



MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY,  
History Education Concentration



GRADUATE HANDBOOK, MA HISTORY, History Education Concentration  
Department of History  
Middle Tennessee State University  
Revised February 1, 2024

# The Master of Arts in History, History Education Concentration at MTSU

Welcome to History Graduate Studies at MTSU! Congratulations on your admission into our community of scholars. You've made a great choice in joining us here and we're glad to have you on board.

You're about to embark upon an intense but rewarding scholarly journey. Consider this handbook your map. It's designed to give you an overview of important information you'll need to navigate your MA program. With help from your advisors, this handbook will keep you on track. It's comprised of three sections:

1. Program Requirements for both thesis and non-thesis students
2. Information about registration, maintaining good academic standing, graduation, and other need-to-know topics
3. Required departmental forms you'll need to complete at various stages of your program

We've tried to keep it short and sweet in this handbook. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the History Graduate Director, Dr. Ashley Riley Sousa at [ashley.rileysousa@mtsu.edu](mailto:ashley.rileysousa@mtsu.edu) or the History Education Concentration advisor, Dr. Andrew Polk at [andrew.polk@mtsu.edu](mailto:andrew.polk@mtsu.edu).

For questions about financial aid, contact the MT One Stop at 615-898-2111 or [mtonestop@mtsu.edu](mailto:mtonestop@mtsu.edu).

We're thrilled to begin this journey with you!

Best Wishes,



Dr. Ashley Riley Sousa  
Graduate Director

## Program Requirements

MA students can choose either the non-thesis or thesis option for their degree plans. The thesis option requires students to research, write, and defend a thesis, while the non-thesis option requires students to pass comprehensive written and oral exams and take at least one research seminar course as part of their coursework.

### Core Courses

All students seeking a Master of Arts degree from the History Department will take the same set of core courses. They are designed to introduce essential concepts and methods in scholarship as practiced by professional historians.

#### **History 6010: Historiography**

Students are advised to take HIST 6010 during the first semester of enrollment in the graduate program.

#### **History 6020: Historical Research Methods**

Students are advised to take History 6020 during their second semester of enrollment in the graduate program.

### Non-Thesis Option

Students who are pursuing the Non-Thesis Option choose a major field but not an advisor. The Graduate Director and History Education Concentration advisor will serve as the non-thesis advisor for these students and help prepare non-thesis students for their comprehensive exams.

5000-level courses do not count towards a graduate degree. Students may count no more than three hours of Selected Studies courses (6910 or 6920) toward their degree.

#### **Coursework—Non-Thesis Option**

Non-thesis students will take 27 hours from the Department's graduate course offerings, in addition to the two core courses.

- Major Field: 15 hours of courses must be completed in the major field (American or European History). 3 of these hours MUST be a graduate research seminar in the student's major field
- Education Electives: 12 hours of courses from the College of Education chosen in consultation with the Concentration advisor.
- Research Seminar Elective: 3 hours of coursework must be taken in a graduate research seminar in any field.

#### **Comprehensive Examinations for Non-Thesis Option**

In the last semester of coursework, non-thesis students will take written and oral comprehensive exams. The comprehensive exam is intended to review the entire history component of the student's graduate career. Non-thesis students should therefore save

notes, syllabi, papers, and other class materials from each class that they take so that they may use this material to study. They should be able to describe and analyze the arguments and evidence from each book or article they have read. In addition, they should be able to discuss how each historical work fits into a larger body of historiography. For more information about scheduling, format, questions, and evaluation of comprehensive exams, please consult the Comps Handbook.

### **Thesis Option**

Students pursuing the Thesis Option must choose their major field within the first 12 hours of graduate history coursework, preferably during the first semester.

The History Department offers two major fields to graduate students pursuing an M.A. in History with a History Major (Traditional MA): American History and European History. Students will take most of their coursework in their major field (see "Coursework" below).

The major field is the general area of intellectual and research interest on which the MA thesis will focus. The major field advisor will serve as director of the thesis. Students may change their major field advisor if necessary. Thesis students do not take comprehensive exams.

5000-level courses do not count towards a graduate degree. Students may count no more than three hours of Selected Studies courses (6910 or 6920) toward their degree.

### **Coursework—Thesis Option**

Beyond the two core History courses, students who write a thesis will choose 21 hours of courses from the History Department's graduate course offerings.

- Major Field: 12 hours of courses must be completed in the major field (American or European History).
- Education Electives: 12 hours of courses from the College of Education chosen in consultation with the Concentration advisor.
- Thesis Option Elective: 3 hours of courses, chosen in consultation with the student's advisor.

### **The Thesis**

To complete the Thesis Option for the History MA, History Education Concentration, graduate students must propose, write, defend, and submit a thesis that demonstrates their ability to research, interpret, and analyze primary sources and contextualize their argument in the relevant literature from their field. For more information about the thesis process and guidelines, please consult the Thesis Handbook.

## **More Information....**

### **Registering for Classes**

Before you can register for classes you must meet with the Graduate Director and History Education Concentration advisor to plan your course of study. You'll do this before each registration period to make sure you're on track to graduate and don't run afoul of financial aid regulations or other potential pitfalls. Once you've chosen your classes in consultation with the Graduate Director and Concentration advisor, the Graduate Administrative Assistant will hold your spot in your chosen classes and notify you when you'll be permitted to register.

