

Graduate Student Handbook



**History Area
Texas A&M University-
Corpus Christi**

Welcome

Everyone who loves history soon learns to respect the past on its own terms: the powerful contrasts, the subtle complexities, the contingent turn of events, and the sheer depth of human society. Professional historians use direct evidence, clear writing, and the work of other scholars to offer original interpretations that make sense of these events. As graduate students in history, you will do the same. The Masters degree in History is structured to introduce students to these three critical tasks. In your coursework and independent studies you will examine historical evidence with your own eyes, you will communicate your ideas using clear and precise language, and you will interpret and rely upon the work of other scholars in your field. In the end, your skills will allow you to articulate and defend your own original interpretation of the past.

The history faculty at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi (A&M-CC) are committed to these goals and to the students enrolled in the History Masters program. Our degree plan offers a wide variety of graduate courses, provides a roadmap for students to follow to graduation and professional opportunities in history, and helps students to understand the past on its own terms

The purpose of this document is to assist those interested in applying for, funding, and successfully completing a Masters degree in History at A&M-CC. The handbook is designed to answer basic yet important questions about the application process, degree requirements, competencies, and final completion of a Masters degree in History. The document is divided into three sections.

- Section One contains information about how to apply to the graduate program, how your application will be evaluated, and the various funding opportunities available for your graduate education.
- Section Two contains a practical description of the degree requirements and the specific worksheets needed to complete your chosen degree path.
- Section Three explains the competencies you will develop in History graduate courses and the ways that graduate students can become more active and professionally engaged in their field.

This document is intended as a useful guide to get started or to assess your progress. The provisions of this document do not constitute a contract, expressed or implied, between any applicant, student or faculty member of A&M-CC or the Texas A&M University System. The document is for informational purposes only. For the most current information and all forms you will need to complete your application, registration, and funding requests, please see the A&M-CC Graduate Catalog.

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Section 1: Applying for the History Graduate Program



Graduate Studies at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is a rapidly growing urban university located on the South Texas Gulf Coast. The University focuses on the higher educational needs of South Texas, the state, and on coastal and urban issues. The Graduate programs prepare students for leadership roles in the future development of the region and the state through formal instruction, research and other forms of scholarly activity. The University emphasizes endeavors that focus on solving problems related to the South Texas urban and coastal region. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is committed to the pursuit of excellence in instruction, research, other forms of scholarly activity, and public service. Consistent with this commitment, the University seeks to identify, recruit and retain students who have high potential for academic success, especially those from groups who historically have been under-represented in higher education. To these ends, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi recruits and supports students, faculty and staff who share its broad purpose and commitment to excellence.

Graduate Studies in History

This program aims to provide students with advanced knowledge and skills in the content, analytical theories, research methods, and public presentation of history. Students have an opportunity to study topics in European, Latin American, and United States history. The program also encourages students to involve themselves with historical activities and institutions in the metropolitan area.

The MA in History will benefit secondary school teachers seeking to enhance their professional skills and standing. It will also benefit students planning careers in academia, public history, or the professions.

History Area Faculty

[Dr. David Blanke](#): Frantz Associate Professor of History; Ph.D., Loyola University Chicago. U.S. Urban, Social, and Cultural History.

[Dr. Patrick Carroll](#): Professor of History; Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin. Latin America, Mexico, U.S. History.

[Dr. Peter Moore](#): Assistant Professor of History; Ph.D., University of Georgia. Early America, The American South, U.S. Religious History.

[Dr. Laura Muñoz](#) : Assistant Professor of History; Ph.D., Arizona State University. Women's History, Mexican American History, History of Education.

[Dr. Anthony Quiroz](#): Professor of History; Ph.D., University of Iowa. Mexican American History, American Labor History, Twentieth Century U.S. Politics.

[Dr. Sandrine Sanos](#) : Assistant Professor of History; Ph.D., Rutgers University. European History, Women's History, Modern France.

[Dr. Robert Wooster](#): Professor of History; Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin. U.S. Military History, Texas History, Civil War and Reconstruction.

For more information on the history area, the history faculty, and specific faculty websites, please see the area website at: <http://history.tamucc.edu>

Important Contacts

In the History Area:

History Graduate Program Coordinator: Dr. Peter Moore
Office Location: FC 279 — Phone: (361) 825-3495
Email: peter.moore@tamucc.edu or gradhistory@tamucc.edu

History Area Chair: Dr. Anthony Quiroz
Office Location: FC 284 — Phone: (361) 825-5985
Email: anthony.quiroz@tamucc.edu

Area Administrative Assistant: Ms. Marti Beck
Office Location: FC 270C — Phone: (361) 825-5783
Email: marti.beck@tamucc.edu

In the Graduate School:

Graduate Studies Coordinator: Ms. Sandra Kureska
Office Phone: (361) 825-3883
Email: sandra.kureska@tamucc.edu

