The Graduate Program in History at Vanderbilt

Guidelines approved by the Department of History

Last updated 9/29/2017

With forty-two full-time faculty members, the Vanderbilt History Department trains graduate students in a wide range of fields and methodological approaches, covering periods from the Middle Ages to the present. A list of faculty working on particular geographic areas and thematic subfields can be found on the faculty Web page here. Links lead to detailed information on each member of the Department. Several graduate fields have Web pages of their own.

The program has been designed to provide our students with sound professional training, both intensive and comprehensive, while enabling them to advance expeditiously toward a degree. Students are reminded that the general rules of the Graduate School, with which this program is in accord, are published in the Graduate School Catalog, available on-line at here. All students should familiarize themselves with the section on academic regulations. They should also be aware of the Honor Code and the regulations governing non-academic matters, which are published in the student handbook. The handbook is available on-line at here.

Graduate students can take advantage of numerous programs of lectures, seminars and workshops offered by the History Department and by other departments and interdisciplinary centers and schools at the University. The Department sponsors the Vanderbilt History Seminar, which meets about five times a semester to discuss a pre-circulated paper presented by visiting scholars and, occasionally, by Vanderbilt faculty. Each year, the seminar is devoted to a theme that has been the subject of recent innovative work. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the seminar as part of their graduate education, to gain familiarity with diverse historical approaches and methods.

History also sponsors the Forum for the History of Science, Medicine and Technology, and co-sponsors multiple activities in the area of British Studies, and a Law School-History Department Workshop. Many other opportunities for interdisciplinary engagement can be found elsewhere. The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities houses on-going seminars in areas ranging from Circum-Atlantic Studies to postcolonial theory, science studies, and early modern cultural studies. A partial listing of other centers and programs whose activities would be of interest to history graduate students would include the Center for Latin American Studies, the Center for Medicine Health, and Society, the Max Kade Center for European and German Studies, and the programs in African American and Diaspora Studies, American Studies, Asian Studies, Jewish Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies.

The Graduate Student History Association organizes activities for graduate students. Its elected officers serve as liaisons with the department faculty.
The Master’s Degree

The History Department does not accept external applications for a terminal master’s degree. The M.A. is usually earned en route to the Ph.D. It is also available to Vanderbilt undergraduates who enroll in the 4+1 program in history. Information on the 4+1 program can be found on-line, here. Students apply for admission after the first semester of their junior year. In addition to completing all requirements for the B.A., students in the program must have 30 graduate credit hours with at least a B average and must submit two substantial research papers in order to receive the M.A. The courses will normally be in the History Department, but appropriate graduate courses in other departments or programs may be counted, subject to the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) in history.

Requirements for the M.A. for doctoral students are described below, in the section on the Ph.D. program.

The Ph.D. Program

The purpose of the Ph.D. program is to train professional historians as scholars and teachers. The course of study will provide the scholarly tools for an academic career. Students will acquire and demonstrate expertise in a general field as well as appropriate subfields. They will also pursue training outside their area of scholarly interest as part of developing their proficiency in the teaching of history and their ability to situate particular research projects within a larger context.

The Ph.D. requires 72 hours of graduate credit, including 45 “quality hours.” All graduate courses taken at Vanderbilt for a letter grade count as “quality hours.” The remainder of the 72 hours includes dissertation research, which is graded SAT/UNSAT, and transfer credit where appropriate. In special cases we can petition the Graduate School to convert transfer credits into quality hours, but prefer for you to take the appropriate courses at Vanderbilt.

Transfer Credit: on recommendation of the History Department and with the approval of the Graduate School, credit up to 6 semester hours may be transferred from graduate schools in other accredited institutions when the student first arrives at Vanderbilt. Only those hours in which the student has achieved at least the grade B or its equivalent will be considered for transfer. Grades earned on transferred credit do not affect the student’s Graduate School average unless such courses are approved as quality hours, on petition from the History Department. After the student passes the qualifying examination and is formally admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D., additional credits may be transferred, up to a total (in very special cases) of 48 hours.

