NON-THESIS OPTION INSTRUCTIONS

M.A. Non-Thesis Sequence:
A typical sequence for preparation of the thesis or thesis project follows:
1. Identify a topic/problem/issue during HIST 6050 Historical Methods or sometime in the first year.
2. Select a research paper director and second reader at the program of study interview. In considering the research paper committee, the faculty member from the student’s geographic area will serve as director and the second faculty member will come from outside the geographic area.
3. File the Comprehensive Examination Application and Research Paper Information Form (See Forms section).
4. Select a specific topic during the first 3 hours of HIST 6299, identify primary source material pertinent to the project and prepare and submit a research paper proposal to the research paper director and second reader.
5. Continue work on the research paper during the third semester.
6. Complete the research paper during the spring semester of the final semester according to the guidelines set out by the research paper director and second reader.
7. Consult with the rotating examiner, assigned at the start of the final semester, and the research paper director on comprehensive exam reading lists and questions.
8. Write the comprehensive examination in April and defend the research paper and examination essays in an oral defense one to two weeks after the examination is taken.

Research Paper and Comprehensive Examination Committees:
Students taking the non-thesis option will choose a faculty member to serve as the director of his/her research paper, as well as another to serve as a secondary reader. The student must choose the secondary reader from a different geographical region than his/her primary field. At the start of their final semester, the student will be assigned a rotating examiner in preparation for their comprehensive examinations. The Comprehensive Examination Committee will be composed of three faculty members: 1) a rotating examiner, 2) the director of the research paper, and 3) the second reader of the research paper.

Forms:
Students must file a Comprehensive Examination Application and Research Paper Information Form (see Forms section).

Research Paper Proposal Guidelines:
Prior to beginning a research paper, students are encouraged to produce an eight- to ten-page research paper proposal, with an attached bibliography, in which the student links his/her topic to larger historical/analytical issue(s). The proposal should be discussed and agreed upon by the research paper director and secondary reader.

Proposals should be in 12-point Times-Roman font with one-inch margins on the sides, top, and bottom of each page. Proposals do not need a title page. Put your name on the first page along with the title of your project.
Make sure to number your pages. During the proposal defense committee members will need to be able to refer to sections of the proposal by page number.

Proposals must include the following two sections:

Section 1: Description of research paper [six to eight pages, double spaced]

This section of the proposal should be in narrative form and must include the following:

- An introduction. A good introduction should clearly identify the topic or topics for your research along with its larger historical context. It should also at least suggest a relationship to explore between your topic and an analytical context or set of contexts. Standard analytical contexts for history include: politics, ideology, cultural attitudes, class, race, gender, identity, globalization, nationalism, and power relations.
- Background. This should be no more than a paragraph or two, just enough so readers of the proposal can clearly grasp the importance of the project.
- Historiography. This is a survey of what other scholars have said and argued about your topic, or, if your topic is entirely new, what other scholars have said and argued about its larger contexts.
- A clear statement of your “propositional thesis.” In other words, a statement of how your approach adds to, complicates, or challenges current scholarly understandings of your topic or context area, along with a statement of the historical relationships and issues you plan to explore.
- Method and Theory. This section should lay out the types of primary sources you will be using along with how (with specific reference to relevant scholarship) you will be using them.
- A schedule for the completion of the paper. This section should lay out the availability of your sources, when you will complete your research and your timetable for drafts and revisions.

Section II: Bibliography [no page limit, single-spaced with spaces between each full citation]

- The bibliography should consist of two categories, one for “primary sources” the other for “secondary sources.”
- Follow the Chicago or Turabian style for bibliographic citations (note that this style is different the style for footnotes or endnotes). For references, rules, and models, see:

  The Chicago Manual of Style Online (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html)  
  OR  

Developing your argument (thesis):

- Keep in mind that good historians do not start with a thesis and then do research to try to “prove” their thesis. If your starting thesis is wrong, you will find little or no evidence to support it. If your starting thesis is right the result will be a restatement of the obvious – since, of course, you had to know it to begin with and you must have learned it from either a class or some reading.
• A good thesis will always emerge as your research progresses. Keep in mind that a thesis does not have to be one simple sentence!

To develop a thesis, follow these steps:
1. Begin by doing primary source research on your topic. Early on, keep your eyes open for documents that interest you – you may want to change topics.
2. Look at your primary sources and find a relationship to explore between your topic and its historical and/or analytical context. This statement that there is a relationship is your initial or proposed thesis.

Your proposal should have a proposed thesis, in effect, a clear statement that your goal will be to explore relationships between your topic and larger historical and/or analytical contexts (these are frameworks of analysis such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, environment, politics, economics, religion, etc.).

Your topic may have more than one analytical context, or even reflect an attempt to establish the ways contexts such as class and race are inextricably linked. You can use historical context to narrow the time frame of your thesis. If your project runs across a broad period of time and through a number of historical contexts, it will probably end up being a narrative history, with less detail. To avoid this problem, you should limit your time-frame: exploring your topic within one historical context or looking at the ways a shift in historical context from one to another affected your topic.

3. Do some searching for secondary sources, books and articles on or related to your topic. Get some more information, but most important: find out what other historians have said – or not said – about how your topic fits into your larger context, looking at their analysis of the period or how issues like class, race or gender operate during the period.
4. Keep collecting primary source evidence. Continue to ask yourself whether your evidence supports what other historians have said.
5. When you find elements in your evidence that add to, complicate or challenge what other historians have said, you have started the process of discovering your thesis.

