THESIS OR THESIS PROJECT OPTION INSTRUCTIONS

M.A. Thesis or Thesis Project Sequence:
A typical sequence for preparation of the thesis or thesis project follows:
1. Identify a topic/problem/issue during HIST 6050 Historical Method or sometime in the first year.
2. Select a thesis or thesis project committee at the program of study interview. In considering the Committee, the faculty member most knowledgeable will serve as Chair, the second faculty member will possess general knowledge about the area, and the third faculty member will come from outside the area.
3. File both the Thesis or Thesis Project Application Form and the Thesis or Thesis Project Committee Approval Form (See Forms section).
4. Select a specific topic during the first 3 hours of HIST 6299, identify significant bodies of primary source material pertinent to the project, and prepare and submit a thesis or thesis project proposal to committee members.
5. Continue to identify significant bodies of primary source material pertinent to the project.
6. Continue work on the thesis or thesis project during the third semester.
7. Complete the thesis or thesis project during the final semester according to the guidelines set out by the thesis or thesis project committee.

Thesis or Thesis Project Committee:
A student’s thesis or thesis project committee must be selected before the student registers for his/her first three hours of HIST 6299 (Research) and shall be composed as follows:
- The Chair and the second member shall be chosen by the student in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator based on student interests and faculty specializations.
- The third member must specialize in an area other than that of the student’s primary field and shall be chosen by the student in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator based on student interests and faculty specialization.
- A fourth reader from outside the department may be added to the committee at the student’s request and in consultation with the committee chair and the Graduate Coordinator.
- All changes to the composition of a thesis or thesis project committee shall be made only with the approval of the Graduate Studies Committee.

Forms:
Students must file a Thesis or Thesis Project Committee Approval Form, available through the Graduate College (https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-college-forms). Students must also fill out a Thesis or Thesis Project Application Form, with the Department (see Forms section).

Thesis Proposal Guidelines:
Prior to beginning a thesis or thesis project, all students taking the thesis option must produce an eight- to ten-page thesis or thesis or thesis project proposal, with an attached bibliography, in which the student links his/her topic to larger historical/analytical issue(s). The proposal must be approved by his/her three-person committee before a student may proceed with work on the
thesis or thesis or thesis project. Students may take no more than three (3) hours of HIST 6299 before the submission and approval of a thesis or thesis project proposal.

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 thesis or thesis project [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 project. This section should lay out the availability of your sources, when you will complete your research, your number of planned chapters, 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 than is expected of an M.A. thesis. 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.

**Thesis or Thesis Project Guidelines:**
A student’s Thesis or Thesis Project Committee will provide the student with specific guidance as to the required elements of their particular project. In general, the thesis or thesis project should meet all the elements of the program’s student learning outcomes. Theses typically resemble academic historical articles or books and thesis projects typically resemble works of public historians such as museum exhibitions (with an accompanying exhibition narrative) or digital history projects (with an accompanying historiographic and methodological narrative). Refer to the Graduate College’s guidelines for details on how to format the document (https://grad.uni.edu/thesis-dissertation).

**Oral Thesis or Thesis Project Defense:**
Students completing a thesis or project will have an oral thesis or thesis project defense in place of Comprehensive Examinations. Because thesis defenses are public events:
- The defense time, place, and topic must be announced no less than one week before the defense.
- No defense will be scheduled until the Graduate Coordinator has received one copy of the student’s thesis abstract.
- Students should make a short presentation on their thesis at the start of the thesis defense. They should consult their thesis advisor on the content/length of this presentation.

The process of submitting thesis or thesis project drafts and receiving responses is negotiated between the student and the committee. **The final draft of the thesis or thesis project must reach the committee thirty (30) calendar days before the Graduate College thesis submission deadline.** The 30-day requirement is stipulated so that revisions in the thesis can be completed in a timely fashion. There are almost always substantial revisions mandated by the student’s committee.

Students bear responsibility for meeting all thesis deadlines stipulated by the Graduate College, as well as submitting the proper number of copies on the appropriate type of paper. Students should complete the Thesis Submission Form and the University Record Sheet, available through the Graduate College (https://grad.uni.edu/graduate-college-forms), and submit them along with a final copy of their thesis to the Graduate College). Students should also submit one copy (on regular paper) to the Department of History and one copy (on regular paper or electronically) to the thesis advisor. Thesis approval will not be granted until the Department has this copy in hand.
**Second Language Competency Requirement:**
Depending on his/her research interests, a graduate student who selects the History M.A. thesis or thesis project option may be required by his/her advisor to demonstrate competency in a foreign language before completing the program. Departmental faculty who are proficient in the language will determine if the student possesses reading competency.

**Application for Graduation:**
A Graduation Application form (sample in Forms section) must be filed by the end of the ninth week of the student’s final semester, 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.