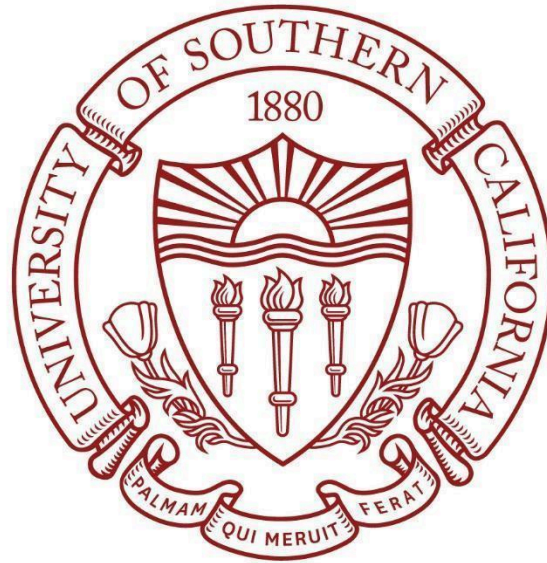


Last update: Wednesday, August 21, 2024

University of Southern California Van Hunnick Department of History

Graduate Student Handbook
2024 – 2025



3502 Trousdale Parkway
Social Sciences Building (SOS) 153
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0034
<http://dornsife.usc.edu/hist/>
Phone: 213-740-1657
Fax: 213-740-6999
Twitter: @USCHistory
Facebook: www.facebook.com/uschistory

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	2
Who We Are	3
History Faculty	4
Adjunct & Visiting Faculty	4
Current Graduate Students	4
The Doctoral Program	5
Degree Requirements	6
Fields (Major, Minor, Area of Specialization)	7
Transfer Coursework	9
Language Requirements	10
Qualifying Examination	10
Scheduling the Qualifying Examination	13
The Written Examination	13
Oral Examination	13
The Dissertation	14
Dissertation Committee	14
Prospectus and Prospectus Defense	15
Dissertation	15
Defending the Dissertation	15
Submitting the Dissertation	16
Ph.D. Hooding Ceremony & Commencement	16
Screening Procedures	16
Registration & Course Enrollment	17
Advisement	18
Funding Information	18
Teaching Assistantships	18
Other Sources of Funding	18
Exceptional Funding	19
Payroll & Stipend Payment Information	19
Helpful Links	19

Introduction

The aim of this handbook is to provide students with the resources needed to successfully navigate through the Ph.D. Program in History. It is not exhaustive, but strives to include important information regarding program requirements, timeline to degree, examinations, research and dissertation writing along with campus resources and information related to Dornsife College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences and The Graduate School.

While this handbook covers a significant amount of information, it is not a substitute for advisement. Please seek out your Faculty Advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies and the Student Services Advisor for assistance with any questions.

Some content within this handbook comes directly from the USC Catalogue, The Graduate School website and publications, and the USC Student Life SCampus. The USC Catalogue is the primary source of all academic and university policies. The USC Graduate School mission is to promote a distinguished Ph.D. educational experience, to celebrate graduate student achievements, and to provide leadership in the establishment and communication of policies, standards, and processes related to graduate education at USC. The Division of Student Life is devoted to creating an integrated learning experience that helps students reach their educational, personal, and professional aspirations. They help create a campus community where students are prepared to contribute to a changing world. The University of Southern California has outlined student policies, rules, regulations and standards of conduct in the most recent edition of SCampus.

University Catalogue: [USC Catalogue](#)

USC Graduate School: [USC Graduate School](#)

USC Student Life SCampus: [The USC Student Handbook - Policies and Policy Governance](#)

You will also find much useful information and departmental-level forms on the Graduate Student Drive found [HERE](#).

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

Department Chair – Professor Paul Lerner

plerner@usc.edu; SOS 153

The Department Chair determines the department's tone and direction and represents the department in College and University administration and in the wider profession. The department chair, who generally serves a three-year term, oversees allocation of financial resources to the graduate program and the History Graduate Student Association, has ultimate responsibility for assigning Teaching Assistantships and is involved in determining course offerings and faculty responsibilities.

Director of Graduate Studies – Professor Brett Sheehan

bsheehan@usc.edu; SOS 164

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), is an appointed faculty member responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Graduate Program including, but not limited to, directing the admissions process; serving as a representative of the graduate program; planning progress through degree; organizing language exams; discussion of exam fields; grants and fellowships; teaching and teaching assistantships; placement; professionalization.

Graduate Studies Committee – Members appointed annually before start of Fall semester

The Graduate Studies Committee, one of three standing departmental committees, approves curricular change, evaluates fellowship applications, evaluates admission applications, and serves as a resource for graduate student advisement.

