

**Idaho State University**  
**Department of History**  
**Graduate Student Handbook**  
Revised August 2021

## **General Information**

- Students should familiarize themselves with the “Graduate Information and Policies” section in the most recent Graduate Catalog.
- Questions regarding degree paths, funding, supervision, course selection, grades, petitions, graduate defenses, and general items not addressed in this handbook should be presented to the Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Stover (stovjust@isu.edu or 208-282-1227 or Liberal Arts Building 337)
- Questions regarding travel, reimbursement, access to the graduate student office, materials and supplies should be directed to the Department Administrator, Cailee Cunningham cunncail@isu.edu or 208-282-2379)
- Questions about the Department website or social media should be addressed to Dr. MacDonald (laurenmacdonald@isu.edu)
- Questions specific to a course or T.A. duties should be directed to its respective professor.

### Program Overview

Offered since 2005, the M.A. in History trains students to explore established and emerging historical problems. Students are taught and supervised toward competency in graduate-level subject matter, writing, digital history skills, and professional preparation. In accordance with current Department outcomes, M.A. students will:

1. Identify major trends, theories, and approaches in the field of History;
2. Analyze and synthesize ongoing scholarly conversations in History and situate their arguments and projects in these contexts;
3. Understand the range of digital resources available to historians and be able to use their chosen resources in producing and presenting research;
4. Outline, pursue, and complete a significant research project, and be able to describe and justify their project in written and presentation formats.

### Coursework and Core Courses

A graduate degree at Idaho State University requires the completion of 30 graduate-level credits, at least fifteen at the 6600-level. Required and elective graduate courses present opportunities to fulfill 6600-level coursework in concentrated reading, digital history, internship, and research courses. Course descriptors and frequency of offering can be found in the most recent Graduate Catalog (<http://coursecat.isu.edu/graduate/>)

<b>Required Courses</b>	
HIST 6600	Graduate Proseminar (may be taken twice)
HIST 6620	Research & Writing Seminar
<b>Elective Courses (offered periodically and on demand)</b>	
HIST 6605	Introduction to Graduate Studies in History
HIST 6610	Introduction to Digital History
HIST 6623	Global Idaho
HIST 6645 <u>or</u> HIST 6650	Graduate Research (Portfolio) <u>or</u> Graduate Thesis credits
HIST 6664	Graduate Internship
External elective courses at 5500- or 6600-level*	

\*Beyond the required program components, students will take at least one graduate-level course to develop proficiency in the use of digital research tools (such as a course in geographic information systems, or GIS), or an additional course that will further develop their academic and professional marketability (such as a course in grant writing, media, or computer programming). The departments of Communication, Media & Persuasion, Geoscience, and Computer Science have traditionally serviced this need. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies for guidance.

### Graduate Curriculum & Coursework Limitations

Graduate curriculum is rotated to allow full-time graduate students to complete the program in two years. Best practice is to take Required Courses when they are offered and to communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies regarding your degree plan. Students may count up to six credits from outside the Department of History toward their degree, as approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. Students may only count six credits from the HIST 6645 or HIST 6650 designation toward their degree, which must align to either a portfolio (HIST 6645) or thesis (HIST 6650). HIST 6650 credits, for example, cannot be applied if the student is not pursuing a thesis.

### Department Funding & Resources

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (G.T.A.) provide full tuition waivers and stipends for graduate students. These awards are highly competitive and evaluated annually in April for the following academic year. All full-time graduate students are eligible and considered for these awards. Students receiving G.T.A.s provide twenty hours of academically related work to the Department per week, typically as Teaching Assistants (T.A.s) or (less commonly) as Research Assistants (R.A.s), though other Department related tasks may be assigned. All full-time graduate students are afforded space in the Graduate Student Office, Liberal Arts Building 326. When demand exceeds available space, students are encouraged to observe a fair use policy. Keys to the Graduate Student Office (L.A. 326) may be obtained from the Department Administrator.

## Paths to the Degree

In addition to completing 30 graduate credits, students prepare a capstone project, demonstrate their competency in a public talk, and sit an oral defense overseen by a department graduate committee.

### Capstone Options

#### 1. Portfolio

All new students enter the program on the Portfolio path. The Portfolio path showcases competency across several categories. Students submit a professional portfolio of their work prior to their defense (see defense deadlines within the Graduate Catalog and Portfolio rubric below). In addition to two required elements, students select three additional elements, chosen and prepared in consultation with their graduate advisor.

Required Elements	Some options that satisfy the additionally-required elements*
A historiographical literature review (rubric to be provided) & A developed piece of research-based writing (rubric to be provided)	A resume or curriculum vitae (C.V.) with cover letter or letter of intent
	A primary, secondary, or college-level lesson plan
	A grant or funding proposal
	A book review adhering to the standards of an identified journal in the student's subject field
	A digital presentation of research and interpretation. This may take the form of a story map, timeline, website, podcast, or other digital tool. It should be publicly accessible online.
	*Students and their advisors are encouraged to suggest other options that satisfy this category.