By definition, your thesis should not be a repetition of what some other historian has said about your topic. Below is a sample proposal outline:
1. Hook – narrative evidence suggesting the relationship[s] you will explore.
2. Background – stressing importance of topic
3. Proposed thesis – laying out the relationships you will be exploring between your topic, historical context, and analytical context.
4. Historiography placed in some type of order, arranged chronologically to lay out early interpretations of your topic or context, then revisions, then getting to how your approach will add to this chronology; or arranged by schools of thought, then getting to how your approach will work between schools or take off in a new direction.
5. Suggestion of how your primary sources might complicate dominant historiography.
6. Suggestion of ways to shift your analysis to complicate the historiography – by shifting the contexts, or by combining alternate layers of historiography.
7. Statement of type and availability of primary sources.
8. Timeline for completion.

Research Paper Guidelines:
Students should work with both the research paper director and the secondary reader to produce a paper that is carefully conceived, well written, and thoroughly documented. In general, the thesis or thesis project should meet all the elements of the program’s student learning outcomes. The style of the paper should conform to the rules of the Chicago Manual of Style. Refer to the Graduate College’s guidelines for details on how to format the document (https://grad.uni.edu/thesis-dissertation). Graduate College policy requires that the research paper must be read and approved by a committee of at least two members of the graduate faculty, presented in a format acceptable for publication, and permanently filed in the departmental office. A Research Paper Information Form must be submitted before final approval can be granted (see Forms section).

A research paper is more limited in scope than a thesis. While considerably shorter (40 to 50 pages) and usually based on fewer primary sources, preparation of a research paper requires utilization of the same skills needed to write a thesis.

Students writing a research paper must:
- Analyze the current secondary literature on the topic and use that analysis to
- Formulate a question of historical interest.
- Locate and use pertinent primary and secondary sources to
- Develop a thesis and, finally,
- Support this thesis in the body of the paper.

Comprehensive Examinations:
In order to take the written and oral comprehensive examinations required in the Department’s non-thesis track, a student must have:
- Completed at least 21 hours of the required coursework;
- His/her completed research paper approved by the director and secondary reader, and have submitted a copy of the approved paper to the rotating examiner and the Graduate Coordinator;
- Resolved all “Incomplete” course grades to letter grades; and
- A midterm grade of “B” or above in all courses in which he/she is enrolled in the semester in which the examination is taken.

A Comprehensive Exam Form must be completed no later than two weeks before a student plans to take the exams (see Forms section).

The Comprehensive Examination Committee will be composed of three faculty members: 1) a rotating examiner, 2) the director of the research paper, and 3) the second reader of the research paper.

The Comprehensive Examinations will consist of a three-hour written comprehensive in a primary field plus an oral comprehensive examination in both the primary field and a secondary field.
The three-hour written exam on the student’s primary field will consist of two essay questions; one question will be written by the director of the research paper and one by a rotating examiner, assigned at the beginning of the semester. Both of these questions will be based on a reading list of approximately 20 books/articles based on classes they have taken in their primary field. The student is responsible for generating this list of readings and distributing it to the three examiners, who may suggest changes to it. This list should be finalized by the end of the third week of the semester.

The Coordinator of Graduate Studies will announce the identity of the rotating examiner the second week of each semester. The written exam will normally take place in the second week of November or the second week of April. The rotating examiner will schedule a time for the student to take the written exam.

All three of the Comprehensive Exam Committee members will read and grade the written exam. The committee will inform the graduate coordinator of the results of the exam. If the student passes the written exam, the committee will ask the student to schedule the oral exam. The oral examination should take place a week or two following the written exam.

Oral Defense:
The oral examining committee will consist of the same three faculty members. In the oral comprehensive exam, the student will be asked to do the following: 1) answer follow-up questions based on his/her written exam, and 2) answer additional questions on a second field. The second field should in some way mesh with the student’s research paper topic. Only one field may be a chronological geographic field; the other must be thematic/topical.

Geographic Fields:
This list includes, but is not limited to the following:
- United States History to 1877
- United States History since 1877
- Medieval European History
- Modern European History 1300-1815
- Modern European History since 1815
- Middle East
- Ancient History
- Latin America
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- China
- India
- Japan

Thematic Fields:
This list includes, but is not limited to the following:
- Cultural History
- Economic History
- Environmental History
• Intellectual History
• Military/Diplomatic History
• Political History
• Social History
• Public History
• Race/Ethnicity History
• Urban History
• Women's/Gender History
• Religion

And others as approved by the Graduate Studies Committee

Following the comprehensive oral examination, the committee will immediately inform the student of the decision:
• Pass with Distinction
• Pass
• Provisional Pass
• Fail

A student may not take a Comprehensive Examination in a field in which he/she has not taken at least one substantive course. (Since the Individual Readings course (HIST 6285) is designed for further study of an area already covered in a regular 5000- or 6000-level course, HIST 6285 does not fulfill this requirement.)

Once the research paper, comprehensive exams, and oral defense have been completed, the department will complete the Report of Comprehensive Examination Approval and the Report of Non-Thesis Paper Approval forms available through the Graduate College (https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-college-forms).

Application for Graduation:
A Graduation Application form (sample in Forms section) must be filed by the end of the ninth week of the fall and spring semesters, or the fourth week of the summer session. A student can either (1) file the form electronically at the time of his/her final registration; (2) access the form through MyUniverse and file it electronically; or, (3) if the student is applying after the deadline, download a paper copy of the form from MyUniverse and file the hard copy with the Registrar’s Office. After this form has been completed, the mandatory graduation fee will automatically be added to the student’s U-bill.

Around the midpoint of the semester a student plans to graduate, he/she will receive a Graduation Information Packet from the Office of the Registrar. Both sides of the enclosed Yellow Card must be completed and returned to the Registrar. If the student is participating in Commencement early, he/she will receive an additional Yellow Card the semester their degree is actually completed. This second card will provide the Registrar’s Office with an accurate mailing address for the student’s diploma.