The History Graduate Students' Association (HGSA)

President – Scott Wagner

scottwag@usc.edu

Event Coordinator – Hannah Ryan

hrryan@usc.edu

Social Director – Charlotte Gibbs

gibbscr@usc.edu

Professional Development Manager: Sarah Ernst

sarahern@usc.edu

HGSA organizes scholarly, social, and professionalization events throughout the academic year. It also collaborates with the DGS in organizing the weekend visit for students newly admitted to the doctoral program each spring.

Union Representatives

Steward: Akane Takahashi

akanetak@usc.edu

DGSA Rep – Abby Gibson

gibsonam@usc.edu

Department of History Staff:

Student Services Advisor (SSA) – Jennifer Hernandez

jenniferhd@usc.edu; SOS 153

Provides information regarding the technical aspects of the Ph.D. program; maintains student files; tracks progress to degree; grants D-Clearance; schedules and organizes qualifying examinations; disseminates information on funding opportunities; initiates petitions with The Graduate School; manages and tracks student funding with Dornsife College and The Graduate School; serves as a liaison to Graduate Admissions and The Graduate School; coordinates technical aspects of graduate program admissions.

Office Manager – Lori Rogers

lrogers@usc.edu; SOS 153

Oversees the management of the Department of History main office; handles expense reimbursement, and distributes Lab keys.

Administrative Assistant II– Sandra Hopwood

sandrajo@usc.edu; SOS 153

Distributes departmental keys (with the exception of the Lab); provides copier access/codes; manages dossiers for job placement; point person for exceptional funding.

Administrative Assistant II – Simone Bessant

bessant@usc.edu; SOS 153

Manages TA classroom requests for review sessions; organizes make-up exams.

HISTORY FACULTY

For information about faculty research interests and contact information, please refer to the Department of History website: <https://dornsife.usc.edu/hist/faculty/>

POSTDOCS & VISITING SCHOLARS

Salem Elzway, Postdoctoral Scholar- Teaching Fellow
David Helps, Postdoctoral Scholar- Teaching Fellow
Richard Ibarra, Postdoctoral Scholar- Teaching Fellow
Andrew Shaler, Postdoctoral Scholar- Teaching Fellow
Emily Warren, Postdoctoral Scholar- Teaching Fellow

CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENTS

For information about current graduate students research interests and contact information, please refer to the Department of History website:
[Current Graduate Students - Department of History](#)

In order to be displayed on our website, you must do the following:

1. Upload a directory photo onto MyDornsife. (instructions listed here: [Directory Photos & Profile - USC Dornsife Website Project](#))
2. Update your website profile with any information that you would like to highlight about you and your research. (instructions listed here: <https://dtssupport.usc.edu/support/solutions/articles/7000050811#loaded>)

THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The Doctoral Program in the Department of History offers broad training in multiple fields and methods of historical study. Our students learn how to carry out advanced scholarly research, write, and publish in multiple media, speak persuasively in academic and public settings, and teach both in their specialties and beyond. Our curriculum consists of research seminars, thematic readings courses, historiographical colloquia, and independent research. It culminates in the execution of original research and the writing of a dissertation. The history profession nationwide combines a traditional emphasis on geo-temporal fields with a new emphasis on transnationalism, comparative history, and interdisciplinary investigation. The department's program reflects the changing landscape of historical training and scholarship and was recently revised.

The revised curriculum went into effect beginning in the Fall of 2023. All students who enter the program that term or thereafter will be required to meet the degree requirements of the revised curriculum. Students who began the program in Fall 2022 or earlier have the option of fulfilling the requirements either of the revised curriculum or the old one. Students must declare which curriculum they have chosen before they take their qualifying exam. In the following pages, [the requirements and commentary for the old curriculum will be in orange](#). [The requirements and commentary for the revised curriculum will be in green](#).

Trajectory

The first year in the program provides opportunities for students both to explore different historical fields, topics, and approaches and to begin to define their fields of study and areas of research interest. With rare exception, first-year students use one of their fellowship years to take three graduate level courses each semester, one of which (History 500) is intended to push students outside their fields of interest to consider the discipline of history more broadly – that is, research methods, theoretical approaches, and a range of practical issues. The other seminars give students a chance to explore topics that may or may not ultimately lead to dissertation work, and while some may ultimately lay the foundation for published work down the road, others may simply give students a chance to get their feet wet in unfamiliar fields or topics. In any case, students should plan to write a research paper in a 600 level seminar at some point during their first year. And they should use this year (and the summer) to develop any particular skills (languages, quantitative approaches, familiarity with other disciplines, etc.) that may serve their emerging research interests down the road. By the end of the year, they should have a clear sense for which member(s) of the faculty will serve as their principal advisor(s).

The second year is generally a time for students to begin to sharpen their interests and hone in on potential dissertation topics as they begin to think more systematically about their qualifying exams (fields, committee members, reading lists, timeline, etc.). Second-year students typically work as teaching assistants and take two courses per semester plus the teaching practicum (HIST 595x), which is required by the college in the

first semester of teaching assistantship. By the end of the summer – if not by the end of the spring term – they should have completed all required coursework and their language exams and to have begun to develop reading lists with members of their qualifying exam committee. Ideally, students would devote at least a significant part of the summer to preliminary research for their dissertations so that they will be able to apply for dissertation research to lay a foundation for their prospectus and research fellowship applications (fall of their third year).

