

# University of South Florida History Department

## MA Program Manual AY 2024-25

This document describes the Department of History's key policies, procedures, expectations, and responsibilities for students in the MA program. Since it reflects the current status of our evolving program, it may be subject to change. Students should refer to the [USF Graduate Catalog](#) for all information on degree requirements. Please be sure to consult the FAQ at the bottom of this Program Manual and the [Graduate Program Canvas page](#) for additional details about the program.

### Important Contacts

**History Department Graduate Director:** Dr. Matt King, [matthewking1@usf.edu](mailto:matthewking1@usf.edu), SOC 213

**Graduate Program Specialist:** Ruth Borrero, [borrero168@usf.edu](mailto:borrero168@usf.edu), 813-974-2784, SOC 268

When you have questions about logistics related to this program, students should first consult the MA Program Manual from the year in which they entered the program ([accessible via Canvas](#)) and the [History Graduate Program Canvas page](#) generally. If these resources do not provide you with satisfactory answers, please send an email to both the Graduate Director and the Graduate Program Specialist so that they can assist you to the best of their abilities.

### Faculty Advisors and Portfolio Committees

Upon admittance to the program, students will be assigned a provisional faculty advisor in their field of study with whom they will meet to develop a plan for their coursework. Typically, this person will become the student's advisor (also called Major Professor). However, if the student's research topic changes or they find a better fit with another faculty member, they are free to choose another advisor. In this case, they need to inform their previous advisor, the Graduate Program Specialist, and the Graduate Director of this change via email.

During their first three semesters in the MA program, students should also form a portfolio committee of three faculty members from the USF History Department. This committee will be responsible for adjudicating the MA portfolio (explained below). Students should work with their advisors to determine who will be the most suitable committee members, though it is the responsibility of students to form their own committees. Students are allowed to include one member from outside the History Department on their committee (thus, having two history faculty members and another faculty member).

Once a committee has been formed (ideally by the beginning of Spring Semester of the student's second year of study), the following form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Specialist for signing: [History Department MA Committee Form](#).

### Graduate Student Responsibilities

Graduate students are expected to maintain sufficient contact with their advisors to ensure that both are aware of their progress in the program. Students must take the initiative to schedule meetings. It is recommended that this be done during the first 2 or 3 weeks of each semester, and at other times throughout the semester as needed. Students are responsible for being on time for appointments and for giving prompt notice if plans must be changed.

### Meeting Official Deadlines

Meeting all deadlines is the graduate student's responsibility. USF is a large institution with a complex bureaucracy, for which forms and procedures are critical to smooth transitions and complying with policies and requirements. Students should become familiar with requirements and deadlines for both the History Department and the Office of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Director and Graduate Program Specialist frequently communicate these deadlines with graduate students [via Canvas Announcements](#), which should be read promptly and carefully.

Every semester, the Graduate Program Specialist or Graduate Director will circulate a list of important Office of Graduate Studies dates. Students should note these and take them very seriously, for they are inflexible. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that such deadlines are met. The Graduate Program Specialist handles the distribution and processing of forms, but students and faculty advisors should monitor the submission of both departmental and college forms and procedures outlined in this document. These deadlines are also posted on the [Semester Deadlines & Exam Information page](#).

### Degree Requirements and Coursework

The USF History MA curriculum and coursework requirements can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#) of the year that the student entered the program. Students should also consult the [MA course audit forms on Canvas](#) (available for each concentration), which will help track your progress through the degree and allow you to check off all requirements as you complete them. Normally, full-time students will take 9 credit-hours per semester (the equivalent of three, 3-credit seminars). Students are required to take a minimum of 33 credits to complete their degree.

### Curriculum and Required Courses

There are two required core courses for MA students in History:

- **HIS 6112: Analysis of Historical Knowledge** – should be taken in the fall semester of their first year of the program.
- **HIS 6075: Historical Research and Publication** – offered every spring semester. If students are planning to graduate in spring of their second year (which is the standard curriculum for this program), they should take this class in spring of their second year. If students are planning to graduate in fall of their second year, they should take this class in spring of their first year. In this course, students develop and revise their capstone project. Students should begin planning for this capstone project in advance of their final semester and start researching and developing it during their earlier coursework, so that they are not starting from scratch in this course.

