

MASTER of ARTS  
in  
HISTORY

Guide for Graduate Study

Revised: February 2009

Thank you for your interest in the M.A. Program at Cal Poly. We hope that this Guide for Graduate Study in History will answer the questions of both prospective and current graduate students.

## I. A Few Words about the Program

The M.A. Program in History is designed to meet the needs of various constituencies - current History and/or Social Studies teachers at all levels of K-12 education, students anticipating teaching in community colleges, individuals who eventually intend to pursue a Ph.D. in History, and members of the community interested in studying the discipline of History.

The program aims to ensure that students develop specialized historical competencies and an enhanced awareness of human diversity; critical thinking/problem solving skills; facility in oral and written communication; and independent thought and research methods. At the same time, it will help current and prospective K-12 teachers to hone their skills and to deepen their knowledge of History. Finally, the program seeks to support the ideal of lifelong learning.

Prospective applicants may want to consult the following resources at the American Historical Association's website:

Retrieving the Master's Degree from the Dustbin of History  
<http://www.historians.org/grads/index.cfm>

Resources for Graduate Students:  
<http://www.historians.org/grads/index.cfm>

## II. Applying to the M.A. Program in History

Deadlines for applying to the History M.A. Program:

- 1 July for Fall Quarter
- 1 October for Winter Quarter
- 1 February for Spring Quarter

*PLEASE NOTE:* there are separate deadlines and conditions for International students, as well as students formerly enrolled in Cal Poly's History M. A. program who are in good academic standing but have not taken classes within the previous two years.

International students should consult the following website for details:  
<http://www.ess.calpoly.edu/admiss/international/index.html>

Returning M. A. candidates should consult the following website for details:

<http://www.ess.calpoly.edu/admiss/grad/former.html>

Before applying for admittance to the program, please visit the History Department website to familiarize yourself with faculty members' areas of expertise, course offerings, and contact information. If you are especially interested in working in one particular field, you may want to contact the professors offering courses in that field before making your final decision about applying to this program:

<http://cla.calpoly.edu/hist/>

To begin the application process, go to:

[http://www.csumentor.edu/AdmissionApp/grad\\_apply.asp](http://www.csumentor.edu/AdmissionApp/grad_apply.asp)

### A. Materials Required for Application

1. Complete online application, as per instructions, parts A and B (applicants must complete the Statement of Purpose section).

2. Official Transcripts of all Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Work submitted directly to Admissions at the following address:

Cal Poly  
Admissions Office  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

3. Sample of Scholarly Writing (10 pages or more). Send the writing sample directly to:

Graduate Director  
Department of History  
Cal Poly  
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0324

*PLEASE NOTE:* With the exception of International students, all supporting materials must be received within one month of the application deadline.

### B. Selection Criteria

Prospective Students should have a B.A. in History or in a related discipline (e.g. English, Social Sciences, Philosophy), and have earned a 3.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale) for the last 90 units as an undergraduate.

Applicants without the requisite GPA or sufficient coursework in appropriate disciplines may be accepted on a *conditional* basis. But they must, in their Statement of Purpose, explain the reasons for not meeting the minimum requirements: for instance, why the lack of a sufficiently high GPA or background in History will not disadvantage them as a History graduate student. Individuals admitted conditionally may be asked to enroll during their first quarter in either History 303: Research & Writing Seminar or History 304: Historiography. *Neither class can be taken for graduate credit.*

All students in the program are evaluated after completing two graduate level courses. They must have maintained a 3.0 average in these two courses.

### C. Deferred Admission

Students who are accepted into the program but want to delay enrollment by one or more quarters may request a deferral from the Admissions Office. All deferrals are subject to approval by the M. A. Program Director.

### D. Professional Standards

All successful applicants to the History M. A. program are expected to familiarize themselves with the American Historical Association's *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* available at:  
<http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm>

## III. M.A. in History: OPTIONS

There are two tracks that a student may follow for the M.A. in History. At a point no later than the end of your second

quarter enrolled as a graduate student, you must fill out, in consultation with the Graduate Director, the FORMAL STUDY PLAN (to be filled out after completion of 12 units). At this point, you will choose either Option One or Two for your M.A.

Option One is least useful for students contemplating pursuing a Ph.D. in History. Option Two is open to all students.

All students are encouraged to gain facility with a foreign language. Students working in a geographic area where English is not the language of the primary sources should have sufficient proficiency to read sources in their original language. The decision as to whether this is a requirement, rather than a desire, will be made by the student's M.A. Thesis Advisor, Examiner, and/or Graduate Director.