The third year is one of transition from course work to dissertation work. Students typically teach during the fall and usually in the spring as they take any additional courses they wish, prepare for exams, write a dissertation prospectus, and ultimately advance to candidacy so that they can embark on full time dissertation research. During the fall, students will be strongly encouraged to apply for additional (internal and external) funding support for their fourth year. Some students will also plan to take their exams in the fall, but when they do so depends on the vision of their advisors, the particular fields students have chosen, and the depth of background they had when they entered the program – students with previous masters degrees, for instance, tend to take them earlier and those who have developed a more advanced draft of their prospectus before the exams, may wish to take them in the spring. Either way, it is advisable to dedicate several months of focused study to exam preparation. Shortly after completing the exams, students submit and defend a prospectus and, in any case, should plan to have advanced to candidacy and begin dissertation research at some point during the year.

Fourth- and fifth-year students usually use fellowship – either from part of their original funding package or from other USC programs or external institutions – to support research and dissertation writing.

Although we prefer for students to complete the program in five years, it is not uncommon for students to require additional time, which is typically funded by either additional years of fellowship students have won either from USC or other institutions – when you win a competitive fellowship, you are able to bank one year of fellowship from your initial funding package for use later – or by additional terms as a teaching assistant.

Requirements

All entering students (including those with MA degrees) are required to take HIST 500 in their first semester of study. All students are required to take two 600-level research seminars in the Department of History. At least one of these seminars must be in the major area of study. Students must complete a minimum of 60 units of course work. No more than 8 units of the 60 may be in HIST 794a, HIST 794b, HIST 794c, HIST 794d, HIST 794z (dissertation writing sequence). **Under the old curriculum, students must complete at least 30 units of graduate course work within the Department of History.** **Under the revised curriculum, students must complete a minimum of ten (4-unit) courses before their qualifying exams.** All students will have a major field, a minor field, and at least one area of specialization. Coursework is expected to be taken at the graduate level, although

students may take up to four 400-level courses toward completing the field requirements (outlined below) with the prior consent of their faculty advisor.

Old Curriculum

Required courses include:

- 4 courses (minimum) in a Major Field
- 2 courses (minimum) in a Minor Field
- 3 courses (minimum) in an Area of Specialization
- Fulfillment of general course work requirements

Fields

Major Field: Students must declare a major field in a geo-temporal area at the time of application to the program. Major Fields of study include: American/U.S.; Early Modern Europe; Korea; Latin America; Medieval Europe; Middle East; Modern China; Modern Europe; Modern Japan, and Pre-Modern Japan. The purpose of the major field is to prepare students broadly for teaching and research. Students may, with the support of their advisor, petition the DGS and Graduate Studies Committee for an alternative major field.

There are additional, field-specific requirements in the major American/U.S. field, which requires the three-semester historiography sequence HIST 566, 567, and 568.

Minor Field: By the beginning of their second year in the program, each graduate student must declare a minor field. The minor field is intended to broaden skills beyond the geo-temporal boundaries of the major field. The minor field may be chosen from the list of major fields, or it may be conceived comparatively, thematically or cross-disciplinarily. Possible minor fields include: Atlantic World; Gender and Sexuality; Modern Europe; Pre-Modern Japan; Trans-Pacific History; and Visual Studies. This list is not exhaustive and is meant to suggest only possible courses of study.

The course requirement for the minor field is a minimum of 2 courses. Depending on their areas of interest, some students may substitute a second major field for the minor field, or complete two minor fields.

Area of Specialization: By the beginning of their second year in the program, each student must declare an area of specialization. The area of specialization is intended to deepen the student's scholarly training in the chosen area of the dissertation. Possible fields for the area of specialization include: Gender Studies; History of Science and Medicine; The American West; Urban History, Visual Studies; and War and History. This list is not exhaustive and is meant to suggest only possible courses of study.

The course requirement for the area of specialization is 3 courses.

Either the minor field or the area of specialization must be outside the major field of study, transnational, or outside the discipline of history. Students must consult with their advisor in putting together these fields of study.

Current Curriculum

The current curriculum has streamlined course requirements and no longer requires a particular number of courses in the major field, minor field, or area of specialization:

Course Requirements:

Students must complete a minimum of 10 (4-unit) courses before their qualifying exams and must meet the following requirements:

- History 500 in the fall semester of the first year.
- Two 600 level research seminars within the history department (or taught by an affiliated faculty member in another department). One of the seminars must be History 600 and be taken in the spring of the first year. And at least one of the research papers must focus on a topic in the student's major field.
- At least eight (4-unit) courses must be taught by faculty with appointments in the History Department.
- At least one course must be taught by faculty not affiliated with the History Department.

