



MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY



**STUDENT GUIDE TO THE MA PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
REVISED MARCH 2026**

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Welcome to the MA Program

Welcome to the History Department at UTEP! We are excited to have you as a member of our program. This handbook is designed to help you navigate the History MA program, keep you in good academic standing, and graduate in a timely manner.



Program Overview

The History MA program at UTEP is designed to train students in historical thinking, research, and writing. Students work closely with History faculty members and can take courses in borderlands, United States, Latin American, and transnational/global history. With full-time study, the program is designed to be completed in four semesters.

The program offers training needed for careers in public history, secondary school teaching, and research-focused professions. Our graduates have gone on to careers in public service, business, museums, archives, and teaching. Others have joined doctoral programs at UTEP, the University of Michigan, and UT Austin, among others.

Affordable tuition, opportunities for teaching and research assistantships, and evening class schedules makes UTEP's History MA program an excellent choice for both full-time students and working professionals.

Program Components & Degree Requirements

The Master of Arts Program in the Department of History at UTEP is a dynamic program offering students a variety of opportunities. There are two concentrations for students interested in an MA in History, the Standard Concentration and the Borderlands Concentration. In both cases, a student can choose the Thesis option (36 hours), Comprehensive Exam option (36 hours), or Public History Project option (36 hours). Under the thesis option, students will register for two thesis writing courses, HIST 5398 and 5399, to expand a previously written research paper and complete the thesis. Under the comprehensive exam option, students will register for HIST 5393 to complete readings and sit for a comprehensive exam in their final semester. Under the public history project option, students will register for HIST 5393 to undertake independent research related to their public history projects. Spanish language competency is also required for the Borderlands Concentration: students must complete fourth semester Spanish with a grade of B or better or successfully complete an approved Spanish language competency examination.

Students may also pursue a [Certificate in Teaching History](#), which consists of 18 hours of graduate courses in History. To be eligible to teach dual-credit courses (i.e., courses that offer credit for both high school and college simultaneously), teachers must have either 18 credit hours of graduate work in History and a master's degree in another discipline, or an MA in History. For students who wish to be credentialed to teach at El Paso Community College (EPCC), or as instructors of courses offered for dual credit in Texas High Schools, it is important to note that EPCC, which does all dual credit credentialing in this area, will typically not accept courses in which a student has received a grade below B.



In addition, students may also pursue a [Certificate in Public and Oral History](#), which will train students in the methodology and practice of public history, focusing particularly on museums and oral history. Public history is a broad field that encompasses archives, museums, historical interpretation, and historic preservation, among others. Oral history, which is often classified as a subsection of public history, is the methodology and practice of collecting recorded oral interviews that are historically contextualized and made available for researchers and others. This certificate emphasizes oral history and museum exhibits. If you plan to earn the Certificate in Public and Oral History, please contact Dr. Saniya Ghanoui (sghanoui@utep.edu).

The Department also offers a [Fast Track](#) Program for the MA in History. Undergraduate History majors who have completed at least 90 hours of undergraduate coursework with a minimum of 24 of those hours at UTEP and have a GPA of at least 3.30 may take up to 9 graduate credit hours while pursuing their BA. This will allow students to complete the MA degree in 1.5 years.

Here is the current [MA Degree Plan Chart](#) breaking down all of the courses requirements for each option.



Culminating Projects

Students will choose one of the following three options for a culminating project to complete their Master's degree.

Thesis

The MA thesis is an extended research paper that is usually based on a seminar paper that has been written in a graduate course. Theses may vary in length but should be no more than 100 pages. The MA thesis must comply with the academic conventions of historical writing (Chicago/Turabian citations) and the [graduate school style guideline](#). A thesis should be grounded in the current historiography (the literature on a given subject), make extensive use of primary sources, and probe a historical problem. It should make an argument and engage the notion of change over time. Although directed by an advisor, the MA thesis is an independent project, and students will need to take initiative in writing and revising them.

Students should work closely with their advisor to formulate the thesis and to form a committee (minimum two members from the History Department and one outside reader from another department at UTEP or another university). The thesis must be formally defended in front of the committee. In their final two semesters, students completing the thesis should enroll in HIST 5398 and HIST 5399 with their thesis advisors.

Public History Project

The public history culminating project combines rigorous historical research with a medium applicable to public-facing historical professions. The project may take the form of a podcast, a museum exhibit design, a historic preservation project report, or another substantive research plan with the agreement of a faculty advisor. In all cases, the public history culminating project will include a substantial research component and make an original scholarly contribution. Students who plan to do a public history culminating project must submit a proposal that articulates the parameters of the project to their faculty advisor for approval. In consultation with their advisor, students must form a committee (minimum two members from the History Department and one outside reader from another department at UTEP or another university) and formally defend the project. In their final semester, students completing the public history project should enroll in HIST 5393 with their project advisors.

Comprehensive Exam

Students may choose to sit for a comprehensive examination in one of the historical fields offered by the department (U.S. History, Latin American History, or Borderlands History). Students will be examined based on their chosen field's book list (available from the MA

coordinator) and will have 72 hours to complete the exam questions. Answers are capped at 25 double-spaced pages and will be evaluated by a committee formed of department members who specialize in that field. In their final semester, students completing the comprehensive exam should enroll in HIST 5393 with a faculty member who specializes in their chosen field.