Individual concentrations for the History MA each have required courses, and along with your advisor, students should consult the [Graduate Catalog](#) (and [Course Audit worksheets](#)) to determine the courses you will need to take to complete these requirements. To fulfill their minor fields and remaining coursework credits, students should choose from the variety of graduate seminars offered at the 6000-level in the USF History Department as well as other opportunities available in departments across the university. Course descriptions from the history department and similar fields are [posted each semester on Canvas](#).

### Independent Studies

Students may take a maximum of three hours each of HIS 6908 Independent Study and HIS 6914 Directed Research in place of a regularly scheduled graduate seminar. Exceptions to this rule can be made with the approval of the major professor and Graduate Director. The Graduate Director must approve all Independent Study and Directed Readings courses, and, once approved, students should complete the [Graduate Directed Study Agreement form](#) and submit it to the Graduate Program Specialist in advance of registration. To register for an Independent Study or Directed Research class, follow these steps:

- Contact the faculty member with whom you would like to work for this course and confirm with them that they are willing to teach it. The two of you should also ensure that you have a general idea of the scope and content of this course.
- Forward that email exchange to the Graduate Director, who will then give approval for the course or request that certain changes be made to the proposed curriculum.
- Fill out the [Graduate Directed Study Agreement form](#) (excluding signatures) and send it to the Graduate Program Specialist so that all involved parties can sign it.

### Course Registration Procedure

All history graduate courses (and many in other departments as well) require a permit, which is granted only by the professor teaching the course. This necessitates students contacting instructors, usually by email, to explain their interest in the course and to request a permit to enroll. Since enrollments are limited, students are advised to begin the process of requesting permits before the actual registration process. Once an instructor in the history department has approved of a student's attendance in their class, the student should forward that approval email to the Graduate Program Specialist so that they can issue an add code for the student. If a student is registering for a course in a different department, they should ask the instructor what their department's protocol is for registration. The schedule of classes is available online through the [Registrar's Student Schedule Search](#). Faculty email addresses are available on the [History Department website](#).

### Language Requirement

The language requirement for MA students is optional and dependent on individual student needs/field requirements. Students should consult with their advisors to determine if foreign language proficiency is necessary for their research.

All students should complete a Language Proficiency Form in consultation with their advisor by the end of their first year of study. On this form, students should indicate if they do or do not need to obtain proficiency in one or more foreign languages to complete the research for their dissertation. If they do need to use foreign language sources, they should document either evidence of their proficiency in the necessary language(s) or plans to obtain it.

MA students who wish to eventually obtain a PhD should be aware that most PhD programs in History continue to require language proficiency in one or more foreign languages for all students, regardless of their field of study. Students should consult with their advisor and the main faculty in their concentration to determine if they should be focusing their time and effort on language training in addition to their regular History coursework. Although USF has limited opportunities for language training, there are [numerous external grants and training programs across the world that can help you gain skills in a wide variety of languages](#).

### **The Comprehensive Examination – MA Portfolio**

All MA students need to submit an MA Portfolio for faculty evaluation during the semester they intend to graduate. Students typically will complete their MA portfolio near the end of their fourth semester in the program. Students are permitted (and encouraged) to begin developing both of these pieces of written work during their coursework. Both components of the MA portfolio must be approved in consultation with the student's advisor(s):

1. A capstone project that shows the student's ability to conduct original historical research on a specialized topic within their major field. It can be an original research paper (ideal for use as a writing sample in a PhD application or publication in an academic journal as a solo author) or another type of project of similar rigor that shows the ability to undertake historical research at the MA level. There are no specific length requirements for this project, but we recommend that the word count gravitate toward the length of a peer-reviewed journal article.
2. A historiography paper of at least 5,000 words that is on a topic other than that of the capstone project (excluding footnotes and bibliography).