Fields

Major and minor fields are selected from the following list:

Africa	Medieval Europe
African Diaspora	Middle East
Atlantic World	Modern Europe
Caribbean	Modern Japan
China	Ottoman
Early Modern Europe	Premodern Japan
Eurasia	South Asia
Global History	US: Colonial to post-Civil War*
Global South	US: Early Republic to the Present*
Science, Technology, and Medicine	
Jewish History	
Late Antiquity	
Latin America	

* Note that students who select either US field as their major field must select the other US field as their minor field.

Area(s) of Specialization

In consultation with their advisor(s), students will develop an area of specialization – they may choose to be examined in two if they wish. Areas of specialization could, for instance, be broad fields of transnational or thematic inquiry (Gender and Sexuality, Visual Culture, Environmental History, Legal History, Urban History, etc.) or could take those themes and focus them in principally within their major field or a particular

comparative context (i.e., US urban history; Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Europe, US Religious History, Japanese Popular Culture, International Film, Business in East Asia, etc.). National or regional histories (Armenian, Mexican, Dutch, American West) might appeal to some students. Others may wish to select a field from the major/minor field list or a field offered in other departments (Archaeology, Architecture, Art History, ASE, Cinema, Classics, English, Spatial Sciences, etc.). Still others may wish to choose a subfield within their major field (African-American History, Chicano/a History) or a topic that moves across a couple fields (Revolutions, Empire, Consumer Culture, Colonialism, etc.) One short hand might be to think about how the areas of specialization complement your major and minor fields, permit you to dig deeper within them, or will help you lay a foundation for your future research or teaching, they qualify so long as your advisor approves.

Transfer Coursework

The Degree Progress Department in the Office of Academic Records and Registrar determines whether course work taken elsewhere is available for transfer credit. Faculty of the student's degree program determine whether such credit is applicable toward a specific graduate degree, subject to approval by the dean of the degree-conferring unit. The faculty's decision should be made no later than the end of the second year.

Credit will only be allowed for courses (1) from an accredited graduate school, (2) of a quality of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 grading scale, (3) constituting a fair and reasonable equivalent to current USC course work at the graduate level and (4) logically fitting into the program for the degree. The university also evaluates courses completed through the armed services and may grant credit for such courses as detailed in the subsequent Credit for Military Education section (see below). Transfer course work is applied as credit (CR) toward the degree and is not included in the calculation of a minimum grade point average for graduation.

Graduate transfer credit will not be granted for life experience, credit by examination, extension courses not accepted toward a degree by the offering institution, correspondence courses or thesis supervision. Graduate transfer credit will not be granted for course work taken elsewhere after a student has been admitted and enrolled at USC unless the student receives prior written approval from the department. Students may not take courses elsewhere as a substitute for courses in which they have received grades that fail to meet departmental or university requirements.

Transfer work must have been completed within seven years of admission to a USC master's degree program (or 10 years for a doctoral program) to be applied toward that degree. Departments have the option of reevaluating transfer work when a student is readmitted to a USC graduate degree program. Requests for exceptions should be directed to the dean of the degree program for approval.

- A maximum of 30 units of transfer credit may be applied toward the doctoral degree.

- Students must provide documentation such as transcript and course syllabi for the courses to be considered.
- The Faculty Advisor in collaboration with the DGS will evaluate the proposed courses to determine whether credit can be granted.

Students should consult with the SSA and the DGS about this process.

Language Requirement

Students are expected to satisfy language requirements before the end of their second year in the program and, in any case, the requirement must be satisfied before a student is eligible to take the qualifying examination.

Language exams to be offered three times per academic year: once in the second week of the fall term; a second time in the penultimate week of the fall term; and a third time in the last week of the spring term.

Students may demonstrate **competence** in two languages or **proficiency** in one. Competence in a language denotes the ability to read and translate passages into English. It must be demonstrated either in a two-hour translation examination (with a dictionary) or by a student passing a reading course in the language offered at USC. Proficiency in a language denotes advanced reading ability and conversational ability for spoken languages. For non-spoken languages, proficiency denotes advanced reading and translation abilities. To demonstrate proficiency, students must first pass the translation exam and then take an oral examination with a faculty member designated by the DGS.

The choice of languages used to satisfy the requirement shall be worked out with the advisor and must be approved by the advisor and the DGS. An advisor may also require a student to meet more than the department's minimum requirement, e.g. by requiring a second language at the level of proficiency or a third at the level of competence.

The scope and length of the language exam is determined by the examiner chosen for that exam and there may be variation from language to language or exam to exam.