Students must maintain continuous registration with the Graduate School, even if not in residence. The normal academic, full-time registration is 9 to 13 hours per semester. Until they reach a total of 72 hours, students who register for fewer than 9 hours will lose full-time status. Those who register for more than 13 may incur supplemental tuition charges. After they have accumulated 72 hours, students register for 0 hours in History 9999 Dissertation Research in
order to maintain full-time status.

It is possible to combine a doctorate in history with credentials from other departments and programs. Interdisciplinary graduate certificates, requiring 15-18 hours of course work, are available in American Studies, African American/Diaspora Studies, Gender Studies, Jewish Studies, Latin American Studies, and Medicine, Health, and Society. In addition, there will be a certificate program in Learning and Design, offered in collaboration with Peabody College, beginning in fall 2016. The M.A. in Medicine, Health and Society is designed to be combined with a traditional Ph.D., as is the M.A. in Interdisciplinary Social and Political Thought.

-The First and Second Years-

The first two years in the Ph.D. program are devoted to taking classes, writing two substantial research papers, passing the necessary language examinations, and preparing for the qualifying examination, which is taken by May of the second year, or in some cases, by December of the third year.

The Graduate School requires that every Ph.D. candidate complete a total of 30 quality hours with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 before taking the qualifying examinations. In the first year, history students usually enroll in 3 courses in the fall semester and 4 courses in the spring semester, including a 1-hour independent study. In the second year, they enroll in 3 courses each semester. In the spring, students who take only 2 regular graduate courses register for enough credit in History 8999 (non-candidate research) to avoid falling below the minimum number of hours. (The designation non-candidate research simply refers to the status of students who have not yet passed their qualifying examination and been officially admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D.) Recognizing the need for maximum flexibility in meeting the course requirements, the History Department encourages students to work closely with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) as well as with specialists in their fields of interest to develop a plan of study.

Advising

The DGS serves as a general adviser to students as they embark on their studies, and a faculty adviser in an appropriate specialty is assigned to each student in the first year. By the beginning of the second year (and, in many cases, earlier), the student will have selected a professor to direct his or her dissertation, who may or may not be the same as the initial adviser. From that point on, the dissertation director serves as the adviser. Students confer with their adviser when they choose courses, research topics, and fields for the qualifying examination, and as they begin to define their thesis topic.
Courses

Courses include graduate courses offered by the History Department; graduate courses offered by other departments, programs, and schools; undergraduate courses for graduate credit; and supervised reading courses with individual faculty members.

**History 6100/6110 and 8000**

The History Department requires all first-year students to take a two-semester introduction to methods and research, History 6100-6110. These courses are designed to familiarize students with a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. History 6100 focuses on recent trends in historical scholarship. In 6110, students write a major research paper. It is linked with a one-hour independent study (History 8000) with a specialist in the student’s field. Students will be encouraged to submit work simultaneously to the instructors of 6110 and 8000.

**History 6400 and 6410**

The Department requires all students of American History to complete History 6400 and 6410, “Readings in American History.”

**History 6500 and 6510**

The Department recommends all students of Latin American History to complete “Readings in Early Latin American History” (6500) and “Readings in Modern Latin American History (6510).”

**History 3280**

Students in Latin American History are also strongly encouraged to take “Latin American Research Methods.”

**Reading Seminars**

These seminars provide the context within which students will write a substantial research paper, utilizing primary sources.

**Mezzanine (Undergraduate) Courses (5000 level only)**

Students may take undergraduate courses that are approved for graduate credit. A complete list appears in the courses section of the Graduate School Catalog (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/catalogs/grad/Grad01.html). Other 5000-level mezzanine courses may be taken for graduate credit if the student obtains special authorization from the instructor, the DGS, and the Graduate School. **The request must be approved by the DGS in time to reach the Graduate School by the tenth day of classes.** Copies of the appropriate form are available from the graduate secretary.
**Independent Studies**

Students may design independent study courses under the supervision of a faculty member to deepen their knowledge in particular areas. In consultation with the instructor, the student must prepare a plan of work for the course and complete a form for submission to the Graduate School. Copies of the form are available from the graduate secretary. **The petition must be approved by the DGS in time to reach the Graduate School by the tenth day of classes.**