Admissions Support: Ms. Theresa Cortinas
Office Phone: (361) 825-3881
Email: theresa.cortinas@tamucc.edu

Graduate Admissions & Records Coordinator: Ms. Josie Ramirez
Office Phone: (361) 825 - 3884
Email: Josie.Ramirez@tamucc.edu

Graduate Admissions Counselor: Ms. Maria Martinez
Office Phone: (361) 825 - 5740
Email: Maria.Martinez@tamucc.edu

Graduate Studies Admissions Department
Office Phone: (361) 825-5740
Email: gradweb@tamucc.edu

Rachelle Stanley, Graduate Advisor
Office Phone: (361) 825-5896
Email: rachelle.stanley@tamucc.edu

Additional Assistance:

Student Services - Includes issues such as on-campus housing, career placement, assisting students with disabilities, recreational sports, and student counseling.
Office Phone: (361) 825-2612

The Application Process

Applying for graduate studies in history involves two distinct processes.

- The first requires students to complete their formal application through the graduate school of A&M-CC.
- The second occurs in the history area, but begins only after the completed application is forwarded to the history area from the graduate school.

In other words, the application process occurs in a series of specific steps. An application is not complete until the Graduate School has received all the appropriate information, fees, transcripts and other required documents.

Students should forward all application materials to:

Office of Graduate Studies and Research
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
Telephone: (361) 825-2177

For more information on applying to the Graduate School, see the A&M-CC Graduate School website: <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu>

Please note that the Graduate School regularly offers a short, free workshop titled “How to get into Grad School.” See their website for scheduling the workshop.

STEP 1: The Basic Requirements

- To be admitted to graduate study, an applicant must hold a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education in the United States (or an equivalent foreign institution).
- To be admitted to the history graduate program, applicants must have completed at least 6 hours of upper-level undergraduate history credits, with a G.P.A. of 3.0 or better. Applicants may be conditionally accepted into the history graduate program with the stipulation that they complete 6 hours of upper-level undergraduate history credits.

STEP 2: Applying to the Graduate School

1. Complete an online, statewide graduate application (the “Texas Common Application Form”) through the following website: <https://www.applytexas.org> [a paper application can be obtained by contacting the Graduate School]
2. Complete payment of current application fees
3. Forward your official transcripts documenting all undergraduate and graduate course work taken at any regionally accredited college or university attended. Official transcripts must be sent directly to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi from the granting institutions. Hand carried or unofficial transcripts cannot be accepted.

STEP 3: Applying to the History Area

Applicants must comply with all university admissions procedures outlined in the graduate catalog in effect at the time of their seeking admission into the program. International students must have their credentials evaluated for their equivalent value according to standard university procedure and meet other admissions requirements specified in the graduate catalog. In addition,

1. Applicants must submit two letters of recommendation, at least one from a professor in your undergraduate major, to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies in History.
2. Applicants must submit a writing sample (minimally seven double-spaced pages in length with proper citations) of previous academic work in history to the Coordinator of Graduate Studies in History.

STEP 4: The Application Review Process

1. Once the graduate school application is complete, the graduate office will forward the entire file to the history graduate program coordinator.
2. A history admissions committee chaired by the Coordinator of Graduate Studies in History, and including two additional tenure-line members of the full-time faculty in history, will review the above materials. Basing their decision upon the information contained in all of the above items, the committee will either:
 - a. Unconditionally admit the student
 - b. Conditionally admit the student (providing a clear statement of the conditions needed to be met), or
 - c. Deny admission.
3. Students with conditional status for one term may accrue no more than 6 hours of graduate credit towards the MA prior to being formally admitted to the program.

Financial Aid

Financial aid can take the form of scholarships and fellowships, assistantships, loans, and employment opportunities through the university and/or College of Liberal Arts. There are many opportunities for financial assistance, and students are strongly advised to aggressively seek out and apply for these sources of funding.

The best place to coordinate your efforts to secure financial aid is through the Office of Student Financial Assistance:

Office of Student Financial Assistance
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412-5772
Telephone: (361) 825-2338
<http://www.tamucc.edu/~faoweb/>
E-Mail: faoweb@tamucc.edu

Scholarships and Fellowships

Scholarships are grants of money used for tuition and/or other specific activities. Those awarded scholarships are not required to financially reimburse the granting institution. All of the forms needed to apply for A&M-CC scholarships are available electronically at <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/scholarships.htm> This website also provides dozens of external opportunities for scholarships.