The Qualifying Examination

Each student must set up a qualifying exam committee by the end of the third semester in residence. It is composed of five members. Committee members may be tenured, tenure track and full-time RTPC (research, teaching, practice, clinical) but the committee may also include a faculty member from an institution other than USC, an individual whose professional profile demonstrates an impact on the field in significant, measurable ways, or part-time adjunct faculty. In any case, the committee chair must hold at least a 50% appointment in the department as tenured, tenure track and full-time RTPC faculty. At least two additional members must have an official appointment in the department as tenured, tenure track and full-time RTPC faculty. And at least one member of the committee must have an appointment outside the department. USC Dornsife requires

that all PhD qualifying exam and dissertation committees contain an outside member. An outside member is considered to be faculty outside the student's program but internal to USC.

The qualifying exam committee will oversee the student's written and oral qualifying examination, which should be taken by the end of the sixth semester. The examination covers the major field, minor field and area of specialization. Students prepare for these exams by developing, in collaboration with members of their qualifying exam committee, reading lists for study in their major field (with two faculty members), minor field, and area of specialization.

Old Curriculum

The **Qualifying Examination** consists of two parts:

- Three four-hour (open book and open note) written responses, based, respectively, on the major field, the minor field and the area of specialization.
- A two-hour oral session, which is an opportunity for further discussion of the written exam questions with broader field specific discourse.

Students with one fail or more than two low-pass grades on the written responses will not be permitted to sit for the oral segment of the examination. The qualifying exam committee determines whether a student may retake any parts of the examination graded low-pass or fail.

A student must wait at least six, but not more than nine, months to retake any part, or all, of the qualifying examination. No part of the examination can be retaken more than once.

Preparing for the Qualifying Examinations

Once students settle on their examination fields, in conjunction with their examiners they create reading lists that provide basic coverage of a particular field's literature. In some cases, two faculty members will direct the readings in a single field. In any case, students and faculty typically work together to design these lists, and the number and types of items on them varies by field and professor. Students should plan to devote several months of focused reading to prepare for the exams and may enroll in HIST 590, which is a directed readings course for credit, or in GRSC 800 during this time.

Current Curriculum

The **Qualifying Examination** presents students the opportunity to demonstrate their command of – and perspectives on – their chosen fields of study. For the department (as represented by the members of the examination committee), it offers the opportunity to

assess formally the student's capacity for synthetic, critical, and independent thought as well as the breadth and depth of their knowledge in those fields.

While there is inevitably a range of perspectives among faculty about what precisely mastery of a field might look like and, likewise, a variety of criteria for evaluating it, the department faculty agree that preparation for the qualifying exam should lay the foundation for students' future research and teaching and that students must demonstrate, in the exam, that they are conversant in major historiographical debates, issues, source bases, and methodological and theoretical developments in their chosen fields and area(s) of specialization. In addition to such broad perspectives and knowledge, faculty examiners may require students to develop a particular depth of knowledge in select topics or themes that relate to a student's future research and teaching interests.

For their qualifying exams, students will be examined in a major field, a minor field, and an area of specialization, but students may opt to be examined in a second area of specialization, too, if they wish and their advisor approves.

The **Qualifying Examination** itself consists of two components: (1) the creation of a **portfolio of written materials**; and (2) an **oral examination**.

The Portfolio of Written Materials consists of the following:

1. A reading list developed with and for at least four members of the qualifying exam committee: two for the major field, one for the minor field, and one for the area of specialization. Students who wish to do a second area of specialization may develop a reading list and complete a written exercise for the fifth member of the committee.
2. A written exercise assigned by each examiner and based on the reading list the student has developed with them. Examiners may select one of the following options:
 - A timed written exam (six hours).
 - An historiographical essay (4,000-6,000 words) on a topic set by the examiner to be completed at any point during the students preparation for the examination.
 - A detailed syllabus for a 15-week course assigned by the examiner to be completed at any point during the student preparation for the examination. The syllabus should include class policies, readings, written (and oral, as appropriate) assignments and exercises, specific paper and exam questions or topics, and grade breakdowns.
3. A reflective personal statement (2,000-3,000 words) in which the student articulates how their fields and area(s) of specialization cohere and lay the foundation for their research and teaching agenda.

The Portfolio must be finalized and submitted to all members of the committee two weeks prior to the oral examination.

The Oral Examination (2 hours) focuses on the whole of the materials in the portfolio – thus, not merely the written exercises assigned by faculty but also the reading lists.

Scheduling the Qualifying Examinations

The SSA is available to guide through the logistics of this process.

The Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam or Dissertation Committee form, available on the Graduate School Website, is used to establish the Qualifying Examination Committee. The form requires the signatures of each member of the committee, the department chair or program director, and dean or dean's designate. The completed form is filed in the student's home department or program. Students must obtain signatures of the committee members and then submit the form to the SSA.

Form: [Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam Committee](#)

Students should then consult with their committee chair to determine a date for the written and oral examinations. Once dates have been confirmed, it is important to relay them to the SSA as soon as possible to ensure proper scheduling. Typically, students take the three written exams over the course of a week. Written exams are approximately two weeks before the oral examination so that the committee has time to review them.