#### **OPTION ONE: Comprehensive Exams (48 Units)**

- A. History 504 Graduate Study in History. 4 units.
- B. History Seminars (5 courses required, 4 units each). Each is repeatable up to 12 units. Total of 20 units. Any five can be chosen from:
  - HIST 505: Seminar in American History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 506: Seminar in European History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 507: Seminar in East Asian History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 508: Seminar in Latin American History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 509: Seminar in African History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 510: Seminar in Comparative History (4-12 units)
- C. Graduate History Electives (5 courses at the 400 or 500 level). Total of 20 units.

Courses at the 400 level must be taken after student has received an undergraduate degree and may not repeat undergraduate courses or their equivalent, unless approved by the Graduate Director (See Section IV.B). With the Director's approval, courses outside of History may serve as electives (up to 8 units).
- D. Supervised Reading for Comprehensive Exams, History 512 (2 sections required, 2 units each). Total of 4 units.

Course is to be taken twice, once in each Field of Study for the comprehensive examination.

Students choosing Option One for their M.A. Degree will be examined in *two topics*, chosen from *two different fields of study*. This will ensure that they acquire a wide expanse of knowledge. Comprehensive exams may be taken from topics within the five general fields of study: American History, European History, Asian History, African History, and Comparative World History.

Students taking the Comprehensive Examinations must first complete two sections of History 512. Professors in these courses (each one focusing on a different field of history) will give students a reading list of works to be mastered.

Each comprehensive examination consists of essay questions dealing both with the larger field of study and one or more topics of concentration. (For example, the student studying Modern Africa would most likely be expected to have some knowledge of Pre-Colonial Africa).

The fields of study and topics of concentration for Comprehensive Examinations are as follows:

1. AMERICAN HISTORY
  - a. Colonial Period
  - b. Middle Period
  - c. Modern Period
  - d. Intellectual
  - e. Women
  - f. African-American
  - g. California and the West
  
2. EUROPEAN HISTORY
  - a. Early Modern
  - b. Modern
  
3. EAST ASIAN HISTORY
  - a. Modern China
  - b. Modern Japan
  - c. Modern Southeast Asia
  
4. AFRICAN HISTORY
  - a. Pre-Colonial
  - b. Modern
  - c. South Africa

## 5. COMPARATIVE WORLD HISTORY

### A. Procedures for Comprehensive Examinations

You must, a quarter before you plan to take either of your field exams, do the following:

1. Make sure that your FORMAL STUDY PLAN has been approved by the Graduate Director.
2. Complete the form, ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY. Before advancement can be approved, you must have at least a 3.0 GPA. Moreover, you must have passed or received credit for the Graduate Writing Examination (see section VI.C), filed a Formal Study Plan, and met any additional requirements.
3. Complete the form, REQUEST FOR GRADUATE EVALUATION.
4. You must demonstrate to the Graduate Director, after review of these forms, that you are within one or two quarters of graduating. Hence, your Comprehensive Exams should be taken no earlier than your last or next-to-last quarters of graduate study.

After the Graduate Director approves your FORMAL STUDY PLAN, ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY and REQUEST FOR FORMAL EVALUATION, the forms will be sent by the Graduate Director to the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office, Graduate Programs Office, and the Evaluations Office for final approvals. The Evaluation's Office will then send you a SUMMARY OF REMAINING MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS.

*PLEASE NOTE:* All forms are available from the Graduate Director, History Department, and Graduate Programs Office.

### B. Scheduling the Comprehensive Written Exam

You must meet with the Faculty Member who has directed your work in each of your History 512 (Supervised Reading for Comprehensive Exams). That Professor will set up a time and place, and procedures, for you to take your Comprehensive Exam. After you have completed the examination, it will be read by the Supervisor for that topic, as well as by the Graduate Director. After they have read the examination and consulted with one another, a grade will be assigned to the examination. Any grade below a "B" is failing. With the

approval of the Area/Topic supervisor, students who fail may retake the examination no later than one-quarter after the failed exam. Students who fail a second comprehensive examination will be removed from the Graduate Program.

### C. What does the Comprehensive Written Exam Entail?

Each Professor within a given area for the Comprehensive Exam will draw up her or his own exam. In general, at least two quarters before the examination, the student should ask the Professor for the exam area for a READING LIST FOR COMPREHENSIVE EXAM in that area. This list will include books and articles that the Professor expects the student to have mastered prior to the examination. In addition, the student should complete a Section of History 512 with the Professor prior to the Comprehensive Exam. And, if at all possible, the student should have taken 400 and 500 level courses in the area of the Comprehensive Exam.