The student will submit their Portfolio in digital format to their Committee Chair for distribution amongst their committee.

#### Committee & Supervision

A Portfolio path student committee functions as internal review boards to ensure the integrity of student work. They comprise a Committee Chair and Committee Member from the History Department and an external Graduate Faculty Representative, which the student must secure. The Committee Chair provides guidance on the various Portfolio elements and directs the committee.

## 2. Thesis

The Thesis path requires students to produce a more concentrated research study that focuses on a single topic. It is particularly helpful to those students seeking to pursue a Ph.D. or other professional degree. Students pursuing the Thesis path must inform the Director of Graduate Studies within their first year in the program. Requests to pursue the Thesis path must contain the following elements, prepared as a cohesive document:

Provisional Thesis title

Overall Thesis abstract (250-500 words)

Outline of potential chapters (150-200 words each) that include arguments, cohesion statements, and general themes.

Potential Sources, Methodology, and a brief review of the historiography.

A Graduate Committee formed from two department members (Committee Chair and Committee Member) and a Graduate Faculty Representative, which the student must secure.

The Director of Graduate Studies determines a student's request for transfer to the Thesis path within two weeks of its submission and suggests committee members. If accepted, the Committee Chair and the student will devise a timeline for chapter submissions, meetings, and feedback. If denied, the student may revise and resubmit.

A student accepted to the Thesis path will prepare a manuscript of at least 15,000 words that, in addition to exploring the proposed subject, develops a digital element complementary to that work. The thesis should contain the following elements, further details for which are available on the ISU Graduate School website:

Title Page

Signature Page

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Thesis Introduction

Chapters

Thesis Conclusion

Bibliography

Citation should conform to the most recent edition of Turabian Chicago Style.

### Committee & Supervision

Full graduate faculty may supervise graduate student Portfolio and Thesis committees, while full and affiliate graduate faculty may help direct their research, suggest coursework, help to identify external funding sources, conference opportunities, and job prospects, and guide development in digital humanities training. It is the student's responsibility to seek guidance in these areas and to be proactive.

## Research, Conferences, & Travel Funding

### Conferences

Graduate students are expected to develop and present their work at graduate-level or early career-level conferences, and professors are available to advise in these matters. ISU's annual Graduate Research Symposium and the annual Phi Alpha Theta (P.A.T.) history society conference is most applicable. All graduate students are strongly encouraged to be involved in Phi Alpha Theta. Contact the Graduate School or History Department P.A.T. advisor (Dr. MacDonald) for details. It is also advised that students link themselves to conference networking sites for updates on conference opportunities. See [networks.h-net.org](http://networks.h-net.org) for details.

### Travel Funds

Graduate students may request aid for travel expenses to present conference papers at regional or national meetings. Such requests should be presented only after a paper has been accepted by the official sponsoring organization. Funds for such purposes are very limited, and only modest requests are likely to be funded. Funds for such purposes should be requested sequentially from the following contact points:

Graduate School  
Office of Research  
Academic Department

When submitting written requests to the Office of Research for travel funds, a breakdown of expenses for registration, lodging, travel, and per diem is necessary. See the [Office of Research website](#) for details.

### Research Grants

A small fund in the Office of Research has been created to provide money to graduate students on a competitive basis to conduct research. Research proposals with budgets must be submitted to the Office of Research by deadlines established and posted on the [Office of Research website](#). Guidelines for research grant proposal preparation are available from the Office of Research. The Call for Proposals is typically sent out the first Monday in February for the following fall semester, and the last Monday in September for spring semester awards.

# Preparing to Graduate

## Program of Study

The Program of Study will list all coursework students have taken or will take in order to receive the degree. A Program of Study, using the departmental form, must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and approved by the Graduate School at the start of the semester in which a student intends to graduate. The submission date is defined as: the date the program of study is submitted to the Graduate School with all student, department, and college signatures. See "Dates, Deadlines, and Procedures" for specific dates, updated annually. The Graduate School website also outlines application to graduate procedures and fees.

## M.A. Defense

Both Portfolio and Thesis path students give a public presentation and sit an oral defense, which has three components.

1. An informative public talk that includes the following elements:
  - A 30-40-minute presentation. In the case of the Portfolio, the presentation may touch on one or several elements and may be tailored to the student's research or professional goals, i.e., the presentation of a lesson plan.
  - Demonstration or explanation of digital competency in some form associated with graduate-level coursework undertaken.
  - Visual complement or interactive demonstration aligned to the research.
2. Questions from the audience, after which the public is asked to leave
3. Questions from the graduate committee, after which the candidate is asked to leave and the committee votes "pass" or "fail." The candidate then returns and is given the committee's decision, after which the defense is concluded.

## Additional Graduate Certificate

In addition to coursework leading to the M.A. in History, students may pursue a Graduate Certificate in Geotechnology, or Geotech Certificate. Students must complete an additional 14 credits and 5 credits of elective course work. For further details see the Graduate Catalog.