



# **Department of History**

## **Graduate Student Manual**

**2025-26**

New Mexico State University  
Department of History MSC 3H  
P.O. Box 30001  
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001

<https://history.nmsu.edu/>



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Applying for Graduate Study	2
Welcome	4
Graduate Catalog	4
Program Themes	4
General Plan of Study	6
Thesis Track	7
Public History Track	8
Dual Track	9
Graduate Student Policies/Academic Performance/Misconduct	9
Registering/First-Time Advising	11
Program of Study	11
Choosing an Advisor	11
Applying for Candidacy	12
Putting Together a Committee	12
Thesis/Article Proposal and Proposal Defense	13
Conference/Public Speaking Requirement	13
Oral Defense	13
Writing a Thesis	14
Funding	14
Additional Funding	15
Staying Connected	17
STAR Reports and Transcripts	17
Transferring Credit	17
Conflict Resolution	18
Becoming a Historian	18
Library and Other Resources for Research	19
Overview of Assignments for Historians	21
Student Organizations	23
Taking a Leave of Absence/Continuous Enrollment	24
Department Faculty and Staff	25



## **APPLYING FOR GRADUATE STUDY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY**

The Department of History offers graduate work leading to the Master of Arts degree involving 36 hours of course work (roughly 12 courses). Students may opt for a traditional Masters in History, for which they write a thesis, for a Master's in Public History, for which they complete a public history internship/project, or for a combination of both of these tracks.

The history department offers graduate work in a variety of regional fields encompassing Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States. The department also offers graduate level course work in women's history, environmental history, environmental history, and the history of race and ethnicity. In addition, the department offers graduate preparation in broad thematic fields that are comparative and interdisciplinary in approach. These fields, and the graduate reading courses addressing them that form the core of our program, are Borders, Boundaries and Frontiers; Nature and Society; History, Myth and Memory; and Modernity and Its Discontents. Please see pp. 7–8 below for more information on our thematic fields.

In addition to fulfilling the basic requirements for admission to the Graduate School, applicants must present undergraduate passage of at least 12 credits in history with grades of B or higher, including 6 upper-division history credits. Those lacking this preparation must normally make up deficiencies before beginning graduate course work. Students applying for admission to the graduate program in history are required to submit an application form and transcript to the Graduate School, as well as a strong writing sample (preferably historically oriented; not a new essay or article, but one completed in the past), three letters of recommendation (ideally from History faculty members at NMSU or other institutions), and a two- to three-page statement of purpose. GRE scores are not required. Students should apply approximately four months in advance of the desired enrollment date. Those who would like to apply for graduate assistantships and fellowships should apply by February 15th for the fall semester and by October 15th for the spring semester. Students who are not applying for graduate assistantships or fellowships may apply at any time for acceptance into the graduate program. Candidates who choose a course of study requiring a foreign language will be responsible for their own language preparation.

All coursework in the Department of History at NMSU is in English. The Department of History does not maintain any specific English language proficiency requirement. English language proficiency will be determined by the applicant's essay for application, and the graduate committee may admit students with the provisional requirement that they take supplemental English coursework.

All of the components of the application are to be submitted electronically to the Graduate School through this website:

<https://apply.nmsu.edu/apply/>

For further details, specific requirements, and course offerings, see the Graduate Catalog:

<https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/nmsu/graduate-school/>

We will only review complete applications. You can expect to hear back within a few weeks to a month after your complete application has been received.

For any additional information, please contact:

**Dr. Laura Hooton, Director of Graduate Studies**

[hooton@nmsu.edu](mailto:hooton@nmsu.edu)

**Dr. Jerry D. Wallace, Director of Public History**

[jwallace@nmsu.edu](mailto:jwallace@nmsu.edu)

**Dana Barksdale, Administrative Assistant**

[dbarks@nmsu.edu](mailto:dbarks@nmsu.edu)

575-646-4616

**Graduate School**

<https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/>

575-646-2736

## **Welcome**

If you're a new, transferring, or continuing graduate student at NMSU, then this manual was written with you in mind. This manual will guide you through the wide array of options and requirements for graduate study at NMSU.

The Department of History office is located in Breland Hall 239. (For a searchable map, see <https://map.nmsu.edu/> and search under "Breland Hall.") Our office hours are Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 12 Noon and 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. (MST). Our main office number is 575-646-4601.



There will be an orientation meeting at the start of every fall semester to give new graduate students an opportunity to meet faculty and meet each other, and to go over departmental policies and procedures.

## **Graduate Catalog**

The Graduate Catalog is online and will provide you with current information regarding registration, financial aid, grades, housing and payment plans. Be sure to take time to familiarize yourself with this site, instead of waiting until you are halfway through the program before discovering it.

<https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/nmsu/graduate-school/>

## **Program Themes**

Instead of focusing primarily on one geographical area and/or time-period, students study history in the contexts of the themes below. The idea behind this is to give you a broader theoretical framework in which to study history. Rather than giving you a deep understanding of only one particular area, our program helps you literally create connections between seemingly disparate environments, cultures, and periods. This will be of particular help in developing your thesis, internship thesis, and for future use when writing your dissertation. These are the issues historians deal with on a regular basis, and chances are you will be able to apply them to whatever topics you are assigned to study. Students will select coursework appropriate to their own interests (see "Degree Requirements," below), and in addition, will all be required to take one or more of the following thematic reading seminars:

### **Borders, Boundaries and Frontiers**

This theme concerns the spaces in which people interact. Borders are sometimes political and defined with legal precision by governments, or they may be geographic, etched into the land by a river or mountain chain. Often vigorously monitored or militarized, borders are transgressed as people migrate and as goods are exchanged. Boundaries may be thought of as cultural linguistic perimeters that define a people or a nation. They may be “ethnic” in nature, or they may be defined in terms of professional interests. Whenever groups compete over resources or professional and/or cultural interests, boundaries are threatened. Frontiers are sites where interaction, conflict, adaptation, and mixture (*mestizaje*) take place. Usually imprecisely defined, frontiers can be real sites (as the hinterland of a colonial settlement) or imagined (as the Seven Cities of Gold). The theme of Borders, Boundaries and Frontiers helps us to conceptualize how groups come into contact with one another through colonialism, imperialism, migration, globalization, and cultural interaction.