Program Goals

In accordance with the American Historical Association's suggested best practice for History MA programs¹, the UTEP History MA program focuses on five essential elements:

- **A base of historical knowledge.** Students receive training in historical content that combines both a breadth and depth of knowledge, a familiarity with multiple historiographical traditions, and the ability to synthesize different types of historical knowledge.
- **Research and presentation skills.** In both coursework and culminating projects, students will conduct individual and sometimes collaborative research projects, learn how to convey their findings to others, and present their work with confidence.
- **A solid introduction to historical pedagogy.** Students are introduced to the cognitive processes involved in teaching and learning history and how historians present the past to different types of audiences.
- **Learning how to think like a historian.** Students learn “‘historical habits of mind’ and ‘historiographic sensibilities’ (i.e., a critical and self-conscious approach to the constructed nature of historical knowledge).”
- **The foundations for a professional identity as a historian.** Students learn about the historical development of the discipline of history, the ethical standards and practices of historians, and the various contexts of professional practice. In short, students will graduate from the program with a greater sense of who they are as a historian and what that means for their future career paths.

¹ American Historical Association, “Retrieving the Master’s Degree from the Dustbin of History,” 2005.

Advising & Mentoring

The MA Program Director serves as academic advisor for master's students for the duration of their studies. In addition, students choose a project advisor who will oversee their culminating project (thesis, comprehensive exam, public history project). The project advisor should be chosen by the beginning of the third semester of studies at the latest.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure they respond to emails and meeting requests from the MA director and keep the MA director informed of any issues they encounter in the course of the program. Students are also ultimately responsible for registering for their classes in a timely manner.

Students can expect the following advising from the MA director, which is designed to make sure they remain in good academic standing and make satisfactory progress through the program:

- Check the student's coursework with the MA program degree plan to determine if the student is making progress toward the requirements of the program;
- Discuss recommendations on course selection that align with the student's plan of study;
- Work with the student and their advisor to determine if modifications are necessary in the degree plan and ensure that the appropriate paperwork for approval of exceptions is filed;
- Discuss the composition of the student's committee and the requirements for successful completion of the final project; and
- Promote opportunities that can provide the student with experiences that will enhance their career prospects and success.

Academic & Professional Performance

Standards for Progressing Through the Program

Graduate students must maintain a 3.0 or higher cumulative GPA in all graduate-level coursework. Credit is given in the Graduate School for the grades “A,” “B,” and “C” only.

Assignment of the grade “I” (Incomplete) is made only in exceptional circumstances. The time span allowed for the work’s completion cannot exceed one calendar year. In no case may repetition of the course be assigned as work to be completed. If the work has not been completed at the end of the specified time, the “I” will be changed to an “F.”

A student will not be cleared for graduation until all Incompletes, regardless of whether or not the courses are required for the degree, have been eliminated from the record. The student will be cleared for graduation at the end of the term that the Incomplete is removed from the academic record which may be different from the intended term of graduation as indicated on the Application for Graduate Degree.

In order to graduate, students must complete all requirements for the degree and be enrolled in the university. All students planning to graduate should meet with the MA Advisor for a graduation check to ensure that their degree plan is in order. They can then submit a petition to graduate with the Graduate School.

Grading Standards and Grade Appeals

Grades in content curriculum will be based on your academic performance, as evidenced in a variety of ways including tests, essays, presentations, and class participation. Your classroom behavior, including professionalism, respect for others, and personal integrity, also influences your grades.

As indicated on the College of Liberal Arts [Guide to Academic Standing](#), graduate students must submit a written request for a grade change to the faculty of record as soon as possible after the receipt of the grade but not later than one year after the semester in which the course in question was taken. A graduating student must request a grade change within three months after the last day of final examinations of the last semester enrolled. After this time, all grades become part of the student’s official academic history and cannot be altered. A grade change must be approved by the faculty of record, the department Chair and the college



Dean. Additional approval is required from the Graduate School for thesis/dissertation and project courses (5396-5397, 5398-5399, 6320-6321, 6398-6399). Students will receive notification of approved changes.

Grades may be changed as a result of (1) grade changes initiated by the instructor and approved by the appropriate department Chair and the college Dean, (2) grade change initiated by the department chair for cases where the instructor cannot be contacted and there exists clear and convincing evidence for a grade change, (3) grade change due to disciplinary action imposed by the Dean of Students or Hearing Officer for violation of University rules, or (4) action taken by the Student Welfare and Grievance Committee in grade appeal procedures.

Grades determined as a result of actions taken in items (3) or (4) above are final and not subject to change. No other grade change shall occur without the consent of the instructor. The Registrar shall notify the student and the instructor of any change of grade.



