

MORRISSEY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

**Graduate Student Handbook**

The Boston College History Department attracts talented students from the United States and around the world. The MA program prepares students for a broad range of careers in public history, education, publishing, and elsewhere. The goal of the PhD program is to produce historians who are both leading scholars and distinguished teachers. While many graduates of the doctoral program become academic historians, the department is committed to assisting students who are interested in positions in university administration, museums, archives, education, research institutes, and historical societies.

**Program Administrators**

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is chair of the Graduate Committee and oversees admissions an2 79c.2 792 reW\*

**Academic Standing:** Students in the BA/MA and MA programs are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5. Students in the PhD program are expected to maintain a 3.7. Students are also expected to make timely progress towards fulfilling all program requirements. The DGS will review all student records at the end of each semester. Students who are not in good standing will meet with the DGS and may be asked to take remedial action or leave the program.

In addition to the GPA requirement, to maintain academic standing, doctoral students must complete a seminar in each of their first two years and receive a minimum grade of B+ in both. Students who do not satisfy this requirement in the first year are placed on academic probation. If they fail to satisfy this requirement in the second year seminar, they will be asked to leave the program. They will be eligible to receive an MA if they successfully complete the MA oral exam.

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Students returning after a Leave of Absence must file a re-admission form with the Associate Dean of GSAS at least six weeks before the start of the semester in which they wish to re-enroll. The Associate Dean will decide on the re-admission application, taking into account the best interests of both the student and the University.

**Academic Integrity:** Students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are expected to maintain high standards of academic integrity. Any student found guilty of cheating or plagiarism is subject to dismissal from GSAS. Cases involving academic integrity will be referred to the dean for adjudication.

### **Certificate in Digital Humanities**

For more information, please contact the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at (301) 405-1234 or visit our website at [www.gsas.gmu.edu](http://www.gsas.gmu.edu).

## **PhD Program**

### **Course Requirements**

Students entering into the Ph.D. program are required to complete 39 credits, 36 of which are taken prior to comprehensive exams. All students in the Ph.D. program are required to pursue two semesters of full-time study during the first year and must, in the course of their studies, complete at least two seminars and at least two colloquia (one in the major and one in a minor area) in addition to the required Introduction to Doctoral Studies.

Only history courses at the 4000 level or above count towards the doctoral requirements. By the end of the third year, PhD students should have completed all 39 credits. After the Dissertation Proposal is signed and filed, students officially enter into doctoral candidacy (informally known as All but Dissertation or ABD).

The typical plan for the first three years of study is:

#### **Year 1**

3 courses/semester

#### **Year 2**

2 courses/semester

#### **Year 3**

2 courses in the fall

Comprehensive Exams in November

Dissertation Seminar in the spring

Dissertation Proposal submitted in May

### **Readings and Research Courses**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the departmental course offerings, but in exceptional circumstances students may benefit from the study of material that is not contained in any course. In such cases, students may arrange a Readings and Research (R&R) course with a faculty member. Such courses may count as colloquia or as seminars but only with prior approval from the faculty member and DGS. For an R&R to count as a seminar, the student should undertake a significant amount of original research and produce a substantial paper. Students need to arrange the schedule of readings, writing assignments, and meetings in consultation with the faculty member with whom they will be studying. Students must fill out an R&R form, which must be approved by the faculty member and the DGS.

### **Cross-Registering**

Students can take up to three courses outside of the department. At Bost



study may be reviewed, evaluated and revised whenever necessary. However, changes must be approved by the faculty advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

**Fields of Study**

prepare a reading list for each area. Students are advised to constitute their orals committee by the end of their second year so that they can prepare for orals during the summer before their third year. Each student is responsible for setting an exam date and time in consultation with the faculty examiners. After doing this, students should contact the GPA who will reserve a room and prepare the necessary paperwork. The exam itself will last two hours, and each professor will have a chance to ask a number of questions regarding their field.

Upon completion of the oral comprehensive exam, students are eligible to receive an MA degree. This degree may be either terminal for students who choose not to complete the PhD or supplemental for those who continue to the dissertation. Students interested in receiving an MA should complete the Master's Degree Option Form and submit it to the GPA (<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/schools/mcas/gsas/pdf/Master%20Degree%20Option.pdf>).

### **MA Students Entering the PhD Program**

Students admitted into the doctoral program after completing an MA at BC enter as either second or third year doctoral students. The student must make the decision on status in consultation with the DGS and the advisor. All such students must take Introduction to Doctoral Studies in the fall of their first year in the doctoral program. Other coursework will be devoted to preparing fields for the comprehensive exam. Although these students will have taken an MA exam, they must take doctoral exams in three fields with three examining professors. They must also take any additional language exams required prior to the oral comprehensive exam.