### **Modernity and Its Discontents**

This theme encourages a transnational perspective and tends to break the barriers of time that normally divide and define us as historians. Feudalism and post--- industrial systems are both part of the theme, as industrialization is not a static process but has occurred in a combined and uneven way in almost all parts of the globe. Industrialization involves the study of class in all times and periods, but also the study of management, capitalism, and competing economic systems. Industrialization calls into being not only the history of the (man, woman, and child) worker, but also of the family and the larger society -- their attitudes and beliefs as well as their modes of living. Industrialization is more than just the tale of the factory worker. The Peruvian artisan and the Southern slave, the Chinese peasant, the South African gold miner, the Market Revolution religious evangelist, the eighteenth-century pirate, the American housewife and the Brazilian slum dweller are all encompassed by the theme of industrialization.

Related to industrialization is the study of modernity, which, again, involves a very long time span. The study of modernity crosses not only time periods and countries but also disciplines. Students may study the rise of the modern nation state, the evolution of modern science, the history of the philosophical consideration of “the modern,” the modern military machine or the aesthetics of modern art, architecture, and film. One may also study the many times and events in which people attempted to escape the implications of modernity, as a theme always invites its opposite.

### **Nature and Society**

This theme looks at human culture in relation to the biosphere. It considers how humans and natural environments have interacted and reshaped each other in the past. It studies the ecological and environmental niches where humans have succeeded and failed and the reasons for these successes and failures. It is concerned with how humans have altered the environments of the places they have inhabited through irrigation systems, agricultural and pastoral practices, and industry; and it studies the social, political and technological systems that have sustained these economic activities. Nature and Society asks such questions as: How has the natural environment influenced human actions, decisions, and cultural and social

development? How have people perceived or imagined the natural world? How have they reshaped and even reordered the natural environment? How have they struggled with each other over ways the environment should be treated and understood? And what have been the intended and unintended consequences of their actions?

The Nature and Society theme also explores the ways in which weather patterns and climate changes have affected the development of cultures. It looks at the history of foods and at the social systems and cultural practices that have developed around the domestication and production of foodstuffs. It sees globalization in terms of the spread of biotas and pathogens as well as the spread of social and political systems. It incorporates parasites and diseases into history, and looks at the religious, political and medical systems that humans have designed to control and manage disease. Finally, as cultural and intellectual history, it examines how different cultures have understood nature and their relationship to nature.

### **General Plan of Study**

The Department offers three tracks toward the M.A. degree in History: **Thesis**; **Public History**; and **Dual**. In brief, the Thesis track will give you more options in doctoral programs and acquaint you more thoroughly with professional history writing; the Public History track will give you more options for work immediately after your M.A. degree and acquaint you with the various means by which historians keep history alive for the general public; and the Dual Track option offers a mix of both.

Whatever track you choose, you must designate this track with the Graduate School. For instance, if you want to change your track within the history department from thesis track to public history, you should search for NMSU's current **Student Program Coordinator** for the Graduate School and request a change in designation from that person.

Regardless of track, all graduate students will:

- ◇ The first semester possible, all students should take History 598, The Craft of History. Public History students should take History 594, the Public History Seminar, the first semester possible. Both are offered every year in the fall semester.
- ◇ Select, by the end of the second semester, their advisor and consult with him or her/the graduate director regarding the formation of their committees
- ◇ Submit a plan of study (application to candidacy) to the Graduate School, and take part in a pre-thesis hearing with their committee to review their written proposal
- ◇ Present at least one conference paper, or undertake some kind of public speaking at least once during their time as a graduate student
- ◇ Consult with their advisor to schedule their oral examination for a date *at least one week before* the Graduate School's semester deadline, save in emergency situations

Public History students should meet with their committee after completing their internship, but before writing the required article based on the internship.

Dr. Laura Hooton ([hooton@nmsu.edu](mailto:hooton@nmsu.edu)) is the graduate advisor for Thesis-track students, and Dr. Jerry Wallace ([jwallace@nmsu.edu](mailto:jwallace@nmsu.edu)) advises the Public History-track and Dual-track students. You are expected to take a minimum number of course credits in certain areas, which are spelled out in detail below. Your advisor will help you choose courses that both interest you and satisfy the requirements for your degree.

### **Thesis Track**

This track is typically regarded as the primary stepping stone toward a Ph.D. program. However, many students have also chosen this track to augment their educational skills, teach at a secondary or community college level, develop their resume for law or politics, or simply for personal development. Many Ph.D. programs will ask for a thesis upon your application, and since this program will both instruct and require you to create one, it is an automatic advantage. This track will require you to take four seminars: History 598, The Craft of History (offered during the fall semester), one research seminar, two thematic readings seminars, and at least six graduate level history courses (two of which must be outside your area of interest). The latter will include at least one 490-and-above Public History course. Students will research and write a thesis (roughly 100 pages in length). Finally, you will invite three professors (one of whom must be outside the History Department) to form a committee, which will appraise your thesis and course recollection during an oral examination. The entire track weighs in at 36 credits, or three courses per semester.