The examination will stress both understanding of the material and familiarity with central questions of interpretation, both within the geographical area and the specific topic. Students will have three hours to complete their Comprehensive examination.

### OPTION TWO: M.A. Thesis (49 Units)

- A. History 504 Graduate Study in History. 4 units.
- B. History Seminars (5 courses required, 4 units each). Each is repeatable up to 12 units. Total of 20 units. Any five can be chosen from:
  - HIST 505: Seminar in American History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 506: Seminar in European History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 507: Seminar in East Asian History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 508: Seminar in Latin American History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 509: Seminar in African History (4-12 units)
  - HIST 510X: Seminar in Comparative History (4-12 units)
- C. Graduate History Electives (4 courses at the 400 or 500 level). Total of 16 units.

Courses at the 400 level must be taken after student has received an undergraduate degree and may not repeat undergraduate courses or their equivalent, unless approved by the Graduate Director (See Section IV.B).

With the Director's approval, courses outside of History may serve as electives (up to 8 units).

#### D. M.A. Thesis Supervision, History 599

Course is to be taken over three separate quarters. (3 units each). Total of 9 units.

Students choosing Option Two will, instead of comprehensive examinations in two areas, be required to write a thesis, in addition to completing all of the courses required under the Option Two Plan.

You must, the quarter that you take your second section of History 599, do the following:

1. Make sure your FORMAL STUDY PLAN has been approved by the Graduate Director.
2. Complete the form, ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY. Before advancement can be approved, you must have at least a 3.0 GPA. Moreover, you must have passed or received credit for the Graduate Writing Examination (see Section), filed a FORMAL STUDY PLAN, and met any additional requirements.
3. Complete the form, REQUEST FOR GRADUATE EVALUATION.

After the Graduate Director approves your FORMAL STUDY PLAN, ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY, and REQUEST FOR GRADUATE EVALUATION, the forms will be sent by the Graduate Director to the Dean of Liberal Arts Office, Graduate Programs Office and the Evaluations Office for final approvals. The Evaluations Office will then send you a SUMMARY OF REMAINING MASTER'S DEGREE REQUIREMENTS.

*PLEASE NOTE:* All forms are available from the Graduate Director, History Department, and Graduate Programs Office.

### A. Deciding on a Thesis Topic and Course Work

Students should, after a year of coursework, decide what area of history they want to research. The student will, in consultation with the professor with expertise in that area, decide upon an acceptable M.A. thesis topic. The student should then sign up, for each of the next three quarters for HISTORY 599: M.A. Thesis Supervision (3 units). In this course, the student will research and write

the thesis, with the professor assigning a grade each quarter based upon the quality and timely submission of work that the student has completed for that quarter.

## B. What is a M.A. Thesis?

The M.A. Thesis is an extended research paper, based upon extensive use of primary sources and comprehension of the existing historiography on the subject. Student theses should have an original interpretation or raise new questions about a subject. The thesis should be written in an accessible and compelling manner and will generally run between 50 and 100 pages, typed, double-spaced.

## C. Thesis Defense and Final Copy

The finished M.A. Thesis will be read by the student's M.A. advisor, by the Graduate Director, and by a third faculty member. The third faculty member may be a professor in the department or outside, including professors from other universities who have special expertise in the student's research area. The student will meet with all of these individuals for a discussion and oral defense of the thesis that will last up to 1 hour. After the completion of the oral defense, the student will be told if s/he must make any changes to the thesis. These changes, if required, will then be reviewed by the student's advisor. If everything is then found to be in order, the advisor will assign a final grade for the M.A. Thesis.

The M.A. degree will not be granted until the Thesis Editor in Graduate Programs has approved the thesis. Therefore, students should be certain that the Thesis is prepared in accordance with the GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING GRADUATE THESES AND REPORTS, available from the Office of Graduate Programs:

<http://www.calpoly.edu/%7Ergp/thesis.html>

All approved theses are posted to Cal Poly's Digital Commons: <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/>

## IV. Courses

### A. Graduate History Courses

The precise nature of graduate seminars is decided by individual professors. In general, there are two types of seminars offered. In Reading Seminars, the students will be assigned a host of works on a particular subject. The works may be secondary or primary, or a combination of both. Students will in these classes meet to discuss the works, and to reach a deeper understanding of the historiographical and interpretive issues involved with them. In these courses, in general, students will be expected to write regular papers on some of these works, and may also complete a comprehensive paper at the end of the quarter as well.