Upon submission of the MA portfolio, the student's committee of three faculty members spends several weeks reviewing it and providing a pass/fail grade to the student. If more than one committee member votes to fail the student on the portfolio, the student fails. If the student fails the portfolio, they have one additional semester to revise and resubmit it to their committee for review. Failing the portfolio twice results in the student's removal from the program.

Detailed instructions (including descriptions of appropriate assignments to use, timelines, and evaluation criteria) of how and when to submit your portfolio elements to your committee [are available here](#).

### **Thesis and Non-Thesis Credit Hours**

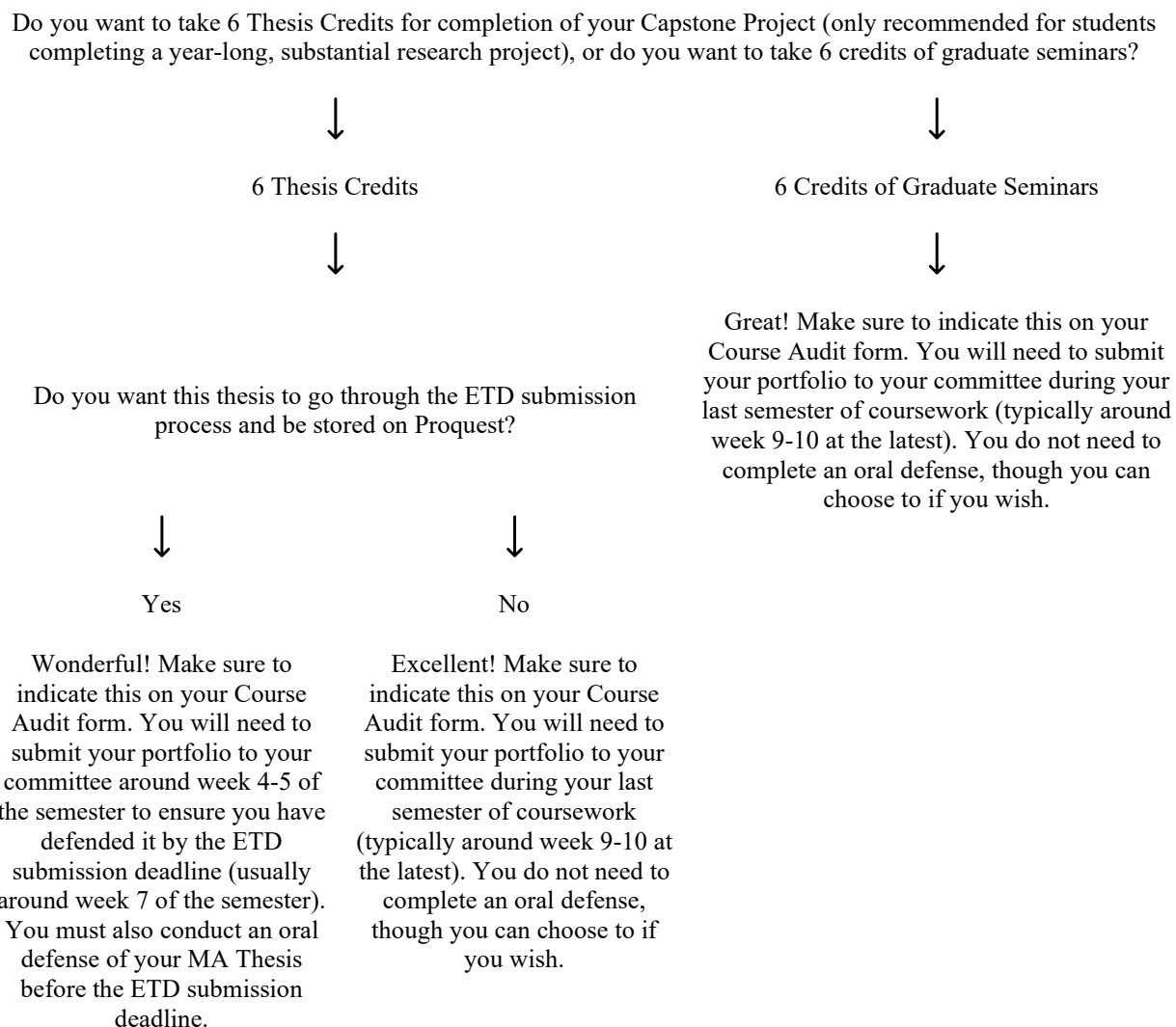
Students have the option of taking 6 credits of thesis hours during their coursework. These credits should only be used when students opt to complete a substantial research project for item #1 in their MA portfolio – the kind of capstone project that can take more than a year of research and writing. If students do not want to undertake a thesis for their capstone project (item #1 in the MA portfolio), then they should not take any thesis credits. Instead, they should enroll in two more content courses for a total of 6 credit hours.