#### **Degree Requirements, Thesis Track:**

- Students in this program must take four core seminars (12 credits): HIST 598/The Craft of History (offered every fall); HIST 596/The Graduate Research Seminar; and two thematic history reading seminars
- Students must take six other graduate (450 or above) classes (18 credits)
- One 500-and-above course must be in Public History
- With permission of the Director of Graduate Studies, students in this program may take two classes (6 credits) of relevant courses outside the History Department
- Present at least one conference paper, or undertake some kind of public speaking at least once during their time as a graduate student
- Students must also write a thesis (6 credits) and pass a final oral examination over
- graduate course work and their thesis



## **Public History Track**

Public History is a hands-on approach to research that examines the various forms of media and methods employed to bring history to the public.

<https://history.nmsu.edu/public-history-program/public-history-overview.html>

From historic preservation and archives, to museum exhibits, tours, and oral histories, Public History emphasizes active work in the field. The Public History Program is designed for students who plan for careers in museums, historic preservation, archives, and governmental or business history. Many Public History students don't choose to go beyond the Master's Degree and pursue a Ph.D., preferring instead to begin working in their chosen field. However, many Public History students have also gone on to get Ph.D.'s immediately following their Master's.

The requirements for Public History are similar to the thesis requirements, with two main exceptions. You are required to take four classes (12 credits) of Public History courses, including the Public History seminar (offered during the spring semester), as well as the three core seminars that the thesis track students must take. Students write a publishable article.

### **Degree Requirements, Public History Track:**

- Students in this program must take four core seminars (12 credits): History 598/The Craft of History Seminar (offered fall semester), History 594/The Public History Seminar, and one each of a Reading Seminar and History 596/The Research Seminar
- Students must also take three Public History classes which may include interdisciplinary classes upon approval of advisor (9 credits)
- Students in this program will also take at least three graduate classes (450 or above) of traditional History (9 hours)
- At least two classes will be in non-United States history
- Present at least one conference paper, or undertake some kind of public speaking at least once during their time as a graduate student
- For the oral exam, students will pass questions on their article and on the courses that they have taken with their committee members and will present a portfolio of their Public History work

For all Public History students who fulfill the above requirements for the Public History track, the Graduate Office will add to their transcript that the student completed a specialization in Public History.

## Dual Track

As its name implies, the dual track incorporates elements of both the Thesis and Public History tracks.

### **Degree Requirements, Dual Track:**

Students who wish to pursue both a thesis track and a public history track for their M.A. degree must complete the credits required for the public history track, perform an internship, receive approval for their thesis research, prepare a portfolio that meets public history requirements, present the portfolio at a public session, and defend the thesis in oral examinations before a faculty committee. They must also present one conference paper or participate in one form of public speaking. In order to satisfactorily complete both tracks, the student will enroll in three internship credits and six thesis credits, and will therefore earn at least 39 credits in completing the M.A. Dual track students will be responsible for taking History 598 (The Craft of History); History 596 (The Research Seminar); History 594 (The Public History Seminar); and one thematic reading seminar.

Whichever track you choose, you will fill out a plan of study to indicate your chosen track with the Director of Graduate Studies. If you change tracks, you must alert the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate School, to request a change in degree designation.

## Graduate Student Policies/Academic Performance/Misconduct

A graduate student *must*

- Maintain a **GPA of 3.0** in their history classes. If a student's history GPA falls below 3.0, he or she will normally be removed from the Graduate Program in History.
- Gain the written permission of their advisor to have any courses outside the History Department count toward their MA degree and History GPA. A maximum of **6 credits** outside History may count toward the MA in History (9 500-and-above credits in Public History).
- Take at least **one graduate seminar a year** if continuously enrolled in the MA program until departmental requirements are fulfilled. A student who does not meet this criterion will normally be removed from the Graduate Program in History. Students who are absent from the program for more than a year must reapply to the Graduate School. If they are absent from the program for longer than a year, they may also be required to reapply to the Department of History.
- Take and earn at least a B in **one graduate seminar** during their first year in the MA program. A student who does not meet these criteria will normally be removed from the Graduate Program in History.
- File an application to candidacy, which formally summarizes the student's program of studies, **no later than the completion of 12 credits** of graduate work.

If a graduate student

- Earns lower than a B in one History class, he or she will be given a written warning.
- Earns lower than a B in more than one History class, he or she will be automatically removed from the Graduate Program in History and will be given a written warning regarding their removal from the program.
- Receives one NP (No Progress) on credits for his or her thesis or internship report, he or she will be given a written warning.
- Receives more than one NP (no Progress) on credits for his or her thesis or internship report, he or she will be automatically removed from the Graduate Program in History.
- Is found guilty of academic misconduct, the student may fail the class in which the misconduct took place, or depending on the assessment of the instructor and the Department Head, may be removed from the program. For an overall definition of what academic misconduct includes at NMSU, see the following:

[https://studentlife.nmsu.edu/academic\\_integrity/academic\\_misconduct.html](https://studentlife.nmsu.edu/academic_integrity/academic_misconduct.html)

Students must abide by all terms of the **NMSU Student Social Code of Conduct** and **Academic Code of Conduct**:

<https://studentlife.nmsu.edu/conduct/index.html>

If you are in doubt about whether or not you are engaging in plagiarism or academic misconduct, do not hesitate to consult with your instructor or thesis advisor. The Department of History emphasizes integrity in research and creative activities and expects responsible conduct where research and creative activities are concerned. Students may be removed from the program for the violations of these professional standards. (See the “Plagiarism” section below.)

At the end of each semester, the Graduate Committee will evaluate each graduate student’s progress. Advisors will refer any students who do not appear to be meeting the program’s standards to the Graduate Committee. If the Graduate Committee confirms this, the graduate student will be informed in writing and the Graduate Committee will recommend to the Department Head that appropriate action be taken.