**Graduate Courses in Other Departments, Programs, and Schools**

Students may enroll in graduate courses in other departments and interdisciplinary programs of the College of Arts and Science and in other schools of the university. They should consult with the DGS to make certain the course is suitable. Anthropology, Classics, English, French, German, Political Science, Sociology, and Spanish and Portuguese regularly offer classes at the graduate level that are appropriate for history graduate students to take as part of their program. Interdisciplinary programs include African-American and Diaspora Studies, the Graduate Department of Religion, Interdisciplinary Social and Political Thought, Latin American Studies, Medicine, Health, & Society, and Women’s and Gender Studies. Students with an interest in the history of medicine, public health, and disease are encouraged to take the MHS interdisciplinary graduate colloquium, MHS 6100. Other schools include Vanderbilt Law School, Owen School of Management, and the Divinity School.

**Research Papers**

Students must write two substantial research papers to fulfill the departmental research requirement. The first of these is written in the context of History 6110/8000 during the first year. It should be completed and graded by May 15, shortly after the end of classes. Students who receive a grade lower than “B” will have the opportunity to revise the paper and resubmit no later than August 1st. If no paper is received by August 1st, the student will not be allowed to register for second-year classes.

Students write the second paper in either their first or second year, as part of formal course work or in an independent study. It should be completed and approved by the time the student sits for the qualifying examination. The student should let the instructor know that he or she is submitting the paper for the departmental research requirement. When the paper is approved, the instructor should so notify the DGS and the graduate assistant.

**Note:** Papers written for courses in other departments will be evaluated by the student’s adviser. Students who have written a master’s thesis in history at another institution may petition to have it count as the second research paper for the Vanderbilt program. A student who wishes to take advantage of this option should submit a copy of the M.A. thesis to be evaluated by the DGS and the student’s adviser. A positive recommendation would then go to the Graduate School. Bear in mind that if the petition receives final approval, the student would be ineligible to receive a Vanderbilt M.A.
Grades and Deadlines

Students are expected to earn a grade of “B” or above in all of their courses. Students do not earn credit for any course in which a grade lower than “C” is received. Students who receive a “C” or lower in any course taken for graduate credit or who receive more than one “B” will be expected to discuss the grade and their future in the program with the DGS. By Graduate School regulations, students who fall below a grade point average of 3.0 will be placed on probation for one semester. If the student’s performance does not improve during that semester, the Graduate School and Department chair (in consultation with the DGS and the Graduate Studies Committee) will decide whether to dismiss the student or allow the continuation of probation. If at the end of the second semester the grade point average is still below 3.0, the student may be advised to withdraw or face dismissal. University regulations stipulate that a “B” average (3.0) is required for graduation.

Students are expected to complete course work in the semester in which it is assigned. Course instructors, however may assign a grade of “I” (incomplete) if work is not completed by the end of the semester.

Note:

- Under Department rules, students in the first year must complete all fall term course work by May 1st. Spring term course work should ideally be finished by August 1st and in no case later than December 1st of the second year. Students in the second year must complete all course work and fulfill the research requirement by the time they sit for the qualifying examination. Failure to meet these deadlines will render students ineligible to receive departmental or university research funds or summer funding.

- University regulations hold that an “I” not replaced by a regular grade within one year may be changed at the discretion of the instructor to the grade “F”. Otherwise, it automatically becomes permanent and remains on the transcript.

Foreign Language Requirements

The Basic Language Requirement: all candidates for the Ph.D. must demonstrate a reading knowledge of a foreign language or languages. In U.S. and British history, one language is required. In all other fields, the minimum is two. Any language will be accepted if there is a Vanderbilt faculty member qualified to judge the student’s level of competence, or if the student can meet the requirement without taking an examination at Vanderbilt. (See below, under “Alternatives to the Examination.”) Students should consult the DGS about the various possibilities.

Language examinations are offered at the beginning of each semester. They are set by Vanderbilt faculty, ordinarily from the History Department. The examinations require the student to translate multiple passages from a foreign language. Usually one is translated in full, and two others are summarized. The use of a dictionary is allowed. Students may take
language courses at Vanderbilt to help them prepare for the examinations, but such courses do not count for the degree. Consult the DGS about other opportunities for language study. The Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship program administered through federally-funded (Title VI) area studies centers provides funding for studying modern foreign languages. The priority is to encourage the study of less commonly taught languages, such as Arabic and Portuguese. Some universities have summer language institutes, at which students pay normal summer-school tuition.