Academic Integrity

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at El Paso. More specifically, students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University. At a minimum, students should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires students to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to the University's Student Conduct and Discipline policy located in Chapter 1 of Section 2 in the Handbook of Operating Procedures located at: <https://www.utep.edu/vpba/hoop/>

Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution

While enrolled at the University, a student neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. Any student who engages in conduct that is prohibited by the Board of Regents' Rules and Regulations or University rules or by federal, state, or local law is subject to discipline whether such conduct takes place on or off campus or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct. All students are expected and required to obey the law, to show respect for properly constituted authority, and to observe correct standards of conduct. The University of Texas at El Paso administers student discipline according to established procedures of due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Regents, Series 50101, and in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HoOP), <http://hoop.utep.edu>.

Student Grievance Policies & Procedures

Grade Appeals. A student may challenge his/her grade as determined by a member of the faculty of the University during or within one year after the end of any credit course, qualifying or comprehensive examination, for which the student has been enrolled or three months following the term the graduate degree was awarded. A challenge to a grade may be pursued only on the basis of malice, bias, arbitrary, or capricious grade determination, or impermissible discrimination. In no event shall a challenge be pursued on the basis of the standards employed in setting grades, so long as those standards are employed impartially.

The student must first attempt to resolve the question through consultation with the faculty member who assigned the grade. The student should then attempt to resolve the question through consultation with the administrator(s) to whom the faculty member reports. Having failed to resolve the matter after consultation with both the faculty member and her/his supervisors, the student may consult with and/or file a challenge with the Chairperson of the Student Welfare and Grievance Committee. Students should contact the Office of Student Life for specific information or download a copy of the grievance form and instructions on the Office of Student Life web page at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/resources/grade-grievance.html>.

Student-Student Conflict. In the event where it may be necessary to report students whose behavior could be harmful to themselves and others, you can submit a [Student of Concern report](#) with the Office of Community Standards. The report is designed for faculty, staff, and students to provide information to the university about a student who may be struggling or experiencing difficulties at the university. Reports are reviewed daily and a case manager will follow-up with both the submitter and the student(s) being reported. This includes, but is not limited to, students who exhibit an abrupt change in performance or behavior, engage in behavior that causes you or others concern for safety, or threatens to harm him/herself or others.

Student-Faculty Conflict. In the event that a conflict arises that is not addressed by an existing University, Graduate School, or program policy, the student and faculty member should attempt to work out the issue. Each party should document when meeting(s) occur and briefly summarize how attempt(s) to create a mutually satisfactory resolution were approached. If the parties cannot reach a mutually satisfactory resolution, the graduate program or home department should attempt to facilitate the resolution. These efforts may be undertaken by the director of graduate studies, department chair, dissertation committee, or another faculty member. The program may have specific guidance within its handbook that outlines the program's procedures. In all cases, local resolution should be attempted by the graduate program or home department before the matter is escalated. In rare cases, the student can bring the issue directly to the Dean of Students Office through their [Student Outreach and Support \(SoS\) Program](#).

Non-Academic Grievances. Non-academic grievances of policies and procedures of University departments related to matters other than discrimination, such as the application or interpretation of student policies, must be initiated by making an effort to resolve the matter with the individual involved in the interpretation or decision. If the matter is not resolved, it must be submitted in writing to the Provost or his/her department within 10 working days of the questioned decision or interpretation.

Student Support and Safety

The MA advisor and administrative assistants in the History Department are available to help students navigate the program, including issues related to enrollment, coursework, and employment. The [Graduate School](#) is another important resource for program-related concerns.

UTEP's [Miner Support](#) program offers a range of services to students, from emergency financial aid to housing and food assistance, mental health support, and technology resources.



The University Counseling Center is dedicated to providing high quality mental health services that support students' ability to benefit from their experience at the UTEP. [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) is the central resource for all mental health-related services available to UTEP students.

The [Center for Accommodations and Support Services \(CASS\)](#) provides students with disabilities, accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. Students who need academic accommodations should register with CASS in order to make accommodation requests.

Teaching and Research Assistantships

Teaching Assistants typically assist professors in large lectures with grading and other tasks. As part of their duties, they will need to maintain consistent communication with the instructor of record, check email regularly to respond to student questions, attend class, hold regular office hours, and grade assignments in a timely fashion. As teaching assistantships are employed positions, students who are awarded a TAship must be present in class, and in El Paso, during the semesters in which they TA. It is rare that a student might be called to serve as a TAship for an online course, but in the event that a TAship allows for remote work, students must follow additional guidelines agreed to by the Instructor of Record, Program Director, and Chair of the department to ensure best practices.

If any professional conduct issues arise or if TAs are reported to the Chair of the department for a failure to complete duties, the Chair in consultation with the Graduate Programming Committee will develop a plan of action that may include termination of assistantship.

In order to be considered for Teaching or Research Assistantships, students will need to be enrolled full-time and in good standing. These are nine-month appointments at 20 hours/week, which make students eligible for medical insurance benefits and for non-resident tuition coverage.



Department and University Resources

[Department of History](#)

[History MA Program](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

[Graduate School](#)

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[Student Health and Wellness Center](#)

[Graduate Student Assembly](#)

[University Library](#)

[Technology Support](#)

[Office of International Programs](#)

Useful Contacts

Department of History

Location: LART 320

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Dr. Leslie Waters, MA Advisor

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