Please note that if they are not otherwise informed, students may assume that they are proceeding apace in their progress towards the degree. Advisors and the Graduate Committee review a student’s progress and plans at least once a year, but they do not issue annual, written progress reports in the case of good progress.

## **Registering and First-Time Advising**

The Director of Graduate Studies advises all incoming Thesis-track students. The Director of Public History, Dr. Jerry Wallace, advises all incoming Public History-track students and Dual-track students. Ultimately, the Director of Graduate Studies, your chosen thesis advisor, or the Director of Public History will advise you every semester. Advisors go over students' programs of study to ensure that they are taking an appropriate number and selection of courses each semester. *All graduate students are required to see their appropriate advisor before enrolling each semester.* All graduate students will be evaluated by their advisor each semester to ensure that they are making appropriate progress toward earning a degree. Faculty advisement will also give students a chance to ask any questions and address any concerns relevant to the successful completion of their degree, including any problems that may hinder their progress.

Once you are in the system, you can register online at MyNMSU (<https://my.nmsu.edu>) through the "Student" tab. You will also be able to access your financial aid status and grades. Remember, it's always best to register as soon as possible for upcoming classes, because if you wait till the last minute there is a distinct possibility that the class may be cancelled, particularly seminars. Also, know that any classes listed under "Special Topics (400/500 with subtitles)" are regular courses that haven't received an official course number yet. You may also have to get your advisor's or the class instructor's signature for seminars and special studies.

## **Program of Study**

After you've completed 12 credits of graduate courses, begin working with your advisor towards putting together a plan for the rest of your time here.

Students in *all tracks* are required to complete the following steps.

### **Choosing an Advisor**

Once students have determined the area of research on which they would like to write their thesis, they will switch advisors from the Director of Graduate Studies to their own, permanent thesis advisor. A thesis advisor is someone who specializes in a field of historical research related to a student's proposed thesis topic. Thesis advisors have the expertise and professional preparation to assist students with their research and determine if their thesis topics are appropriate, timely, and innovative. While there is no hard and fast rule as to exactly when students choose an advisor, as a rule of thumb, students should try to choose a thesis advisor by the end of their first year of study. This is *your* thesis advisor, not to be confused with the Director of Graduate Studies or the Director of Public History. Your thesis advisor must be a member of the Graduate Faculty at NMSU and a full-time faculty member of the Department of History. Once you choose a thesis advisor, he or she will become your overall academic advisor for the duration of the program. It is the responsibility of thesis advisors to assist students in choosing their specific research topics, finding relevant sources for research, and crafting the

final product of a written thesis. Thesis advisors will help students establish a timeline for forming a graduate committee and completing their thesis and degree. It is the responsibility of the graduate student, in turn, to maintain regular contact with his or her thesis advisor and follow the specific advice and directions he or she gives towards the completion of research, a thesis, and a final degree.

Note that if the History Department has a specialist in your field of interest, that instructor *must* be your advisor. (For instance, historians of Europe or America should not oversee theses on the history of China if there is a resident faculty specialist on Chinese history, etc.) If there is no specialist in your field of interest, students will select the most appropriate advisor among the faculty available. Students should inform the Director of Graduate Studies if/when they choose a permanent advisor and receive approval for this choice, which will be registered in a student's file. If a student changes advisors, he or she again should inform the Director of Graduate Studies of their switch.

Faculty on sabbatical are not required to oversee graduate student work. Faculty are required to inform their advisees of upcoming leaves and sabbaticals, and graduate students are required to make specific and clear arrangements with their advisors about what their working relationship will be during the time that faculty are away, including arrangements about degree completion and oral exams.

### **Applying for Candidacy**

After completing at least twelve graduate credits at NMSU, graduate students need to apply for candidacy. To do so, fill out the "Program of study for Masters Students" form on the link below. You will be required to have all people sign it digitally. You will automatically be charged a fee at this time, which will appear on your student account.

<https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/current-students/graduate-forms.html>

### **Putting Together a Committee**

By the end of the second semester, students must consult their advisor and the graduate director regarding the formation of their committees. A student's thesis committee shares the responsibility of reviewing the student's progress and guiding the student toward degree completion. Orals committees will typically consist of the student's thesis advisor; a second member of the history faculty, typically with whom the student has taken classes; and a Graduate Faculty member from outside the department, known as the Dean's Representative, whose main role is to ensure that the university's examination procedures are followed correctly. Both the thesis advisor and the Dean's Representative must be members of the NMSU Graduate Faculty (meaning, you may opt to ask a faculty member at another institution to serve on your committee, but that person may not serve as the Dean's Representative; they function as just another, regular committee member). Students should not approach any potential committee member without approval from their advisor. Thesis advisors will advise graduate students on how to choose committee members and will approve the final composition of a student's committee. Students must consult with their thesis advisor and receive approval to

change the members of their thesis committee once the committee has been formed. Students may occasionally opt to have a total of four committee members if such a configuration is appropriate to their thesis and enriches their research.

After submitting your plan of study to the Graduate School, take part in a pre-thesis proposal defense with your entire committee. There are no forms required for this proposal defense.

### **Thesis/Article Proposal and Proposal Defense**

A thesis proposal should be about 4-5 pages in length, and should contain a statement of your working thesis, the arguments you expect to make, and a bit about the sources you expect to use and how you expect to use them to build your argument. You should also include a full bibliography of the sources you have used and expect to use.

Consult with your committee to schedule a defense of this thesis proposal at a mutually agreeable time, and make sure that all members of the committee have the thesis proposal in hand several days ahead of time. A thesis proposal defense should take about a half-hour, during which time your committee members will ask you questions and give you suggestions to aid you in your research.

