policies in the University of Montana Catalog](#)

HISTORY DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the regulations specified by the Graduate School, PhD students in history must complete the Department's course credit, dissertation, and other requirements, outlined in the [History Ph.D. section of the University of Montana catalog](#).

Requirements of note:

- PhD students must maintain a continuous GPA of 3.5 or higher, and must complete all required coursework with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher in order to qualify for comprehensive exams. (nb: this is above the Graduate School requisite of 3.0).
- PhD students must earn a B-plus or higher in a HSTA 594 or HSTR 594, our graduate research seminar, in their first year in the program.
- PhD students must earn a B or higher in a minimum of four 500-level readings seminars, including at least two courses in the student's major field (US, Europe, or the World), and at least one course in one of the other two areas.
- PhD students must complete language requirements, as outlined in the catalog.
- PhD students who enter the program without holding an MA degree in History must complete the requirements to earn their MA, as outlined in the catalog and the MA student handbook. In addition to the other pathways available to all MA students, PhD students may earn their MA in history, with a portfolio of at least two research papers completed in UM History graduate courses and completion of 36 approved credits.

- PhD students must be actively engaged in choosing and preparing three different comprehensive exam fields, in consultation with their advisor, during their first three years in the program. Satisfactory progress on comprehensive exam preparation will be defined and evaluated by the examining professors and approved by the Graduate Committee.
- PhD students must be actively engaged in research and writing projects throughout their years in the program, building from chapter-length explorations toward their final dissertation. Satisfactory progress on dissertation conceptualization, research, and writing will be defined and evaluated by the student's advisor and approved by the Graduate Committee.
- PhD students must comport themselves professionally—meeting deadlines and responsibilities, responding to emails from advisors and professors, participating in workshops, conferences, and department events, and acting respectfully toward peers, staff, professors, and undergraduate students.
- PhD students must adhere to the [University of Montana Student Conduct Code](#), including provisions for academic honesty.
- PhD students on Teaching Assistant (T.A.), Research Assistant (R.A.), or fellowship contracts must fulfill all the responsibilities and tasks given to them by their supervising instructor, up to 19 hours per week, in a timely, proficient, and professional manner.

Exceptions to any requirements must be allowable under University and Graduate School policies, and must be approved by the student's advisor and the Graduate Committee.



STUDENT PROGRESS REVIEW

The Graduate Committee regularly monitors each student's academic performance, progress toward the degree, and, when applicable, fulfillment of teaching assistant (TA), research assistant (RA), or other instructional responsibilities. The committee determines each student's standing in the program, makes decisions regarding the renewal of fellowships and assistantships, and awards departmental scholarships. These evaluations take place through both a limited mid-year progress review and a more comprehensive end-of-year review, described below.

Mid-Year Review:

At the end of the fall semester, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) collects brief feedback from instructors of History graduate courses and from TA supervisors, highlighting both exceptional performance and areas of concern. The Graduate Committee reviews this input and contacts students and advisors as needed.

Annual Progress Review:

At the end of the spring semester, each student must submit a written Progress Report to their advisor by a deadline set by the DGS. Advisors then add comments and forward the reports to the Graduate Committee. Students may also be asked to submit additional materials, such as research

papers. Failure to submit the report on time may jeopardize a student's standing in the program and their eligibility for funding.

After reviewing the reports—along with feedback from course instructors and assistantship supervisors—the Graduate Committee evaluates each student's overall standing using the following categories:

- Good Standing
- Good Standing with Renewal of Fellowship or Teaching Assistantship (if applicable)
- Probationary Status
- Non-Renewal of Fellowship or Teaching Assistantship (if applicable)
- Suspension from the Program

The DGS notifies students of their standing in the program, and if any further action is required. To remain in Good Standing, UM History PhD students must meet all program requirements in a timely manner. If these requirements are not met, and no exception has been approved for extenuating circumstances, the DGS may recommend probation or suspension to the Graduate School. Both actions are recorded on the student's official transcript. In cases of probation, the DGS and the student's advisor will provide a written plan specifying the steps and deadlines required to return to Good Standing. See [Graduate School Policies B8.000 – Academic Probation and Suspension](#) for more details.



SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR PhD STUDENTS IN HISTORY

(This is not a required schedule. It may vary significantly based on MA transfer credits, funding status, and other individual circumstances)

YEAR 1

Fall: 3 Courses (at least 2 at the 500-level) – 9 credits earned¹

Spring: 2-3 Courses (one of which should be the Graduate Research Seminar) – 6 or 9 credits earned

- ☐ Consult with faculty as you begin determining your Comprehensive Examination Fields
- ☐ Present your original research & writing at GradCon, Phi Alpha Theta, and/or other conferences

YEAR 2

Fall: 3 Courses – 9 credits earned

- ☐ Solidify your Comprehensive Examination Fields
- ☐ Present a research essay at the Lockridge History Workshop (Either Fall or Spring semester)

Spring: 2-3 Courses – 6 or 9 credits earned

- ☐ Finalize Exam Field Reading Lists in consultation with faculty

YEAR 3

¹ Credits might also be earned in HSTR 500: History Pedagogy, when serving as a TA in certain courses.

Comprehensive Exams and Dissertation Proposal²

YEAR 4

Dissertation Research and Writing

YEAR 5

Dissertation Research and Writing

GRADUATION!



OTHER HISTORY DEPARTMENT EXPECTATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PhD STUDENTS

- We expect our graduate students to present work at conferences when appropriate and feasible, as determined in consultation with your advisor. Local and regional opportunities to present your work include:
 - [UM History Department Lockridge Workshop](#)
 - [UM Graduate Conference \(GradCon\)](#)
 - [Phi Alpha Theta NW Regional Conference](#)
 - [Montana History Conference, Montana Historical Society](#)
 - [Western History Association \(WHA\) Conference](#)
 - [National Council on Public History \(NCPH\)](#)
 - [American Historical Association-Pacific Coast Branch](#)
- We expect our graduate students to contribute to the intellectual and pedagogic life of the History Department, which includes regular participation in the [Lockridge Workshop](#).
- We expect our graduate students to place a high priority on their coursework, research and writing, and professional development. Graduate students with TAs or fellowships from us should not undertake work outside the History Department during the regular semester, without the approval of their advisor and the Graduate Committee.
- Graduate students who do not have funding from us are strongly encouraged to discuss external work and other responsibilities with their advisors and the DGS. Our goal is for you to succeed in our program, and we want to help you put in place conditions for your success.



OTHER SELECT INFORMATION

- Graduate Assistantship contracts are covered under the University of Montana Graduate Employee Union [collective bargaining agreement](#).
- The Graduate School has a continuous registration policy requiring students to register for at least 3 credits each fall and spring semester until they graduate. In a student's last semester, if

² In years 3-5, students may earn credits in Independent Studies, Internships, and Dissertation Credits. See the catalog for details.

they do not need the credits to graduate, they may petition the Graduate Dean to take fewer than 3 credits, but no less than 1 credit. See [Graduate School Policies, section B3.000](#).

- For many doctoral students, it makes sense to try to secure in-state residency, which substantially reduces tuition costs. It can be a bit tricky because registering for more than 6 credits of coursework per semester will work against you. For information, see [UM Graduate School Residency Qualifications](#).



ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES

- [UM History Public History Certificate for Graduate Students](#)
- [UM History Department Internship Program](#)
- [Confluence](#): UM Graduate Students “Telling Our Story” (podcast + videos). This is the Graduate School’s media page, which hosts a podcast and videos about graduate student work at UM. They encourage you to listen and watch to learn more about what others are doing around campus, community, and region.
- [Donna McCrea](#), Head of [Archives and Special Collections, UM Mansfield Library](#)
- [Montana Historical Society](#) (in Helena, MT)
- [Student Advocacy Resource Center \(SARC\)](#) SARC celebrates diversity, supports the right of all students to pursue success in our academic community, openly respects and cares for everyone, and is committed to a campus free from discrimination and unwelcome physical, sexual, emotional or social coercion. If you have experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, bullying, intimidation, or discrimination, SARC is here to help you. All our services are confidential and free.
- [UM Curry Health Center](#)
- [Graduate School Student Health and Wellbeing Resources](#)
- [The UM Writing and Public Speaking Center](#) offers one-on-one appointments for students at every juncture in the writing process. They have an ongoing [Workshop Series](#), writing groups, and many other resources for graduate students.
- The [UM Humanities and Sciences Career Planning Center](#) can help you with all aspects of career readiness, from helping you find internships and jobs to helping you craft your resume and application, prepare for interviews, and much more.
- [UM Student Financial Services](#) offers valuable information on loans, grants, scholarships, and more!
- Most graduate students find their own housing using the many property management companies in town, but some choose to take advantage of [UM Housing](#) and [Off-Campus Student Apartments](#).

- The [UM Experiential Learning and Career Success](#) office is a good resource for graduate students who are working on their CVs, resumes, and exploring career options. Though much of their structured programming is geared to undergraduates, their individual counseling on specific aspects of job search are very useful for graduate students at any stage.
- TAs and RAs are eligible to access UM's subscription to [LinkedIn Learning](#), a large repository of videos and short courses on a wide range of topics. Students can login with their NetID (Single-Sign-On) and develop some specialized skills that will augment their professional development and career success.
- For students who are not on contracts, [LinkedIn Learning is available for a trial subscription](#), which is free for a month.



University of Montana Non-Discrimination and Title IX Statement

The University of Montana is committed to providing a learning and working environment that promotes respect, dignity, and equity for all individuals. In accordance with federal and state law, the University does not discriminate—and prohibits discrimination—on the basis of race, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, creed, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, lactation or related medical conditions), gender, (including gender identity, gender expression, and gender transition), sexual orientation, physical or mental disability (including having a history of a disability or being regarded as having a disability), marital or family status, genetic characteristics or information, age, veteran or military status, political ideas, or any other legally protected classification in its educational programs and activities, including admission and employment.

In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and its implementing regulations, the University of Montana does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that it operates. This requirement extends to admission and employment. Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the University's Title IX Coordinator.

The University of Montana has designated a Title IX Coordinator and Director of Equal Opportunity to coordinate its compliance with Title IX and other non-discrimination laws and policies. Their contact information is:

Title IX Coordinator and Director of Equal Opportunity
Office of Conflict, Resolution, & Policy
University Hall 004
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
Phone: (406) 243-5710
Email: conflict@umontana.edu
Website: umt.edu/eo
[Submit a report online](#)

Individuals may also contact the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) with inquiries, questions, or complaints at:

Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
 U.S. Department of Education
 400 Maryland Avenue, SW
 Washington, D.C. 20202-1100
 Phone: 800-421-3481
 TDD: 800-877-8339
 Email: OCR@ed.gov
 Website: <https://www.ed.gov/ocr>

Any person may report discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), or retaliation—by using the contact information listed above, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator or the Office of Conflict, Resolution, & Policy receiving the report. Reports may be submitted at any time, including during non-business hours.

The University has adopted and published grievance procedures providing for the prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee complaints of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and sexual harassment, including formal complaints under Title IX. Information about how to file a report or formal complaint, and how the University will respond, is available from the Office of Conflict Resolution and Policy on the [Equal Opportunity and Title IX website](#), including:

- [Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures](#)

This non-discrimination statement is prominently displayed on the University of Montana’s website and included in relevant publications, including handbooks and catalogs distributed to students, employees, applicants, and unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with the University.