Students have the additional option of choosing to complete an official MA Thesis that will go through the [Electronic Thesis & Dissertation](#) (ETD) process and see their completed MA Thesis stored online through Proquest. ETD requires submission of a completed MA portfolio (the MA Thesis will be the Capstone Project of the portfolio) around week 7 of the semester of graduation, which means that students need to submit their finalized portfolio around week 4 or 5 of the semester to provide time for their committees to read it. Students going through this process must also have an oral defense of their MA Thesis completed before submission of the portfolio – typically around week 6 or 7 (before the ETD submission deadline) of the semester.

Students that choose not to complete an official MA Thesis need to have their entire written portfolio completed and submitted to their committee by week 9 or 10 of their semester of

graduation (the specific day will vary). This will give members of the committee sufficient time to review and provide comments on portfolio before the end of the semester. MA students are not required to have an oral defense of their portfolio. [All deadlines related to MA portfolios are detailed here each semester.](#)

The below flowchart summarizes the options that MA students have for their portfolio:



### **Timeline and Degree Path: Year One**

#### **Fall Semester: Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**

- HIS 6112 Analysis of Historical Knowledge (3 credits)
- Content Seminar (3 credits)
- Content Seminar (3 credits)

**Portfolio/Thesis Considerations:** Students should be using seminar final assignments to prepare portfolio elements when appropriate, in consultation with their advisors.

**Spring Semester: Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**

- Content Seminar (3 credits)
- Content Seminar (3 credits)
- Content Seminar (3 credits)

**Portfolio/Thesis Considerations:** Students should be using the seminar final assignments to prepare portfolio elements when appropriate, in consultation with their advisors.

**By the end of the first year of the MA program:**

- Students should be well on their way to completing the requirements for their Concentration/minor field; they should use the [MA Course Audit worksheets](#) to assess their progress through their degree, in consultation with their advisor.
- Students should have decided whether or not they will write a thesis for item #1.
- If they are not writing a thesis, they should (at the very least) start thinking about what they will do for the capstone project (item #1) of the Portfolio. Ideally, they will have already started developing a research project in one of their seminars.

**Timeline and Degree Path: Year Two****Fall Semester: Coursework for Full-Time Students (9 credits)**

- Content Seminar (3 credits)
- Content Seminar (3 credits)
- Content Seminar or Thesis Hours (3 credits)

**Portfolio/Thesis Considerations:** Students writing a thesis should be developing chapter drafts and aiming for a completed draft by the beginning of the spring semester. Students should be using their content seminar final assignments to prepare final portfolio elements when appropriate.

**By the end of the first semester of the second year:**

- Students should have decided on their historiography essay for item #2 of their portfolio and be working to expand or develop it (if needed) to prepare for their Portfolio review.
- At this time, students should also be discussing with their advisor which faculty will be on their three-faculty committee to evaluate their portfolio.
- Students writing a thesis should have a nearly full draft completed by the beginning of the spring semester so that they can revise and submit it to their committee for review in plenty of time before the university [ETD submission date](#) (typically mid-March).