### **Distance Learning Policy**

Students are expected to be present on campus for most of their degree program. However, a limited number of courses offered by the department have a remote instruction option. Enrollment in these courses will only be permitted in special circumstances. Students wishing to take a course in this manner must have permission of both the instructor and Director of Graduate Studies. The College of Education offers online options.

### **Maintaining Satisfactory Progress**

MA students must complete their degrees within six years (12 semesters) of entering the program. The History Department policies and procedures for assuring that graduate students maintain satisfactory progress toward the completion of degree requirements are as follows:

#### **Grade Requirements**

M.A. students are expected to make satisfactory progress toward completing degree requirements. The university defines satisfactory progress as maintaining a minimum grade point average of 3.00 in all graduate work completed at MTSU as well as in the major. Six semester hours of C grade (C+, C, or C-) coursework may be applied toward a master's degree, but no grade below C- may be applied toward a degree. All grades are included in calculating the cumulative GPA. Consult the graduate catalog for academic regulations on probation and suspension.

#### **Intervention Committee**

If a student receives a C+ or lower grade in any course used to satisfy M.A. degree requirements, the Graduate Director may create an intervention committee composed of the Graduate Director and the student's thesis committee (or two members of the graduate faculty if the committee has not yet been chosen or if the student is pursuing the Non-Thesis Option). This committee will meet with the student to determine the reasons for the C+ or lower grade and which remedies need to be taken.

#### **Stopping Out**

Students must maintain enrollment in the program until graduation and make progress toward the MA degree. If you are unable to enroll in a particular term (fall or spring) for personal or professional reasons, you must submit a Request to Stop Out (available on the College of Graduate Studies website). The Stop Out option may only be used once. If

you break enrollment without requesting the Stop Out, you will be required to reapply to the program.

## **Graduate Assistantships**

If you have been awarded a graduate assistantship, the Graduate Director will contact you with your GA assignment before the start of the semester. Graduate Assistants will serve either as teaching, research, or administrative assistants. We do our best to match students with assistantship opportunities that match their interests and help their professional development. Please contact the Graduate Director if you have questions about your assignment or applying for an assistantship.

## **Graduation**

This is the best part of your MA program! We hope you'll seriously consider walking in the College of Graduate Studies graduation ceremony at the end of your graduation semester so your advisors and mentors can cheer for you.

### **Intent to Graduate Form**

At the beginning of the semester in which a student intends to graduate, they must submit an Intent to Graduate Form to the College of Graduate Studies. Check the website of the College of Graduate Studies for deadlines.

### **Graduation Ceremony**

Middle Tennessee State University has three graduation ceremonies each academic year – August, December, and May. All details concerning graduation are handled through the College of Graduate Studies. Current graduation information and procedures are available on the College of Graduate Studies website.





## Forms

Graduate education comes with a lot of forms. Some come from the College of Graduate Studies and are available on their website: <https://www.mtsu.edu/graduate/index.php>. Others are forms specific to the History Department and they are included here for your convenience. Below is a breakdown of the most common forms you'll need at each stage in the program. This can be a confusing process, so please reach out to the Graduate Director or your thesis advisor if you have questions.

### College of Graduate Studies Forms

- Revision Form (Thesis)—All History MA students are considered Non-Thesis students upon admission to the program. As soon as you decide to switch to the Thesis Option, fill out the Revision Form online.
- Transfer Equivalency Form (All)—If you want to use a graduate course you took at another institution toward fulfillment of your MTSU History MA degree requirements, you must request this online by using the Transfer Equivalency Form. Please consult with the Graduate Director before submitting the Transfer Equivalency Form.
- Advisory Committee Form (Thesis)—If you are writing a thesis or dissertation, you must submit an Advisory Committee Form online to formally establish your committee and chair. This should be done in the beginning stages of the writing process, before your proposal.
- Intent to Graduate (All)—You will submit an Intent to Graduate Form during the first two weeks of the semester you plan to graduate.
- Graduation Requirement Notification Form (Non-Thesis)—This form is for reporting the results of comprehensive exams for Non-Thesis Option students. Unlike all these other forms, you won't submit this one yourself—the Comprehensive Exams Committee will submit this one for you—but it's good to be aware of it.
- Thesis/Dissertation Approval Form (Thesis)—Once you have successfully completed your defense, submit this form online.
- Publishing Agreement (Thesis)—When you submit your thesis to the College of Graduate Studies (check their website for the submission deadline!) you'll also submit a Publishing Agreement, which grants MTSU the non-exclusive right to archive and preserve your thesis to make it accessible.

### **History Department Forms**

- Thesis Proposal Acceptance Form (Thesis)—Fill this out after your thesis proposal defense and have each committee member sign off on it, then submit it to the Graduate Administrative Assistant.

History Department Use Only

**THESIS PROPOSAL ACCEPTANCE FORM**  
Department of History Middle Tennessee State University

Thesis Title:

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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student M Number \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Director \_\_\_\_\_

Second Reader \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Thesis Completion Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember—always reach out to us here in the History Department  
if you have questions or need help—that’s why we’re here!**

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