### **Conference/Public Speaking Requirement**

All graduate students entering the History Department as of Fall 2013 must give at least one public presentation of their research or present a conference in order to graduate. Attending conferences is not only important for meeting others in your field, but also to practice articulating your ideas verbally and organizing your thoughts in a clear manner. Conferences and public talks are opportunities to share with others analysis you're proud of or research you've performed. They often help open doors to publications, Ph.D. programs, or even employment.

The two most accessible, local venues for such a presentation are the annual Phi Alpha Theta Conference which takes place every spring, and/or the annual Graduate Research and Arts Symposium (GRAS), which is announced every fall and takes place every spring on campus at NMSU.

<https://gsc.nmsu.edu/gsc-activity/gras.html>

Other potential venues include public lectures or conference papers, and national or international conferences. Individual advisors can also suggest additional conferences and speaking opportunities, and will check to confirm that their advisees have fulfilled this requirement before graduating.

### **Oral Defense**

An oral defense – the final Master's examination – is the culmination of the degree program and reflect the accomplishments of the graduate student. Oral examinations are discussions that address questions regarding your thesis or internship/article, as well as your coursework. These typically last about two hours. It is the moment when graduate students present the results of

their thesis in a seminar style discussion of questions and answers with their thesis committee. Their goal is to determine if the student is able to speak knowledgeably about their field of research, both broadly (including coursework) and on their chosen thesis topic. In preparation, remember to keep notes from all of your classes organized and legible, so you can refresh yourself prior to your exam. It is important that, in connection with your oral exam, you review all notes and major concepts studied in any classes taken at the graduate level at NMSU and that you are ready to relate the material covered in your thesis or in your internship article to wider historical events, concepts, and trends. It is perfectly OK to consult your examiners ahead of time and ask whether there is anything in particular you should be concentrating on.

During the oral examination, it is the responsibility of the Dean's Representative to ensure fairness and the maintenance of academic standards. The Dean's Representative will take part in the oral examination and will submit a report to the dean of the graduate school at the conclusion of the examination to confirm that the examination was (or was not) successfully completed.

Students, in consultation with their advisor, must schedule their oral examination for a date *at least one week before* the Graduate School's semester deadline, save in emergency situations. At least two weeks before the oral examination, students should complete the "Masters Final Examination Form" on the Graduate School Forms website and begin circulating it. The form must arrive at the Graduate School ten days before the exam. Oral examinations in the Department of History are generally not open to the public, to family members, or to anyone outside the committee. Public History oral exams contain a public component at the beginning of the exam, which includes an opportunity for questions, but attendees will be asked to leave during the committee-only portion of the exam.

### **Writing a Thesis**

Your thesis should be about 100 pages in length, with roughly five chapters totaling 20 pages each. This paper cannot be merely a summary of previous research by other scholars, but must be your unique contribution founded on your own research of primary sources. The introduction usually contains a review of historical literature on the topic (see Historiographical Paper below), which explains to the reader what other historians have written about the topic, so that they can see more clearly the merit of your contribution. Students can find recently accepted theses, if they would like to look at some examples, in the departmental office.

### **Funding**

In addition to financial aid, there are several options to help pay for your continuing education while at NMSU. Contact the Director of Graduate Studies with questions or to apply for any of the following opportunities.

## **Graduate Assistantships**

Graduate Assistants (GAs) are basically professors' apprentices. Whether making photocopies, grading undergraduate assignments, or even substituting for an absent professor, GAs typically work a maximum of 20 hours per week and are paid accordingly.

The positions are limited and therefore competitive. GAships are awarded yearly and interested students should indicate on their application if they are interested in receiving one. The Graduate Committee awards GAships based on their estimation of applicants' potential to speak articulately to and interact professionally with an English-speaking undergraduate audience, their potential ability as graders, and their organizational capacity to manage undergraduate courses. Graduate students will establish, together with the instructors to whom they are assigned, how often they will meet with the instructor and what their exact tasks and assignments will be, since the work assigned to graduate students varies considerably by instructor. **Assistantships can last a maximum of four semesters**, which can be continuous or not. Not all will last this long, and positions may not be renewed because of unsatisfactory work, including unprofessional behavior or the inability to complete the tasks assigned by the instructor in a satisfactory and timely fashion. The Director of Graduate Studies will inform GAs at the end of every semester in writing/by email if their GA status is continuing or ending.

GAs are assigned shared office space with other GAs, and these offices have shared computers. GA positions come with an in-state tuition waiver (meaning, you pay in-state, as opposed to out-of-state, tuition), as long as (1) the student maintains **full-time status** (9 credits per semester); and (2) you maintain a **3.0 GPA**.

For more information about obtaining in-state tuition, see University Student Records:

<https://records.nmsu.edu/>

Students may hold a GAship for **a total of four semesters**. These four semesters do not have to be consecutive. Therefore, if you plan to take more than two years to complete your degree, you may decide to take time off from your GAship and then return to it. GAships cannot be renewed after four semesters.

## **Additional Funding**

Fellowships and grants are posted and announced on the bulletin boards outside of the History Department office and also on the **hisgrad** listserve. For tips on additional funding, see the Graduate School Awards page, and the Fellowships and Grants information listed there:

<https://gradschool.nmsu.edu/scholarships-and-tuition/awards-and-funding.html>



To be eligible for scholarships, all graduate students should sign up to the Scholar Dollar\$ Program, as soon as they enroll in the MA program:

<https://scholarships.nmsu.edu/>

### **Awards**

#### **Joan Jensen Award**

This award grants a student \$200 for research, either towards a M.A. thesis or Public History internship thesis.

#### **Monroe Billington Award for Best Thesis**

This is an endowment set up by the late Monroe Billington, who was a department professor, to recognize the best graduate thesis each year.