Fellowships offer financial grants beyond simply tuition. A complete listing of current fellowships and methods of applying are found at, <http://gradschool.tamucc.edu/fellowships.htm> In addition, the following websites provide useful information:

- FinAid: The Smart Students Guide to Financial Aid scholarships <http://www.finaid.org/>
- Guaranteed Scholarships <http://www.guaranteed-scholarships.com/>
- Graduate Fellowships For Minorities Nationwide <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Student/GRFN/list.phtml?category=MINORITIES>

The College of Liberal Arts offers selected academic scholarships for its graduate programs. A PDF application for scholarships through the College of Liberal Arts is available electronically at: <http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~aandh/Graduate%20Scholarship%20for%20Academic%20Year%2006-07%20Application%20form.pdf>

University Core Curriculum Employment

History graduate students are often employed as first-year seminar leaders by the University Core Curriculum Program. In this role, they are assigned one or two sections of first-year seminar, each of which are linked to large lecture courses (many are in history). First-year seminar leaders help students with the work of the large lecture courses and with other issues related to the first-year experience. They also assist in grading duties for the large classes. Training for first-year seminar leaders is required. The graduate student should plan to begin training in the second summer session prior to the Fall of employment. Graduate students interesting in becoming Teaching Assistants in the First-Year Seminar Program should contact the Co-Directors of the University Core Curriculum Program (825-2150) or go to the following website: <http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~uccp/>

Assistantships

Assistantships offer further financial assistance beyond tuition. Class assistants provide support to teaching faculty in large classes; their duties vary in accordance with the needs of the professor to whom they are assigned. They are selected on a combination of seniority and academic performance.

Any student employed as a graduate teaching assistant during a regular semester (fall or spring) must be enrolled for at least 6 hours of coursework in that semester. Summer enrollment is at least 3 hours of coursework during the combined summer terms. Those teaching assistants given full responsibility for a class must have at least 18 hours of graduate work in the field of their teaching responsibilities.

Student Loans

Student loans offer low-interest sums of money used to pay for a variety of expenses, but most typically fees, tuition, books, and other related costs. In applying for loans, students often find other financial aid packages that do not require repayment (such as scholarships, grants, etc.). These opportunities are missed by students who do not apply for them. Students are strongly encouraged to contact the Federal Student Aid program at: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

Section 2: Completing the History Graduate Program



Degree Requirements

The History MA requires students to complete thirty-six (36) hours of graduate coursework (thirty hours for the thesis track, in addition to the foreign language requirement). All students must complete their respective requirements with a 3.0 GPA or better, and can earn no more than one “C” grade in their graduate work.

The History MA requires only two “core courses,” consisting of six (6) semester hours, for all students:

- HIST-5310 which examines historiography, or the ways that professional historians study the past
- HIST-5320 which examines the practical research methods available to professional historians

Beyond these core courses, the History MA allows for thirty (30) supplemental semester hours of coursework (18 for the thesis track). Most students will take all of their graduate courses in history, although the program allows for two (2) non-history courses (6 hours total) upon approval from the student’s primary advisor or the Graduate Program Coordinator. Thesis-track students will also take a maximum of two HIST-5395 (thesis supervision) courses (6 semester hours).

With prior approval of the History Graduate Program Coordinator, up to 6 hours of 4000-level History courses taken for graduate credit may be accepted. Approval must occur before the student enrolls in the 4000-level History course and will require additional course work. Students may transfer up to 12 hours of graduate credit from regionally accredited institutions.

Two Track Exit Requirements

Based on a student’s career objectives, there are two tracks that history graduate students may pursue to complete their degree. Both tracks provide advanced historical content and a comprehensive overview of the research and writing methods used by professional historians. Both tracks require students to identify a primary advisor and, with that advisor, organize an individualized graduate committee. The exam track culminates in a comprehensive exit exam. The thesis track culminates in a written thesis.

By the end of a student’s first academic year (12 semester hours), he or she will identify a graduate advisor. In conjunction with their graduate advisor, each student will determine their preferred track. By the end of a student’s second academic year (24 semester hours), the student and his or her graduate advisor will identify a graduate committee consisting of no less than two tenure-line history faculty.

The exam track is designed for students for whom the M.A. is the final or terminal degree. With the exam track students must pass a written comprehensive examination during the term of expected graduation. The comprehensive exam requires individualized study based upon a student’s historical interest and course preparation. The student’s three graduate committee members will construct the questions from an agreed upon reading list. The student’s graduate advisor will administer the examination, and the committee will evaluate the examination, designat-

ing the performance as a “pass with distinction,” “pass,” or “fail.” Any student who fails the comprehensive examination may retake it once within one calendar year. Failure to pass the examination a second time means that the student will be terminated from the program.

The thesis track is designed for students who intend to pursue further academic study beyond the M.A. program at A&M-CC (i.e., the M.A. is not the final or terminal degree sought by the student). Students intending to enter a history doctoral program must write a thesis. The history M.A. thesis requires substantial commitment and ongoing consultation with the student’s graduate advisor. The finished project must demonstrate historical knowledge, analytical ability, and research skills. Students on a thesis track will also be required to demonstrate competence in a second language, either by having successfully completed two years of course work in an approved language as an undergraduate, or by successful completion of a language exam.

STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE ALL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM OR DEFEND THEIR THESIS AT LEAST ONE MONTH BEFORE SCHEDULED GRADUATION.



Student Worksheet for M.A. in History Exam and Thesis Tracks

This worksheet offers students the ability to track their progress through the History M.A. program. It is offered for the benefit of students who are responsible for their timely progress through the graduate program. It should be completed by the student, signed by their academic advisor and the graduate coordinator, and regularly updated (and initialed by the graduate coordinator and primary advisor).

Student Name _____
 Phone # _____
 E-mail _____
 Primary Advisor _____
 Graduate Coordinator _____

I. BY THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR OR TWELVE (12) SEMESTER HOURS

	Graduate Coordinator	Primary Advisor
Successfully complete EITHER HIST-5310 or HIST-5322	_____	_____
Identify and agree to primary graduate advisor	_____	_____
Complete up to three additional graduate courses	_____	_____

II. BY THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR OR TWENTY-FOUR (24) SEMESTER HOURS

	Graduate Coordinator	Primary Advisor
Successfully complete BOTH HIST-5310 and HIST-5322	_____	_____
Select either the exam or thesis track	_____	_____
With your primary advisor, select a graduate committee	_____	_____
Complete up to three additional History graduate courses	_____	_____

III. EXAM AND THESIS TRACK (AT OR NEAR THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR)

For the exam track:

- The student (in consultation with their primary advisor and with the approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator) must construct a committee of two additional full-time faculty members.
- The student (in consultation with their primary advisor, their graduate committee, and with the approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator) must develop a reading list divided into three examination fields (for example, fields might be described as “U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction,” “U.S. Women’s history, 1840-1920,” or “Colonial Mexico”)

For the thesis track:

- The student (in consultation with their primary advisor) must develop and propose a viable thesis using primary sources. Only with the approval of their primary advisor may thesis-track students then form a thesis committee.
- The student then (in consultation their primary advisor and with the approval of the Graduate Program Coordinator) must construct a committee of two additional full-time faculty members.
- The student then must formally propose their thesis to the committee. In consultation with the committee, the student, and their primary advisor, all expectations about thesis content, writing and editing, submission deadlines and timing, and the final completion of the degree must be discussed and agreed upon.

	Graduate Coordinator	Primary Advisor
For both exam and thesis tracks, the student forms a graduate committee	_____	_____
For both exam and thesis tracks, the student completes and submits a proposal and a formal degree plan*	_____	_____

* The degree plan, signed by the student and graduate adviser, will become official when approved by the Dean. Students who wish to change their major field must secure a revised degree plan.

IV BY THE END OF THE THIRD YEAR OR THIRTY-SIX (36) SEMESTER HOURS

	Graduate Coordinator	Primary Advisor
All students must complete all course requirements	_____	_____
All students must meet with the History Area Graduate Advisor, Ms. Rachelle Stanley, to confirm graduation	_____	_____
<u>For the exam track:</u> Schedule and successfully complete comprehensive exams <i>at least one month before graduation</i>	_____	_____
<u>For the thesis track:</u> Students must complete their foreign language requirement	_____	_____
<u>For the thesis track:</u> Schedule and successfully defend thesis project <i>at least one month before graduation</i>	_____	_____
<u>For the thesis track:</u> Contact A&M-CC's Bell Library for information and format required when submitting thesis to the University	_____	_____

Section 3: Graduate Student Survival Guide: What You Need to Know



Important Basics

What is Graduate History?

Graduate history concentrates on developing the basic tools of professional historians. These include developing a defensible historical thesis, identifying and using primary sources, and understanding and using secondary sources.

What is a Thesis?

A thesis is a statement or conclusion reached by a historian about the past. A thesis is central to all professional historical writing. Examples of historical theses include:

- Economic change and industrialization determined the shape of modern American society.
- Slavery should be considered as the central cause of the American Civil War.
- Environmental realities explain the place of South Texas in the early history of the state.

Students will practice developing a thesis in almost all of their history graduate work (such as term papers, short essays, and, for those pursuing a thesis track, the master's essay).

What are Primary and Secondary Sources?

To “prove” or effectively demonstrate the soundness of a thesis, historians rely on primary and secondary sources. As one of our faculty members likes to note, professional historians act as if they are all from Missouri, the “Show Me” state. We want to be shown the evidence for what is argued. Primary sources are the artifacts (often written, but also found in other formats such as maps, photos, statistics, and many others) that record historical events *at the time* and by those who participated in these societies. By contrast, secondary sources are conclusions reached by others, often professional historians, about the meaning and importance of historical events. Scholarly articles, books, and documentaries are good examples of these secondary sources. Secondary sources are essential in constructing a new and original thesis; after all, it is hard to say something new and original if we don't know what others have already said!