The Written Examination

Students will check in with the SSA each morning of their Written Exam days at which point they will be provided with the Exam question they wish to take on that day. Students may check in as early as 8:30am when the main office opens and must be finished with the exam by 4:30pm to ensure there is enough time to process the exam before the office closes at 5pm. Students have four hours of writing time for the exam which may be divided as they wish throughout the 8:30am-4:30pm window of time. They may take breaks as needed. After completion of the written examinations, the SSA will disseminate the work to the committee for review. The SSA will also prepare the necessary approval materials for the oral examination.

Oral Examination

The Committee will meet briefly at the start of the oral examination to determine if the student passed the Written Examinations; if so, the student will be invited in to participate in it. At the conclusion of the examination, the committee will determine if the student has passed the qualifying examinations. Permission to conduct a remote-participation qualifying examination must be obtained by the committee chair from the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Graduate Programs at least two weeks prior to the date of the exam. A maximum of two out of the five committee members may participate remotely. The committee chair and the outside member may not participate remotely.

The SSA will process the necessary paperwork whether the student passes or does not pass the Qualifying Examinations. After a student passes, the student is eligible to receive

a Masters in History. The SSA will add the degree to the student's record and enter the necessary information to award the degree. Students may participate in the commencement ceremony for the academic year in which they have been awarded the degree.

THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM: The Dissertation

After passing all required courses and the qualifying examination, and after meeting all other requirements, the candidate must propose, write, and defend the dissertation. The doctoral dissertation must be an original contribution to scholarship or scientific knowledge and must exemplify the high degree of scholarly advancement and power of investigation demanded by the university for final recommendation to the doctorate.

The semester following successful qualifying examinations, students will begin the dissertation sequence of coursework (HIST 794a, HIST 794b, HIST 794c, HIST 794d, HIST 794z). Students must register each semester thereafter to maintain continuous enrollment until the dissertation is completed.

Dissertation Committee

After students have successfully completed their qualifying examinations, they select a dissertation committee consisting of at least three members, including at least two from the Department of History. These individuals will be in charge of guiding the dissertation to completion. The dissertation committee should be constituted promptly after the examination has been passed.

The dissertation committee is composed of at least three and no more than five members, but the majority of members and the committee chair must have an appointment in the department. Committee members may be tenured, tenure track and full-time RTPC (research, teaching, practice, clinical) faculty, and the chair must hold at least a 50% appointment in the department. USC Dornsife requires that all PhD qualifying exam and dissertation committees contain an outside member. An outside member is considered to be faculty outside the student's program but internal to USC.

The committee may also include an "external" member from an institution other than USC, or someone whose professional profile demonstrates an impact on the field in significant, measurable ways. Emeriti faculty appointed to a qualifying exam committee when they were full-time faculty at USC may continue to serve on the dissertation committee until the student has graduated. Similarly, a former USC faculty member who was appointed to the qualifying exam committee while they were a full-time USC faculty member may continue to serve on the dissertation committee until the student has graduated. But note that someone who serves as an external member of the faculty in the qualifying exam may only serve as an outside member for the dissertation committee; likewise, someone who served as a member from the department for the qualifying exam may only count as a member of the department for the dissertation committee.

The Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam or Dissertation Committee form, available on the Graduate School Website, is used to establish the Dissertation Committee. The form requires the signatures of each member of the committee, the department chair or program director, and dean or dean's designate. The completed form is filed in the student's home department or program. Students should obtain signatures of the committee members and then submit the form to the SSA.

Form: [Appointment or Change of Dissertation Committee](#)

Prospectus & Prospectus Defense

Within six months of passing the qualifying examination – and ideally much sooner – students must submit a formal dissertation prospectus to all members of the dissertation committee and pass a one-hour prospectus defense convened by that committee. After passing the dissertation prospectus defense, a student is admitted to candidacy for the PhD degree. The student will thereafter concentrate on the dissertation.

The dissertation prospectus is a substantive piece that sets out the historical problems at the heart of a student's proposed dissertation. It should lay out in some detail the importance of the selected topic, situates the project in terms of the existing historiography, proposes methods for approaching the problem, and describes available evidence or source base for the dissertation. And it should lay out the plan for the completion of the research for and writing of the dissertation and provide a breakdown of proposed chapters. HIST 700 may be available for students who desire a structured setting for defining their dissertation topics and composing their prospectuses.

In the case of a failed prospectus defense, the student must schedule a second defense within three months of the original defense date.

Dissertation

The dissertation is a book-length scholarly monograph based on research, fieldwork, and scholarly analysis. It should be an original contribution to academic historical discourse.

Once students have completed the writing of the dissertation, they must follow the guidelines set forth by the Graduate School to defend and submit their work. Refer to the Graduate School website [Thesis & Dissertation Submission - USC Graduate School](#) for all resources.

Defense of the Dissertation

Students should consult with the SSA in concert with their dissertation committee to schedule a date for the defense.