#### **Steele-Jones Fellowships**

The Steele-Jones Fellowship is awarded once a year, typically to meritorious students who do not hold a GAship. The amount of the fellowship varies per year, but is typically around \$1800. *It does not waive out-of-state tuition.* The Department of History's Graduate Committee, serving in the role of awards committee for graduate students, will select Steele-Jones Fellows.

#### **Edward and Lydie Thiery Hull Travel Awards**

Hull Travel Awards, ranging up to \$1000, can be used for any academic purpose, including assistance for scholarly travel. The Committee will solicit applications for Hull Travel Awards each semester in October and March and will meet each semester to discuss potential awards.

The Graduate Committee will periodically review these award criteria, and may make recommendations to the department regarding potential changes in the criteria. The committee and department will always be guided by Lydie Hull's mandate that the Hull funds be used solely for the benefit of graduate students in History.

### **Arts and Sciences/Graduate School Graduate Student Travel Grants**

The College of Arts and Sciences will award competitive travel grants for graduate students to attend conferences, meetings, workshops, or external collaborations. Awards may range from \$500 to \$1,000. The deadline for this application is usually at the beginning of February. For the most up-to-date information, see

<https://eltnmsu.sharepoint.com/sites/ASResearchResources/SitePages/Travel-Award-Information.aspx>

The Graduate School and the Graduate Student Council (GSC) also offer matching funds to graduate students presenting conference papers, workshop attendance, and other research-related activities. See below for more:

<https://gsc.nmsu.edu/finance/funding.html>

### **Staying Connected**

The best way to keep informed of all the happenings around the department is to make sure your email address is on the **hisgrad** listserve. Check with Dana Barksdale to make sure that it is. Once subscribed, you can also post your own announcements to the list at [histgrad@nmsu.edu](mailto:histgrad@nmsu.edu).

Each new and current full-time graduate student has a mailbox in the History Department. It is located in **Breland 238**. You'll also want to make sure that Dana has your current address, NMSU email, and phone and/or cell number on file in case anyone in the department needs to contact you.

### **STAR Reports and Transcripts**

Students may review their transcripts, at any time, by checking their **STAR** (Student Academic Requirements) report, which details how many credits students have accrued, how many are in progress, and how many remain. Students can consult their STAR reports independently, whenever they choose, or together with their advisor:

<https://degreeaudit.nmsu.edu/>

Unofficial transcripts can be viewed by going to your MyNMSU page, clicking "Student," and clicking "Unofficial Transcript / Academic History" under the "Student" heading.

<https://my.nmsu.edu/>

### **Transferring Credit**

Students are responsible for any requests for transfers of credit. The transfer of credit form is available here:

<https://apply.nmsu.edu/register/?id=c9027f3b-b4bf-43cf-88de-ed459cd31e3f>

Students usually discuss the transferable courses with an advisor, prepare a matrix of what courses transfer, noting where these courses were taken, what their final grade in these courses was, and what courses they can directly or feasibly replace at NMSU. Students bring this matrix and the above form to the Graduate Student Services Office. Students may not replace any of the four core courses (thematic reading seminars, 594, 596, AND 598) with any courses from another institution. Students may transfer up to 6 credits of coursework from another institution towards their MA in history at NMSU.

In addition, prior to being admitted into the graduate program in history, students may take up to three graduate-level courses at NMSU that will count towards their MA. Feel free to contact Cathy Robinson in Graduate Student Services (575-646-2152) for additional questions about transferring credit or counting credits earned prior to admission.

More information about transferring credit can be found here:

[https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/nmsu/graduate-school/graduate-school\\_transfercredittext.pdf](https://catalogs.nmsu.edu/nmsu/graduate-school/graduate-school_transfercredittext.pdf)

### **Conflict Resolution**

If at any time during a student's progress towards their degree there is a need for conflict resolution, either between a graduate student and his or her thesis advisor, committee member, or instructor, the initial task of conflict resolution will reside with the Department Head. Graduate students who wish to appeal any part of their evaluations, either for their work as students or as Graduate Assistants, may do so in writing to the Department Head of the Department of History. The Department Head represents the first venue in conflict resolution and will listen to grievances and seek resolution in a timely fashion and, if necessary, follow procedures to advance the conflict in question to the Dean of the Graduate School if additional appeals are necessary.

### **Becoming a Historian**

#### **Languages**

While mastering a second, or third, language isn't required of graduate students at NMSU, it's a good idea to make it a personal goal. Many Ph.D. programs require mastery of languages related to your field of study, and an early start on one can really help out. However, even if your future Ph.D. program doesn't require an additional language, you'll find that your research skills are greatly augmented by having one in your tool belt.

#### **Careers in History**

There's much more to history than just teaching it or learning it, as you'll soon find. Check out these websites to see all the various directions your degree might take you.

For more, see the American Historical Association's "Careers for History Majors", whose content equally applies to graduate students:

<https://www.historians.org/resource/careers-for-history-majors/>

### **Developing Skills**

Always be on the lookout for additional opportunities or classes that can teach you how to conduct oral histories, how to edit primary source collections, how to process archives, and even how to get involved in historic preservation and museum work. If you're a thesis track student, try taking a few Public History courses to gain additional skills. Students in both tracks should always keep an eye on the hisgrad listings for internship or volunteer opportunities at museums, archives, or other related centers.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

This is your academic résumé and you should begin to develop it, with your advisor's help, when you begin your studies at NMSU. It consists of your academic record of employment, papers written, articles published, lectures delivered, conferences attended, and outside activities in the community. Update it on a regular basis so you will have it ready to distribute for grants, fellowships, internships and employment.

## **Resources for Research**

### **Campus Libraries and Interlibrary Loan (ILL)**

NMSU has two on-campus libraries. At the beginning of each semester they offer orientations to their services and we recommend you attend one or more of these.