**Spring Semester: Coursework for Full-Time Students (6 or 9 credits)**

- HIS 6075 Historical Research and Publication
- Content Seminar or Thesis Hours
- Content Seminar (if necessary to maintain 9-credit status for funding)

**At the beginning of the semester when the Portfolio review will occur:**

- Students and their advisors should finalize both components of the Portfolio and students should be working on revising them for the Portfolio evaluation.
- In consultation with the Portfolio review committee, the student should determine how and when they should submit the Portfolio to the committee (no later than Week 12 of the semester).
- Once the committee receives the Portfolio, they will review it according to the evaluation criteria provided on the MA Portfolio Assessment form, which will be provided to the student upon completion of the evaluation.

## **Funding**

The USF History Department has a limited number of Graduate Assistantships available for MA students that we distribute between incoming and continuing students on a competitive basis. All new applicants will be considered for funding during the admissions process unless they indicate that they do not wish to be considered. Students who did not receive a GAship in their first year are eligible to apply in their second year by following instructions posted annually by the Graduate Director. Continuing students who wish to renew their GAship must also fill out a brief application to have their funding renewed (also posted annually by the Graduate Director).

A GAship for MA students provides a tuition waiver for full-time enrollment, subsidized health insurance, and a stipend that is determined [according to a contract](#) set by the USF-GAU (graduate student union). During the regular school year, GAs are contracted to work no more than 20 hours/week. In the History Department, most GAs work as teaching assistants to professors, although a few are assigned to research or administrative positions. Additional details about GA employment [can be found here](#).

## **FAQ: General Questions**

Where can I find information about student regulations, policies, and resources?

The [Regulations and Policies](#) page of the USF Website provides a comprehensive listing of them. Here are a few offices that have been historically relevant for our students:

- [Student Accessibility Services](#): provides accommodation letters.
- [Graduate Catalog](#): details program requirements, academic standing, leaves of absence, incomplete grades.
- [Student Conduct Policies](#): considers plagiarism, academic and personal conduct, medical amnesty, student grievances.
- [Title IX](#): protocol for discrimination, harassment, and retaliation/

I have a question about the graduate program. Who should I ask?

Before sending any emails, I recommend reading through this FAQ (or using CTRL+F to locate relevant search terms), going through the [USF History Graduate Program Canvas page](#), and [browsing the Graduate section of the department website](#). If you still have an unanswered question, you should probably speak to one of three people. For questions about your academic progress, the structure of your portfolio, and classes you should take, I recommend first contacting your faculty advisor. For questions about bureaucratic processes and forms, Ruth Borrero ([borrero168@usf.edu](mailto:borrero168@usf.edu)) is your best bet. For questions about the graduate program generally (and anything else that does not fit in the above categories), contact the Graduate Director, Dr. Matt King ([matthewking1@usf.edu](mailto:matthewking1@usf.edu)).

In general, you will find the most up-to-date and detailed information about the program on the [Canvas page](#). I highly recommend that you familiarize yourself with this page upon entry into the program so you can familiarize yourself with the department's policies and procedures.

Can I change advisors?

Yes! We assign interim advisors at the beginning of your time at USF, but you are welcome to switch advisors (ideally within the first year of your enrollment) based on your preferences. If you

have concerns about your relationship with your advisor, please contact Dr. Matt King ([matthewking1@usf.edu](mailto:matthewking1@usf.edu)) to inform him of the situation.

#### How can I best utilize USF's libraries?

Reach out to our library liaison, [Dr. Matt Knight](#), who works directly with students and faculty to facilitate our access to research resources in the USF Library. Feel free to email Matt directly if you have questions related to library resources. He is an amazing resource and also teaches Irish and Irish-American history in our department!

#### **FAQ: Classes and Coursework**

Where can I find information on history department courses (and courses in other departments)?

We maintain a [page on Canvas](#) dedicated to information about course offerings.