While the oral examination is open to the general university community, only the members of the dissertation committee have the authority to recommend acceptance of the dissertation. For the dissertation defense, the committee chair and the student must be present, unless the relevant dean and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs provide written permission for remote participation. In any case, all members of the dissertation

committee must be present and must give a judgment on the student's defense. The recommendation must be unanimous. If the defense is satisfactory, the committee then signs the electronic Approval to Submit Defended and Final Copy of Dissertation form. If additional work is required, the electronic form must be signed only on full completion.

Submitting the Dissertation

Required documentation is electronically submitted to the Graduate School by the deadline date and time. It is then reviewed by the thesis coordinator. When the documentation is determined to be complete, the candidate is cleared to submit the dissertation manuscript electronically.

Required documentation for doctoral students includes the electronic Approval to Submit Defended and Final Copy of Doctoral Work form, the most recent Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam or Dissertation Committee form, and for PhD students only, the electronic receipt confirming completion of the Survey of Earned Doctorates.

Manuscripts are reviewed and required documentation is processed in the order received. Students have three months from the date the committee chair signs the Approval to Submit form to complete the necessary corrections to the formatting of the manuscript.

Early Submission Option

Students who submit the necessary documentation a week or more before the add/drop deadline and who also upload the manuscript to the Graduate School by the add/drop deadline in a given term are exempted from the requirement to register in 594 or 794 in that semester. Otherwise, students register for 594, 794 or the equivalent in order to maintain continuous enrollment. International students considering the Early Submission Option should check with the Office of International Services to be sure the lack of course registration will not affect their visa status.

Ph.D. Hooding Ceremony & Commencement

To mark the significant accomplishment of earning a Ph.D., students are invited to participate in the Ph.D. Hooding Ceremony and Commencement in the academic year in which they plan to defend their Dissertation. Each year the SSA sends out information leading up to the event which happens in May.

THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM: Screening Procedures

In the first week of May the department conducts its annual formal screening of graduate students in the program. First and foremost, the goal of the screening is give faculty the opportunity to check in on each student; to make sure that they're making good progress through the program; and perhaps most importantly, to identify anyone who may be struggling for one reason or another so as to help them address any issues that might be impeding progress. In the case of truly unsatisfactory progress, students may be placed on probationary status which could ultimately lead to dismissal from the program.

Among the documents reviewed in the screening is the annual update and self-assessment from each student. This document will look different, of course,

depending on where students are in the program. Someone planning to defend their dissertation in the following year should simply let us know the approximate defense date and provide any news about recent achievements or plans for the following year. Students who will be continuing on in the program should indicate recent achievements and what funding they plan to use in the following year (TAsip, fellowship from the initial funding package, external fellowship, etc.). Pre-Quals students should list their planned fields, those faculty they expect to serve as committee members, and when they plan to take the exams. Those who have recently passed the qualifying exams should note the composition of their dissertation committee, the expected date of the prospectus defense, and plans for the following year. Ideally, this document should also include reflections on progress, areas for potential growth, and plans to address them or achieve it. Likewise, students should feel free to share anything they feel the faculty should know, including any concerns, struggles, or problems of any kind that they have. Students should send their self-assessments to the SSA and DGS by 15 April. After the screening meeting, they will receive a letter from the DGS that addresses any issues the faculty have raised.

REGISTRATION & COURSE ENROLLMENT

All registration transactions occur using Web Registration, which can be accessed by logging into your MyUSC account. The Schedule of Classes for Spring typically comes out at the beginning of October, and students may begin registering toward the end of October. The Schedule of Classes for Fall typically comes out at the beginning of March and students may begin registering toward the end of March. The SSA will email all students to inform them of the relevant dates throughout the year.

Once the Schedule of Classes is available, students are expected to meet with their Faculty Advisor to discuss their course plans for the upcoming semester. This meeting may happen in person or via email correspondence. If the meeting happens via email, the Faculty Advisor will need to send their approval of their students' programs to the SSA.

All Department of History graduate level courses (level 500 and higher) require special permission in order to enroll, this is called Departmental Clearance or "D-Clearance" for short. Section Numbers with a D at the end (37200 D for example) require D-Clearance.

Students who will be taking courses outside of the Department of History may need to request D-Clearance from those specific departments. The contact information for D-Clearance is usually listed at the top of the department page on the Schedule of Classes. If you have any questions about whom you should contact, please ask the SSA or DGS.

Once students pass their Qualifying Examinations, they will begin the Dissertation Sequence course work, HIST 794a-z. They will enroll in these courses until they complete their Dissertation. The Dissertation Sequence still requires D-Clearance and should be requested through the SSA. A separate email prompt will be sent to those students who will be enrolling in the Dissertation Sequence courses.

ADVISEMENT

Graduate students have a number of resources for advisement within the Department of History. Students should take advantage of these resources early and often to support their timely progress through the program.