In Research Seminars, the students will read some materials in common, as well as work on a research project, decided upon through consultation with the professor. In general, these papers will be based upon both primary and secondary research. Students will probably present their findings to the other students in class and receive comments on their work from their fellow students. These papers will be in the range of 15-25 pages, typed, double-spaced.

Grades in these seminars will be determined on the basis of a student's written work and, in some instances, exams. In addition, students will be graded on the quality of their participation in the class. Students must have their written and reading assignments done on time. Students should come to class prepared with notes to help them discuss whatever reading or subject is assigned for that day. At the graduate level, shyness is no longer an excuse. Students are expected to participate with enthusiasm and to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject in both oral and written form. Repeating what other students have already said does not constitute useful participation.

### Course Descriptions:

#### **HIST 500: Special Problems for Graduate Students.**

Individual investigation, research, studies, or surveys of selected problems. 1-4 units.

**HIST 504: Graduate Study in History.** Weekly reading and discussion course on practical methods and theoretical approaches to the study and writing of history. Seminar

format. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 505: Seminar in United States History.** Intensive study of selected topics in United States history. Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 506: Seminar in Modern European History.** Intensive study of selected topics in Modern European history. Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 507: Seminar in East Asian History.** Intensive study of selected topics in East Asian history. Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 508: Seminar in Latin American History.** Intensive study of selected topics in Latin American history. Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 509: Seminar in African History.** Intensive study of selected topics in African history. Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 510: Seminar in Comparative History.** Intensive study of selected topics in comparative history. Class Schedule will list topic selected. Total credit limited to 12 units. Prerequisite: Graduate standing in History or consent of instructor. 4 units.

**HIST 512: Supervised Reading for M.A. Comprehensive Exams.** Directed supervision of M.A. reading for comprehensive exams. Regular consultation between advisor and student. Prerequisite: HIST 504 and 12 units of graduate study. Variable course content. 2 units each, has to be taken two times. Total of 4 units.

**HIST 599: M.A. Thesis Supervision.** Directed supervision of M.A. thesis. Regular consultation between advisor and student. Prerequisite: HIST 504 and 12 units of graduate study. 3 units each, to be taken three times. Total of 9 units.

## B. 400-level Courses for Graduate Students

Graduate students may take up to four 400-level courses for their graduate requirements. Professors in these advanced, undergraduate courses will generally expect higher quality work from graduate students. In addition to regular class participation, they may also require additional reading or writing assignments of graduate students. The graduate student should, before or immediately after the first class meeting, inform the professor that s/he has graduate status. The professor will then elucidate for that student the particular requirements.

PLEASE NOTE: Students may not take as graduate students the same 400-level course that they had as an undergraduate at Cal Poly unless the M. A. Program Director determines that the content or teaching of the course has changed sufficiently to warrant an exception to this rule.

A list of 400-level history courses is available online at: [http://www.calpoly.edu/~acadprog/2007depts/cla/hist\\_dept/histcrs2007.pdf](http://www.calpoly.edu/~acadprog/2007depts/cla/hist_dept/histcrs2007.pdf)

## C. Teacher Education Courses

Present and prospective teachers are urged to take HIST 424 Organizing and Teaching History and EDUC 505 Seminar in Social Studies Curriculum and Methods. Students should also consider the following courses: EDUC 587 Educational Foundations and Current Issues and EDUC 589 Educational Research Methods. Courses outside of History can serve as electives (up to 8 units), as approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

If a student accepted into the History M. A. program wishes to pursue the teaching credential, s/he must file a Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective form. The application process goes through the Graduate Programs Office (not through Admissions).

### **HIST 424 Organizing and Teaching History**

Organization, selection, presentation, application, and interpretation of subject matter in history in secondary schools. 4 seminars. Prerequisite: Admission to teacher education program or valid teaching credential. Total of 4 units.

**HIST 425 Social Sciences Teaching Practicum(CR/NC)**

Practicum for part-time and full-time student teachers in the Social Science Credential Program. Teaching techniques and strategies useful for addressing a wide range of issues that arise in grades 6-12 social science classrooms. Credit/No Credit grading only. Total credit limited to 4 units. 1 seminar. Prerequisite: HIST 424; concurrent: EDUC 469 or EDUC 479.

**EDUC 587 Educational Foundations and Current Issues**

Historical, organizational, legal and philosophical characteristics of American education. Emphasis on the analysis of contemporary issues focusing on these characteristics. 4 seminars. Prerequisite: Graduate standing. Total of 4 units.