### **The Dissertation Proposal**

In the spring semester of the third year, students take the Dissertation Seminar in which they write their dissertation proposal. Proposals must be completed by the end of the semester following the passing of comprehensive exams and filed with the department. During the dissertation seminar, students will ask three faculty members to serve on their dissertation committees. Two must be from Boston College; the chair must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the departmental faculty. Committee composition is subject to departmental approval.

## **Doctoral Candidacy**

After a student has completed all coursework, passed all language exams and the oral comprehensive exam, and has received approval for the dissertation proposal, the student is admitted to doctoral candidacy.

## **The Dissertation**

Upon admission to doctoral candidacy, students research and write their dissertation, which is an original contribution to knowledge based on extensive primary and secondary research. The completed dissertation must be defended at a public oral defense and approved by the dissertation committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

## **Graduation Deadlines**

Boston College offers graduation dates in August, December, and May for doctoral students. To receive the degree in August, all requirements must be fulfilled by August 1. To graduate in December, the deadline is December 1. For May, the deadline is April 1. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will grant extensions under exceptional circumstances, but in general a student who misses a deadline must wait until the next graduation date to receive the degree.

## **Teaching Assistants**

PhD students serve as TAs in the second, third, and fifth years in the program. Teaching Assistant duties include leading small discussion groups for undergraduate students who are enrolled in large courses, chiefly in the university core curriculum, grading assignments and exams, and holding office hours for students. TAs must stay in regular contact with their students and with the faculty with whom they are working. TAs are required to abide by all university policies and procedures. Please visit the Center for Teaching Excellence site for important resources for TAs (<http://cteresources.bc.edu/documentation/new-instructor-resources/tatf-faqs/>).

## **Funding**

All PhD students receive funding for five years, contingent upon satisfactory academic standing and satisfactory teaching. Service stipends are offered for students serving as Teaching Assistants and





## **MA Program**

### **Course Requirements**

M.A. students are required to take a total of 30 credits or 10 courses. Students are required to take at least one colloquium and one seminar, plus a minimum of 12 credits of coursework. In order to receive credit for the seminar, students must receive a minimum grade of B. Classes with a number above HIST4000 count toward the degree. Students are not allowed to complete the M.A. program by attending only summer sessions; at least four courses (12 credits) must be taken during the regular academic year.

All candidates for the M.A. in History are encouraged to pursue an individual course of study developed in conjunction with their faculty advisor and selected by the student during the first year in the program. In making their selection of courses and seminars, students are urged to widen their chronological and cultural horizons while deepening and specifying one special area of concentration.

### **Fields of Study**

Students must choose a major and minor field. As many as seven courses (21 credits) can be taken in the major field. The M.A. degree in History is offered with concentrations in United States, early modern European, modern European (including British/Irish/British Empire) Asian, and Middle Eastern history. We also offer coursework in African and Latin American history.

The minor field is made up of a minimum of three courses (nine credits), at least one of which must be at the HIST7000 level or above. Minor fields can be chosen from the same list of major fields or can be thematic or topical. Such fields, for example, could include social or labor history; or could concern race, gender, or sexuality in the writing of history. Minor fields must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

In addition to the departmental offerings, it is possible to do minor fields in archival management and in cultural heritage/public history through the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences at Simmons University. Note: for these minor fields two courses are sufficient, not the three as is the case with minor fields



## **Comprehensive Exercises**

Students must complete a comprehensive exercise by April 1 of the second year of study. Students can choose to take an oral examination or write a thesis. Prior to the end of the first year of study, students must indicate their choice as well as their fields and advisors.

An oral comprehensive exam is conducted in the major and minor areas.

A 6-credit thesis in the final year in the program culminates in an oral defense of the thesis before a committee of two faculty members. The thesis should be an original piece of research, in the realm of publishable quality and roughly article-length (60-100 pages) and must be submitted to the university in accordance with the graduate school policies (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/thesis-checklist.html>).

## **Graduation Deadlines**

Boston College offers graduation dates in August, December, and May for graduate students. To receive the degree in August, all requirements must be fulfilled by August 1. To graduate in December, the deadline is December 1 and in May, the deadline is April 1. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will grant extensions under exceptional circumstances, but in general a student who misses a deadline must wait until the next graduation date to receive the degree.

## **BA/MA Program**

The BA/MA Program allows selected students to earn both a BA and an MA in History in 5 years. Students may carry in up to 4 history courses taken as an undergraduate toward their MA degree: any 2 upper-division undergraduate courses, plus 2 more courses taken for graduate credit in the senior year. Students in the BA/MA program must meet all the specific course requirements for the undergraduate