What is Historiography?

The study of the methods and approaches taken by other scholars in these secondary sources is called historiography. Historiography actually refers to two different approaches to the past. In one, historiography refers to the vast literature about any given topic, such as all books and essays written about slavery, or World War II, or Anne Hutchinson. In another sense, historiography refers to scholars' philosophical approach to history; how they approach the past and the decisions they make in ranking the influence of historical change. An obvious example of this is with the American Civil War. Was the conflict spurred by an “irrepressible conflict” between two very different economic systems or the result of a “blundering generation” of politicians unable to maintain a national compromise over the issue of racial slavery? Both approaches make assumptions that graduate students must work to understand and clarify if they are to better understand their own approach to the past.

What is the Proper Citation Style?

The history area requires all graduate students who write papers and/or a Master's thesis to use the Chicago Manual of Style (also known as the “Turabian” style) for all citations, including notes, bibliography, and paper formats. We will not accept finished written work using any other citation method.

Graduate School Culture and the Graduate Community

Graduate school is also about joining a community of scholars interested in the past. Historians like to engage each other in debating the meaning of historical events, the implications and contingencies of these changes, and the ideas of others. As graduate students enter into this community they need to understand that the culture is slightly different from those not concerned with ideas and evidence. In most graduate classes, students and instructors will read a common set of documents (often a complete book or series of articles) and come together to debate the merits of the various arguments – not to simply agree on a “right” answer. Often, disagreements emerge over one’s philosophical approach to the topic (do you think economics are more important than gender, for example), the result being that we examine our own assumptions, modify our conclusions, and strengthen our overall appreciation of history.

In addition to your courses, the best way to absorb this graduate school culture is by participating in the many events held on campus. These include outside speakers, informal talks, and other presentations. The University website is a good place to start, but also keep notice of groups like the Clearinghouse for Mexican-American Research (CMAR), Special Collections, and the other departments of the College of Liberal Arts.

The best way to get connected to these events is through the history area listserv. Subscribe to the list by sending an email to Anthony.Quiroz@tamucc.edu. Membership to the list allows you to receive messages from and post to the list. The list is not pre-screened, so please employ decorum and respect when posting. Graduate students are encouraged to use the list to raise historical questions, discuss issues of theory and method, ask questions related to writing, publishing and conference attendance.

Another important electronic resource is the H-Net. H-Net is an international interdisciplinary organization of scholars and teachers dedicated to developing the enormous educational potential of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Their edited lists and web sites publish peer reviewed essays, multimedia materials, and discussion for colleagues and the interested public. H-Net can be accessed at: <http://www.h-net.org/>

You should also meet with your advisor on a regular basis to discuss your progress in the program, your administrative concerns and problems. In a graduate program you will develop a close relationship with your advisor, other faculty, and, of course, your fellow grad students. The best way to squeeze the most out of your time in graduate school is to keep an open mind. Heed the advice of your faculty. Ponder the potential value of the viewpoints of students with whom you disagree. Question not just the values of others but your own as well.

Success in the Classroom

Reading, Writing, Communicating, and Critical Thinking

All potential graduate students must understand that graduate classes differ *significantly* from undergraduate classes. In graduate history classes there will be few, if any, exams, and virtually no formal lectures (where professors deliver a set of lectures and students take notes). Instead, students are expected to drive the course. The professor acts as a guide, pointing them in the right direction through the syllabus, assigned readings, and graded events, but ultimately it is the student who “makes or breaks” the value of any course.

Your reading load in graduate history classes will be significantly higher than you are accustomed to. Expect to read a minimum of one book per week per class. In some instances you will also have to read a series of articles. Not only will you have to read more, you will be expected to read at a deeper level than you have in the past. You will have to understand books in terms of their arguments, their use of sources (primary and secondary), their relationship to other books on the same topic, and eventually their relationship to your own research.

The graduate classroom is driven by student discussion of the assigned readings and their own writings. The professor does not lecture, but facilitates discussion. You must therefore come to class having read all assigned material and prepared to talk about it critically and at length. You should feel free to express your own analysis in class, but be sure that your comments are well-thought out and well informed, especially by the assigned readings. “Shooting from the hip” or emoting your way through a class meeting invites challenge.

You will also develop your writing skills. Graduate work requires clear and uncomplicated writing. You will learn to strip your writing of ambiguous language, weak arguments, and the passive voice. Ultimately, in-class discussion and written assignments are exercises in effectively communicating your ideas to others.

Critical thinking forms the basis for your engagement in reading, discussing, and writing. Where you once may have passively read historical documents (assuming it “must” be true because it was found in a book), you now will critically (not negatively) question authors of essays and books. When sharing your ideas you must think them through and choose carefully your words to make sure that you convey your meaning clearly and unambiguously. Most of the writing you produce in our graduate program will be historiographical papers, research papers, and book reviews. Some faculty may also ask for reaction papers, outlines, bibliographies, annotated bibliographies and other assignments.