**EDUC 589 Educational Research Methods**

Introduction to research methodologies, application of inferential and descriptive statistics, critical analysis of research designs and data collection techniques. 3 seminars, 1 activity. Prerequisite: EDUC 586. Total of 4 units.

## VI. Additional Academic Policies

### A. Continuous Enrollment

Students are considered enrolled in the program so long as they do not cease taking classes for two consecutive quarters (this does not include summer term). If, for some reason, you must miss classes for more than two quarters, you should first advise the Graduate Director, then contact the Records Office for policies regarding Leaves of Absence.

### B. Course Load

There is no easily defined optimal course load, especially since many students in the M.A. Program have full-time jobs

and family responsibilities. Obviously, to remain in the program, as noted in the previous paragraph, you should take 1 course each quarter. Eight (8) units per quarter (at the 400 or 500) level is considered Full-Time, and will help you complete your course work in an optimal fashion.

### C. Graduation Writing Proficiency Exam

Some students will have passed the Graduation Writing Proficiency Requirement as undergraduates at Cal Poly. If you have not passed such an examination at Cal Poly or elsewhere, then you must sign up, within the time frame of your first year in the M.A. Program, to take the Writing Proficiency Examination. You can get details about this exam from the Writing Skills Program at:

<http://writingskills.calpoly.edu/gwr/>

Students from another Cal State University or University of California campus may receive a waiver if they can demonstrate that they have passed a Writing Proficiency Examination on one of their campuses.

### D. Incomplete Grades

Students will, as per university policy, have up to one year to remove an "RP" (Report in Progress) grade. However, a graduate professor may ask the student to sign a contract stipulating when the work must be turned in.

Students may not have more than two I's on their record at any time. If they do, then they will be required to see the Graduate Director to draw up a contract for the completion of the work in question.

### E. Academic Probation and Disqualification

The M.A. will not be awarded to any student with a final grade point average for graduate level courses listed on the Formal Study Plan below 3.0.

Academic Probation: If you fall below the minimum 3.0 GPA, you must meet with the Graduate Director before enrolling for the next quarter and sign a probationary contract designating which courses you will take and the minimum grades that you must receive in order to remain enrolled in the graduate program. You will have *two quarters* to raise your GPA to the acceptable level.

Academic Disqualification: Failure to adhere to the exact provisions of the probationary contract will result in the student's dismissal from the program.

Administrative Academic Disqualification: In addition to failure to maintain the minimum 3.0 GPA, students may be disqualified by campus authorities for repeated withdrawal from classes, noncompliance with an academic requirement, or other actions preventing them from making satisfactory progress toward the degree.

For additional information on these and related policies, please consult "General Policies Governing Graduate Studies" in the *Cal Poly Catalog*.

## F. Deadlines for Completion of Degree Requirements

Students have 7 years to complete the M.A. program. The clock begins once they have taken their first class counting towards the graduate degree.

Students may receive up to 8 units for work completed as an undergraduate in courses that are included in the Graduate Study Plan. However, these courses can only count if the units were not used as courses required for graduation, either in the major or in the school. Also note, if course work taken as an undergraduate is included among the student's courses for the M.A., then the 7 year limit for when the degree must be completed begins at that moment.

Students who were in a M.A. program elsewhere, without receiving a degree, may transfer 13 quarter units of coursework into the program at Cal Poly. Their clock for completion of the degree will begin from the time the first of those courses was taken.

Students must complete at least 32 units at Cal Poly to be eligible for their M.A. degree.

Students doing a written thesis have up to three years to complete it. The clock on the thesis begins when they take their first section of History 599, Thesis Supervision.

## G. Graduation with Distinction

Students pursuing either option may graduate with distinction if they have a GPA of 3.75 or higher. In addition, students in Option One, M.A. Comprehensive Exams, must also be graded as distinguished on those examinations. Students in Option Two, M.A. Thesis, must be deemed to have written a distinguished thesis. If both requirements are met, then the student will graduate with distinction.

## H. Research and Graduate Programs

Graduate students will find information on financial aid, thesis preparation, research awards, and essential program forms at the Research and Graduate Program website:  
<http://www.calpoly.edu/%7Ergp/graduate.programs.html>

### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?**

We welcome your interest and participation in this program. If you have additional questions please direct them to the current Graduate Director, Prof. Tom Trice, at [ttrice@calpoly.edu](mailto:ttrice@calpoly.edu) or (805)756-2724.