You should also plan on becoming familiar with the Interlibrary Loan System soon after starting your first semester. When the libraries lack the materials you need, on the shelves or online, ILL becomes a partner in your research. For older materials, you can also consult Special Collections as they sometimes have non-circulating copies you can view.

### **Using ILL**

To access ILL, go to <https://lib.nmsu.edu/>. Then click on "INTERLIBRARY LOAN - REQUEST IT!" You will need to register with NMSU's ILL system, ILLiad, using your email login and password.

For articles, most search engines (like ArticleFirst) have a button, "Request It." Click it and fill out the necessary data. Articles typically arrive over email and take about three to seven days, on average.

For books, both the NMSU library catalog and the Worldcat database also have Request It! buttons on their listings. If you don't go through these catalogs, you will need to go to the Request It! site and enter information on a form (author, title, place of publication, publisher and, if possible, ISBN number); you can also go to ILL desk in Zuhl Library off the main lobby. They will help you conduct searches and send you an email letting you know when it has been received. All ILL requests can be picked up at the main desk in Zuhl Library on campus. You can return to the ILL site to check on your account status and/or renew materials. Make sure you do so at least two days prior to its expiration date.

Books, it should be noted, can take much longer to arrive, so be sure to submit your requests well in advance of the research paper's due date.

### **Historical Abstracts/America: History and Life**

These are tremendous bibliographies for historians whose research requires deeper investigation than the library catalog can provide. They collect books, book reviews, and journal articles dealing with all possible historical topics from prehistory to the present. There are also direct links to full-text versions of articles. Historical Abstracts deals with research on non-American topics: it's probably obvious to you what America: History and Life covers. You can access both through NMSU Libraries' alphabetical catalog of available databases:

<https://nmsu.libguides.com/az/databases>

Note: these, like all databases, are a little fiddly. Be prepared to spend some time fussing with them to make the search engines do what you want.

### **WorldCat**

WorldCat stands for World Catalog and is just that: the library of tomorrow. This is a way to access every online catalog in the nation. Through this search engine you can find sundry forms of media on just about every topic imaginable. You can access WorldCat off the [lib.nmsu.edu](http://lib.nmsu.edu) website by clicking "Article Databases," and selecting the link off the submenu that follows. Remember that you will likely need to use the ILL system to acquire any resources found there.

### **NMSU Archives & Special Collections**

Branson Library contains two tremendous resources for historians: the **Rio Grande Historical Collections (RGHC)** and **Special Collections**. Branson Library is located on the pedestrian mall on campus.

The Rio Grande Historical Collections at New Mexico State University act as a repository for non-current university records and for manuscripts and personal papers documenting the cultural heritage and history of New Mexico and the Southwest. RGHC acquires, preserves, and makes available for research, records of organizations, personal papers, and other unpublished materials relating to New Mexico and the adjacent Spanish Borderlands. Materials from other areas also are accepted providing they generally support the research needs of students and faculty of NMSU. It is located on the fourth floor and is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. There are no weekend hours.



More information can be found here:

<https://lib.nmsu.edu/archives/rghc.html>

Special Collections, located on the second floor, contains rare maps, books and manuscripts which can be viewed by appointment or from 1:00–4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can view the archives finding aids online through the Library site:

<https://lib.nmsu.edu/archives/>

## **Overview of Assignments for Historians**

Depending on your undergraduate experience, your graduate experience may introduce you to several new types of assignments. Even familiar assignments may have changed their nature since you last dealt with them. While individual instructors are the final arbiters of expectations, refer to the following list of general definitions as a guide anytime you're not quite clear about what is expected of you.

### **Book Reviews or Précis**

The books you will be reading in most of your classes have all been read and analyzed by your professors, so remember: they don't need a summary of what the book was about. (Imagine that you have a favorite movie you've seen twenty times. You take your good friends to see it, and afterwards you go out for coffee and discussion. You've been dying to know how they felt about it, and you finally ask them. Instead of analyzing it with you, they all just systematically recount the events of the film. Would you be disappointed? So would your professors.)

Be sure to mention what the author's primary objectives/arguments seem to be in these initial paragraphs. After this *brief* summary, you should break down the author's arguments into small, easily digestible portions. Did the evidence cited support or contradict the author's conclusions? Did they fail to mention significant incidents or rely too heavily on questionable evidence? Are their conclusions logical (If A=B, and B=C, then A=C) or illogical (All A are B, therefore all B are A). What kinds of sources were used? What was the author's intended audience?

### **Research Papers**

Research papers are the foundations of theses, which in turn are the foundations of dissertations, which in turn are the foundations of books. At the heart of any genuine research material are *primary* sources.

- ◇ Primary sources are the actual records from which we historians derive history. Newspaper articles, journals, diaries, oral histories, photographs, court records, and census reports are examples of primary sources. They are the artifacts and vestiges of a time, event, or place produced by eyewitnesses.
- ◇ Secondary sources are *interpretations* of primary sources, such as history books, articles, or documentaries.

Excellent research papers need both kinds of sources, balanced throughout the argument. While secondary sources are always helpful to show how scholarly minds have interpreted historical events, primary sources are absolutely essential in research papers in order for you to form your own arguments about history that are not dependent on other's research. A good research paper will not only demonstrate independent research, but also an appreciation of historical context and historiography—the flow of scholarly interpretation over time.

### **Historiography Papers**

During your first semester, you may be required to write historiography papers, especially in *The Craft of History* (HIST 598). Don't be scared by its syllables. *Historiography papers are analyses of the way that history has been written on a particular topic during a particular time period.* For example, a historiographical paper on Lewis and Clark would begin by examining 19th Century histories about the expedition. What was important to the authors at the time? What was their view of Lewis and Clark? Gradually, it would work its way up through the 20th Century to the present, asking questions about how historians have represented Lewis and Clark during different generations. Is the 19th Century Lewis a different man than the 20th Century Lewis? If so, how and why?