Research Papers

Research papers at the graduate level are longer (generally 20+ pages) and involve higher expectations for original thought. Students must employ primary sources to tell their stories, and use secondary literature to offer context. Students must also locate their own work in the literature and explain the import of their contribution.

Book Reviews

Book reviews differ sharply from book reports. Reports simply prove to a reader that the student read a given book. A review locates that book's place in the historiography, explains its arguments, use of sources, and overall effectiveness. A review does not comment on whether a book was "fun" to read. Rather, it focuses seriously on the ways in which the author was or was not persuasive. Please consult with your instructor, your faculty advisor, or professional history journals for examples of good book reviews.

Outlines, Reaction Papers, and Bibliographies

These are somewhat self-explanatory. Your instructor will give you specific guidelines for such assignments. The only thing worth expanding upon here is the concept of the annotated bibliography. Requirements will range from professor to professor, but they should all include grouping books and articles by theoretical perspective, type of argument, topic and so forth. Each should also ask for a discussion (usually a few sentences) of the topic, argument, and contribution of each source. Embedded in such an assignment is the expectation that the student will learn to think and write critically about the various works.

Some Research Resources on or near Campus

On Campus (housed in Bell Library unless otherwise specified) <http://rattler.tamucc.edu/>

- Special Collections and Archives contains numerous sets of papers dealing with South Texas and Mexican Americans in particular
- *New York Times* and other newspapers
- The U.S. Government Congressional Serials Set
- Databases of Early American Imprints and America's Historical Newspapers
- On-line sources such as JSTOR and Lexus Nexus
- Databases such as the Chicano Database and America: History and Life

Off Campus

- Individuals you wish to interview
- Land and other public records at the County Courthouse
- City Council Minutes and other public City documents at City Hall
- CCISD documents and meeting minutes held at the CCISD offices
- State archives and governmental offices in Austin, San Antonio and other surrounding cities
- The Museum of Science and Natural History



Completing the Program

The Exam Track

Some students will choose to complete the program via the use of comprehensive examinations. This method is preferable for students who plan to end their study of history at the M.A. level. As soon as the student has decided upon the exam track, they should choose an advisor whose specialization most closely matches their own learning interests. The student should then consult with that advisor to choose two more committee members. While there is no stipulation that a committee have three members, this has been the general trend in the past. One may, in special instances, choose a committee member from outside the university as long as the individual has proper credentials and is acceptable to the rest of the committee, the graduate program director, and the Graduate School. Comprehensive exams are comprised of three written examinations, each over a separate topic in history (for example, Mexican American, Civil War, Gilded Age, U.S. Since World War II, etc.). Once a student decides upon the comprehensive examination route, he or she should meet immediately with the members of the committee and draw up a readings list. Generally, the faculty assign 25 to 50 books and articles per topic. Over the course of your graduate studies, you will have read assigned works that could constitute the bulk of these books and articles. As the student reads through this list and prepares for the examination, they should meet regularly with all members of the committee to ensure that they are on the right track and focusing properly. Oral examinations are optional, depending on the composition of the committee and its chair's desires. Generally, the comprehensive examinations should be taken at the near completion of all coursework (but at least one month before scheduled graduation). A student may take up to six hours of Directed Independent Study in order to prepare for examinations.

The Thesis Track

Students who pursue further graduate education in history (to earn a Ph.D.) should strongly consider taking the thesis track. The process for forming a thesis committee is not that different from forming one for comprehensive examinations. Students should think carefully about their topic and choose as their chair the one among the faculty whose expertise most closely fits their research interests. The other members should be chosen based on their potential to contribute to the strength of the final product. Again, an outside person may be chosen, but only after consultation with the committee and the graduate program director. After a committee is formed, such details are worked out as the viability of the proposal, timeline for completion, role of the various committee members, and process for final distribution and defense. Generally, students will take six or more hours of thesis credit to complete research and writing of the thesis.

Defending Your Thesis

Upon completion of the thesis to the satisfaction of the committee chair, the student will then distribute final copies to all committee members and prepare for the defense. At the defense three things may happen. The student will "pass with distinction," "pass," or "fail." The student who fails will be given an opportunity to schedule another defense. In such instances revisions may or may not be required. If the student defends and fails a second time they will be terminated from the program.

Be forewarned that writing the thesis is a challenging intellectual assignment. Not only is it difficult to find adequate primary and secondary sources for a given topic, but organizing one's thoughts and arguments into a lucid presentation is far more difficult than many students imagine. With the thesis, you will be proving that you can master one specific set of literature and speak to it confidently and with substance. The writing at this point must be clear and precise. You will receive guidance and instruction from your chair and committee, but the responsibility of effectively responding to these suggestions remains with the graduate student.