The **Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)** is available to advise all graduate students in the program. Students must meet with the DGS at least once per year. DGS office hours will be announced each semester.

Students who have declared an advisor should meet with their **Faculty Advisor** at least once per semester.

The **Student Services Advisor (SSA)** offers support and counsel graduate students on the technical aspects of the program. Students should be in regular contact with the SSA regarding course enrollment each semester, progress towards their Qualifying Examinations, plans for their Teaching Assistantships, applications for and receipt of fellowships, and their plans for defending their dissertation. The SSA will send email notifications from the Department of History, Dornsife College and the Graduate School, so it is important for students to regularly check their USC email accounts. SSA office hours will be announced each semester. Appointments are available upon request.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Graduate student support packages provide for three years of fellowship to allow full time focus on academics and two additional years of support as a teaching assistant so that students may develop the additional skills needed for their professional futures.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) help full time faculty in course instruction, taking responsibility for leading discussion sections, grading student work and, in some cases, helping the professor with class preparation. TA stipends are for a full-time appointment, and also provide tuition remission for full-time study as well as health insurance and mandatory student health center fees.

Teaching Assistantships are assigned by the DGS for each semester.

Other Sources of Funding for research, travel, and dissertation writing support are available as USC-funded internal grants and grants/fellowships from external sources. Students are expected to seek funding through Graduate School Fellowships and outside sources. The Graduate School has a helpful list of external fellowship opportunities here: [External Fellowships – USC Graduate School](#)

EXCEPTIONAL FUNDING

Graduate students in good standing are eligible for reimbursement of up to \$750 annually to support conference travel or to defray research costs and materials (travel, books, photographic reproduction, language training, etc.). These funds are contingent upon approval of your faculty advisor/dissertation chair and the DGS. However, due to fluctuating budgets, the department cannot guarantee that there are sufficient funds for each student each year.

The Exceptional Funding Form is submitted via DocuSign. Please contact the SSA for more information. Receipts for items over \$50 are required for reimbursement.

PAYROLL & STIPEND PAYMENT INFORMATION

The first Fellowship stipend check is mailed to the mailing address in OASIS. Please be sure to keep this address current. Should you wish to set up Direct Deposit for your stipend checks, simply login to MyUSC and select the Pay My Bill icon. More information is available on the [Graduate Student Drive](#).

Please refer to the following links for more information regarding payment dates:

[International And Graduate Stipend Calendar - Financial Aid](#)

Students who are Teaching or Research Assistants through Workday (Payroll System) may set up Direct Deposit themselves. Students can also set up ACH on their student account through OASIS directly.

HELPFUL LINKS

MyUSC: <https://my.usc.edu/>

This is a customizable online portal which provides access to services at USC. Services include Web Registration, OASIS, Blackboard, Faculty/Staff/Student Directory, Library Information, Course Enrollment Information, Daily Trojan, Google Apps, Student Announcements, and University Event Calendar.

OASIS (Online Academic Student Information System)

This is where you will find all aspects of your academic record. It is recommended to access OASIS through your MyUSC page.

- Course Information includes your Registered Course List, Book List, Enrollment History, Restrictions, STARS Report, Grade Report, and Permit to Register.
- Financial information includes your USCe.pay ([Log In to USCe.pay](#)) and USC Payment Plan, Financial Aid Services, and Tax Documentation.
- Course Transfer includes your Transfer Credit Report if you have coursework from other institutions.

- Record Ordering Services includes your Degree Verifications and Transcripts.
- Other Services include Updating Expected Graduation Term, Diploma Delivery, Change of PIN, Change of Address, Guest Access, and Student Health Insurance.

USC Schedule of Classes - <https://classes.usc.edu/>

This site is produced by the Registrar and provides a list of all courses offered each semester by each department throughout the university.

The Graduate School - <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/>

Comprehensive student resource for policies, standards, and processes related to graduate education at USC.

- **Appointment or Change of Qualifying Exam Form:**
https://graduateschool.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Appointment_Change_of_Committee_Form_Qualifying.pdf
- **Appointment or Change of Dissertation Committee Form:**
https://graduateschool.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Appointment_Change_of_Committee_Form_Doctoral.pdf
- **Thesis/Dissertation Submission:**
<https://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/>

Please refer to the following links for more information regarding payment dates:

- [International And Graduate Stipend Calendar - Financial Aid](#)

University Catalogue: <http://catalogue.usc.edu/index.php>

USC Graduate Life: <https://studentlife.usc.edu/>

The USC COVID-19 Resources Center - <https://coronavirus.usc.edu/>

Information, updates and support for the USC community in response to the coronavirus.

University of Southern California Van Hunnick Department of History

Graduate Student Handbook
2024 – 2025



3502 Trousdale Parkway
Social Sciences Building (SOS) 153
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0034
<http://dornsife.usc.edu/hist/>
Phone: 213-740-1657
Fax: 213-740-6999
Twitter: @USCHistory
Facebook: www.facebook.com/uschistory