#### Which classes should I take?

This is a question best answered by your graduate advisor and, potentially, the Graduate Director. I recommend first taking a look at the MA Course Audit or PhD Course Audit forms available on the [USF History Graduate Program Canvas page](#), which specify the courses you need to complete to graduate.

#### Should I take independent studies?

We are trying to limit the number of independent studies that graduate students take, even when (seemingly) there are no classes offered in a semester that apply to a student's field of study. The reasons for this are multiple. First, independent studies put an extra burden on faculty, who do not receive any teaching credit for these classes despite the labor that they put into them. Second, having graduate students in independent studies means that there are fewer students in our other seminars, which means that more seminars are cancelled. Third, I think it is a good thing for students to take classes outside of their specialties because it broadens their understanding of history and the ways that we can approach it. Having said this, if you and your advisor agree that it is imperative that you need to take an independent study, then Ruth and I will sign off on the necessary forms needed for this to happen.

#### What should I do if I cannot find any classes that I want to take?

There are bound to be some semesters where you cannot find multiple classes that directly relate to your research. This can feel annoying, but it can be very useful. I highly recommend that you take courses outside of your geographic/chronological/thematic specialty so that you can approach your field from different vantage points. Some of my most rewarding experiences in graduate school were from classes that had little relevant to my field of study.

#### Can I take courses outside the history department?

Yes, and we encourage this! If you are interested in taking seminars outside of the department, you typically need to introduce yourself (via email) to the professor teaching the seminar and ask for an add code. The departments listed below are some of the few that might have relevant courses: Anthropology; Economics; English; Humanities & Cultural Studies; Interdisciplinary Global Studies; Library and Information Science; Philosophy; Religious Studies; Sociology & Interdisciplinary Social Sciences; Women's, Gender & Sexuality Studies; World Languages.

### How does the graduate minor work?

The minor is very flexible. In consultation with your graduate advisor, you choose two classes that are thematically related in some way, not used for any required components of your graduate degree, and then designate those two classes as fulfilling the prerequisites for your minor. These classes can be taken in the history department or outside of it. For example, you could take a history course called “Early American Empire” and an English class on “Literature in the British Empire” and pull them together for a minor in “Comparative Empires.” This process is designed to be flexible to accommodate your interests and the courses that USF is able to offer during your coursework.

### What is considered “good academic progress”?

The Graduate Director and departmental graduate committee keep a close eye on the academic progress of our graduate students. A GPA of 3.0 is necessary to remain in “good standing” with the USF Graduate School, and any grade below a “C” is considered by the USF Graduate School to be a failing grade and will not be counted as credit toward your degree. Students with a GAship must maintain a 3.0 GPA. Additionally, within the department, any grade below a “B” is considered a sign of poor performance in the course and may merit some intervention, as may multiple Incomplete grades, depending on the circumstances. Students who fail to maintain “good standing” may be placed on academic probation and/or dismissed from the program.

### How do I apply for graduation?

To apply for graduation, you should ensure that you have met all degree requirements, including clearing all Incomplete grades and financial holds, and then go to [the Graduation Application page](#) on the Registrar’s website to formally apply for graduation. The deadline to apply is typically at the beginning of the semester in which you plan to graduate, so you should keep an eye out for deadline announcements from the department and university. Graduate students cannot walk in commencement unless they have met all degree requirements, however, so if you do not complete your degree during the semester in which you initially apply, you will need to reapply for a subsequent semester, after you have completed all of your requirements.

### **FAQ: Funding**

#### Where can I find resources related to funding opportunities?

We maintain a [Canvas page](#) dedicated to information about funding opportunities inside and outside the history department. Pay attention to Canvas Announcements, too, as faculty members sometimes make announcements about specific funding opportunities in their subfields.

#### Can I apply for funding if I did not receive a GAship in my first year?

Yes, you can apply for a GAship for your second year. They are distributed on a competitive basis, and decisions about funding for all GAships are made during the admissions deliberations at the beginning of the spring semester.