The thesis defense generally takes ninety minutes to two hours. During this meeting the student must defend her arguments and use of sources. Assuming that the research is sound, committee members will not generally ask narrow questions about a single page or quotation, but rather more global questions about the importance of your work. How does it "speak" to what others have written? Why should non-specialists read your work? What kinds of sources did you use and why are these critical to answering your thesis? Understand that the thesis defense is not simply the "last hoop" through which you must jump. It is a serious undertaking that requires serious and careful consideration.

University Standards and Policies for Graduate Students

For the most current information, please consult the A&M-CC Student Handbook, the Graduate School, and the College of Liberal Arts standards. These and other policies can be found at the University website: www.tamucc.edu

Time Limit for Completion of the Degree

The graduate history program currently (as of spring 2008) offers six graduate hours per semester. Considering that the degree requires 30-36 hours to complete, it should take two to three years to complete the program. Some students, however, have managed to take additional DIS and non-history elective courses in the full terms and summer and finish a bit earlier. While there is no formal maximum amount of time allowed by the history program to complete the degree, we must follow the university rules which impose a seven year "recency of credit" rule. By this rule, any coursework that is more than seven years old will no longer be counted toward the degree except in severe instances.

Academic Standards

Students are expected to maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA throughout their time in the program. Once a student's GPA falls below 3.0 at the end of any semester or term, the student will be placed on academic probation. The student must raise her or his GPA to a 3.0 within the next nine hours of approved graduate study. If the student's GPA remains below a 3.0 at the end of that time, the student will be placed on enforced academic withdrawal. The history department also enforces a "two C" rule. By virtue of this rule, any student who receives more than one grade of C at any time during his or her presence in the program will be dismissed by the program.

Academic Honesty

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one's own work.) Disciplinary action for academic misconduct is the responsibility of the faculty member assigned to the course. The faculty member is charged with assessing the gravity of any case of academic dishonesty, and with giving sanction to any student involved. Penalties that may be applied by the faculty member to individual cases of academic dishonesty include one or more of the following:

- A Written Reprimand;
- Requirement to re-do work in question;
- Requirement to submit additional work;
- Lowering of grade on work in question;
- Assigning grade of "F" to work in question;
- Assigning grade of "F" for course;
- Recommendation for more severe punishment, such as dismissal from the program or from the University.

If the faculty member determines that assigning a grade of "F" to the course is the appropriate penalty and this disciplinary action occurs prior to the deadline for dropping courses, the student forfeits his/her right to drop the course in question. If the faculty member recommends more severe punishment, such as dismissal from the program or from the University, the faculty member will notify the appropriate chair/college dean, who in turn will notify the Office of Student Affairs. If dismissal from the University is recommended, the Office of Student Affairs will follow its usual procedure for such cases. (As indicated in the Student Handbook and Code of Conduct, any nonacademic issues are referred to the Office of Student Affairs.) The faculty member must file a record for each case of academic dishonesty, including a description of the disciplinary action taken, along with any materials involved, with his or her college dean, who will forward a copy to the Office of Student Affairs. The office of the academic dean of the college in which the offense took place will maintain records of all cases of academic dishonesty reported for a period of five years. The Office of Student Affairs will also maintain records of such cases for a period of five years. The Office of Student Affairs will inform the Graduate Dean as appropriate.

Any student who has been penalized for academic dishonesty has the right to appeal the judgment or the penalty assessed. The Appeals Procedure will be the same as that specified for grade appeals.

Your Professional Resume and Professional Opportunities

What is a “c.v.” and why is it important?

CV is short for the Latin phrase *curriculum vitae* (literally the “course of your life”). Unlike a typical resume, which asks for your work experience, goals, and other personal activities, a cv is a statement of your *academic* accomplishments. It does not measure your GPA or offer examples of your writing style; rather, a cv is a historical record of your *active involvement* in the profession. Typically a cv includes your educational history, any historical publications, presentation of papers at professional conferences, teaching experience, and awards, as well as a listing of key academic references. Your cv will develop and grow over time. The best place to begin thinking about your cv is by requesting a copy of your advisor’s cv to use as a guide. CVs are essential when applying to Ph.D. programs, requesting external funding, and, eventually, to landing a job in the profession. As a result, it is important to continue to update (and add to) the course of your academic life.

History Publications

Publications are the lifeblood of all academic disciplines. Scholars publish in order to inform readers of a new or altered information, thesis, or conclusion. As relatively junior graduate students, you are not be expected to publish your work, but publishing opportunities do exist. The two best opportunities are book reviews and encyclopedia entries. These opportunities are now almost exclusively announced electronically, making your participation on listservs essential if you intend to pursue an advanced degree beyond the M.A. Please consult with your advisor about the most appropriate opportunities for publication.