### **Annotated Bibliographies**

Annotations require work, and lots of it. Many students, when given the choice between writing a twenty-page paper or putting together an annotated bibliography, choose the latter under the false impression that a bibliography won't require as much blood, sweat, and tears. Not so. Imagine doing thirty-five one-page book reviews, back-to-back.

Annotated bibliographies typically begin with a four-to-eight-page prospectus, which serves as a historiographical roadmap for the bibliography. Let's take for our example the Trail of Tears. The prospectus would first briefly outline the incident to familiarize readers with the topic, and then discuss at length how historians have grappled with it over time. Finally, the prospectus sets out several questions that the author seeks to answer in the bibliography. Have historians provided a more or less sympathetic portrait of the Cherokee over time? How did popular conception of the incident change over time, and what do these changes tell us about the eras in which they were written?

The general purpose of annotations is to give future scholars concise sneak-previews of books written about a particular topic. Imagine you're doing a research paper on the Trail of Tears. How helpful would this be? In fact, many theses begin with an annotated bibliography, as a foundation for beginning the actual research. Again, though, mere summaries need not apply.

Your annotations should also break down the author's arguments and/or biases in such a fashion that would answer the questions set out in your prospectus, and address the changing paradigms of the different time periods in which they were written. Likewise, your prospectus should reflect the variety of arguments you're examining, and reveal the flow (or historiography) of the various arguments over time and place. Annotated bibliographies

consequently become an intense balancing act between prospectus goals and bibliographical realities. Equilibrium is the goal.

### **General Wisdom about Writing Graduate Papers**

There is one word that is of paramount importance when writing *anything* from this point forward: *argument*. Historical writing is not the art of reciting facts; it is the art of interpreting the past.

Remember to ask your professor for sample papers from previous grade A-students. They often keep a handful of these on hand to show you exactly what kind of format, presentation, composition, and argumentation they are looking for in your projects. If you have fun writing it, your professors will likely have fun reading it. Conversely, if it's boring for you to write, it will probably be boring for them to read. Nobody likes a boring paper, so please don't make your professors read more than they already have to. Find the fine line between writing professionally and just being you. Remember, you can write with authority *and* a sense of humor. Try to find the irony, the absurdity, and the humanity in all of your subjects. History itself is full of these things, and the best analyses aren't afraid to address them.

Second-to-last if your professor offers to review a working draft, take advantage of it, especially early in your graduate program. Also feel free to share your paper with other students in the class before submitting the final draft. It always helps to get as many opinions as possible before the red pen comes out.

### **Regarding plagiarism: *Don't***

If for some deplorable reason you find yourself pilfering someone else's work, know that the professors here are tremendously skilled at rooting out such deception, and you will ultimately pay the price with your career and/or reputation. In all honesty, however, if you even need this stern warning, you're in the wrong field; and by field I mean academic life generally. That being said, remember that you, too, can be the victim of plagiarism. This is a highly competitive field, and unique research can be somewhat hard to come by. Keep a sharp eye out for those who might claim your research and/or writing as their own. Should you feel you might be the victim of plagiarism, speak with your advisor about the situation.

## **Student Organizations**

### **NMSU History Club**

The NMSU History Club operates both at the student and the professional level, for graduate and undergraduate students, and seeks to promote the study of history by encouraging research, good teaching, publication, and scholarly exchange.

So what does the NMSU History Club do during the academic year? It holds monthly meetings and fundraisers to help students attend conferences. It often co-sponsors a graduate



symposium in the spring with University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and presents on-campus symposia and lectures of current interest during each semester.

We encourage all graduate students to participate in the history club. Feel free to attend the first meeting of the semester to meet everyone and find out what is on the schedule. Contact the graduate advisor to learn more about its upcoming activities.

### **Graduate Student Council (GSC)**

This on-campus organization meets prior to each ASNMSU (student government) meeting to vote on upcoming bills and resolutions that affect graduate students at NMSU. It is important for History graduate students to attend these as every hour spent in GSC meetings or activities counts for monies received for travel to conferences, resource materials in the department, etc. More information can be found on the GSC webpage:

<https://gsc.nmsu.edu>

Each spring, the GSC sponsors the Graduate Research Arts Symposium (GRAS) on campus. It gives graduate students an opportunity to present papers or posters for feedback and prize money. Announcements of meetings are posted on the hisgrad listserve.

### **Taking a Leave of Absence/Continuous Enrollment**

Students working on advanced degrees who plan an interruption in studies for a calendar year should address a request for leave of absence through their department head, alerting the dean of the Graduate School. The student must submit a formal letter through their department head to the Dean of the Graduate School. Email will not be accepted. The request should include the beginning date and the anticipated ending date for the period of absence. A graduate student on leave of absence will be expected not to use university facilities and place no demands upon the university faculty and staff, and, therefore will pay no fees. Time spent in leave-of-absence status will not be counted toward time limits.

A graduate student who fails to register for one calendar year without obtaining a leave of absence from the Graduate School will be considered withdrawn from the university and will need to reapply and be readmitted, both to the Graduate School and the Department of History.

## **Department Faculty and Staff**

### **Faculty Specialties & Contact Info**

All the information you're likely to need about History Department faculty can be found on their respective webpages. See the master directory to navigate.

<https://history.nmsu.edu/people/faculty.html>

### **Department Office**

Dana Barksdale, Administrative Assistant  
575-646-4601      [dbarks@nmsu.edu](mailto:dbarks@nmsu.edu)