Teaching Activity

While not yet essential to your academic development, an ability to teach history indicates your sophistication and skill in presenting complex material in a clear and objective way. Some Ph.D. programs will be greatly swayed by a long history of teaching while others will not. The two most important opportunities for teaching experience at A&M-CC are as “teaching assistants” (graders for large undergraduate courses) and as “First Year Seminar” instructors through the First-Year program at A&M-CC. Contact your advisor to discuss these and other options. Typically, universities will NOT employ a part-time (or “Adjunct”) instructor who does not possess at least an MA in the discipline being taught or a minimum of thirty-six (36) semester hours in graduate course work.

Attending and Presenting Papers at Professional Conferences

A central part of the historical profession involves attending professional conferences. Such meetings are important for presenting one’s original research to peers as is done in the medical, scientific, mathematical, and other professions. Conferences are also a way to connect with others in the profession. Professional meetings often hold sessions specifically for graduate students. While such attendance can become expensive, even prohibitive, there are some options. Students may present their work locally at the Nueces County Historical Society or other such venue. The A&M System sometimes holds graduate student conferences on our campus. Occasionally larger historical and social science organizations hold their meetings here in the city.

Further, you may wish to apply for support through various grants (read the posts on the listserv and read campus announcements, fish the web, and ask around the hallways). If you decide to present your work at a conference do NOT do so without having at least your advisor read and critique your work well ahead of time.

Frantz Essay Competition

Each year the Frantz Fund sponsors a “best paper” competition among undergraduate and graduate students. The prize for the best undergraduate paper is \$200 and \$300 for the best graduate student paper. Applications are submitted in the spring semester. Determinations are made and prizes awarded by the end of that semester. Contact your advisor for more information on the Frantz Essay Competition.

Letters of Recommendation

Whether taking the examination route and entering the world of work upon completion of the degree or moving on to a Ph.D. program, students will all need strong letters of reference. The first rule to remember is that we cannot lie. We cannot say that poor-performing students are among the strongest we’ve ever taught. For this reason, remember that you need to be conscious of developing your professional demeanor throughout your entire graduate career. Most employers and graduate programs require at least three letters of reference. Be sure to choose your referees carefully. With whom did you have the best rapport? In whose classes did you perform the strongest? Who really “gets” your work? Once you devise the list, you should consider having each writer approach her or his letter from a different angle. Perhaps one could attest to your originality of thought, another to your work ethic, and another to your teaching abilities. In any case, letters are crucial to your future. Be mindful of that as you interact with faculty in and out of the classroom.

Finding Jobs with an M.A.

Where can one find jobs with an M.A. in history? Many places, but you have to know where to look. The most current listings of job opportunities are now almost exclusively electronic. Scholarly trade publications such as the Chronicle of Higher Education are indispensable for locating these opportunities. In addition, listservs (such as www.h-net.org) and other active web services for graduate students can provide useful and timely information. Be sure to make yourself familiar with these forums; your competition certainly will. For jobs outside academia try the following:

- Museum jobs, see The American Association of Museums, www.aam-us.org
- Jobs at historical societies, go to The American Association for State and Local History www.aaslh.org
- Jobs in the federal government, consult the Office of Personnel Management, www.usajobs.opm.gov. Be warned, you will find a LOT of job listings here, but if you look carefully you will see openings requiring specific historical training
- Jobs in state and local government, go to the local agencies directly or you may try www.statejobs.com
- Archival jobs may be found at the Society of American Archivists; look for the employment bulletin at www.archivists.org, and also look at the National Council on Public History at www.ncph.org, and finally the Society for History in the Federal Government, www.shfg.org

- Further leads for jobs may be found at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation at www.woodrow.org/phd, and *Careers for Students of History* may offer leads at www.historians.org/pubs.
- Finally, you should visit www.historians.org/governance/tfph/PublicHistoryEmployment.htm.

Applying to a Ph.D. Program

In choosing a Ph.D. program the student should consider several factors, such as:

- What major area of research concentration will you pursue?
- How will you fund your graduate studies? Loans? Fellowships? Scholarships?
- What schools are you most likely to gain acceptance into?
- Given the answer to the question above, what schools have the faculty that are most able to help you develop as a professional?

The first place to start is the internet. Go the websites of schools in which you are interested and look up information on deadlines, financial aid, time to complete the degree, faculty, research resources, living arrangements, presence or absence of a union.

You should know that most programs offer some type of financial assistance through research assistantships or teaching assistantships. Research assistantships generally require the student to work ten to twenty hours per week conducting research for a faculty member. Teaching assistantships require students to grade and lead discussion sections, or in some cases, teach their own classes. Each type of assistantship carries a stipend out of which the student pays living expenses, tuition, books, and fees. These pay scales are barely livable at best. In some smaller programs such support is less or non-existent. Even in some larger programs, there is limited funding which is doled out in a competitive atmosphere. Still, it is possible to finish a Ph.D. program with little or no debt. But be cautious and do the math carefully first.