Alternatives to the Examination(s):

- The Graduate School may accept certification from the Department that the minimum requirement in a language has been met if the student is able to present an acceptable academic record of the equivalent of at least 12 semester hours in the language.
- A student who has fulfilled the language requirement at another graduate school prior to entering Vanderbilt may, at the discretion of the History Department and the Graduate School, transfer the certification if the student does so within three years after having received it.
- A student who has done graduate work in a foreign language in history or another appropriate discipline (during a year abroad, for example) may ask the DGS to petition the Graduate School to accept the transcript documenting that work in lieu of the examinations.
- A student whose native language is not English may petition the Graduate School, through the DGS, to accept that language without an examination.

All students must fulfill their basic language requirement before they take their qualifying examinations. Students who need to take two language examinations must pass the first one by the end of the first year. Those who have not satisfied the requirement by the end of that year should use the following summer to improve their language skills.

The language requirement for doctoral research: In addition to satisfying the basic language requirement, students are expected to develop proficiency in any languages required for their dissertation research. They should normally have met this requirement by the time they take the qualifying examination, but an exception may be made for fields requiring more than one foreign language.

The M.A. Degree for Doctoral Students

- 30 quality hours, with at least a “B” average and no incompletes
- Completion of foreign language requirements appropriate to field of specialty
- Fulfillment of research requirements (two substantial research papers, both written while at Vanderbilt University)
  - Submission of MA Research Form to Graduate Administration (Susan Hilderbrand) typically before comprehensive exams, but can be submitted later in the year if need be.
• A grade of Pass in Comprehensive exams in major and minor fields (in rare cases, a student has to transfer out of the program, and when this happens, this requirement may be waived, per DGS approval. This situation is handled on a case-by-case basis.)

All students will complete this checklist in the normal course of the program (typically at the end of year 2).

Filing for the M.A. Degree

Filing for the MA must be completed several months in advance:
• Submit “Intent to Graduate” Form online, at the beginning of the term in which you expect to receive the degree. The deadline can be found on the Graduate School website on the Intent forms as they are posted. On-line intent to graduate forms will be available effective Spring 2018. Until that time, you should submit a paper form.
• Choose either “MA-non-thesis” or “MA-thesis.”
  o The “non-thesis” option does not require filing additional paperwork. Choosing this option means that your research papers will not be electronically archived in the University library.
  o The “thesis” option requires submission of the two research papers required of each student. These will be electronically archived as if they were a thesis or dissertation.
    ▪ Each paper must include a Title page and Abstract.
      • Title pages must include the signature of at least two Graduate School faculty members, typically the advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.
      • The Abstract is signed by the faculty member who most closely supervised the work.
      • File Name Format is LastName_Major title of the paper, saved as a PDF
    ▪ Once your files are assembled, contact Liz Leis or Linda Harris in the Graduate School 2 or 3 weeks prior to the Submission Date* listed on the Intent to Graduate Form. Once you have received their approval of the manuscripts, follow directions on the ETD (Electronic thesis and Dissertation) site, located at: http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/
    ▪ Additional guidance:
      http://gradschool.vanderbilt.edu/academics/theses/index.php

* For example, March 28, 2016 for Graduation May 2016

For Students with Previous Masters Degrees
• Students who have written a master’s thesis in history at another institution may petition to have it count as the second research paper for the Vanderbilt program. Bear in mind that taking this option means that the student would be ineligible to receive a Vanderbilt MA in History, but would rather proceed to Candidacy for the PhD.
• Students must submit the MA Research Form to the Graduate Administration (Susan Hilderbrand) before comprehensive exams.
The Ph.D. Committee

In the second year, and no later than the end of the fall semester, each student, in consultation with his or her adviser and the DGS, must propose a Ph.D. Committee. The committee is appointed by the Graduate School on the advice of the DGS. In accordance with Graduate School regulations, the committee consists of no fewer than four members of the graduate faculty. Three will be from the History Department, including the dissertation director, who will serve as chair. One must come from outside the Department (a member of the history department at another university is one acceptable possibility). Any variation of the committee makeup must be approved by the Graduate School. The committee must represent the student’s minor as well as major fields. (On fields, see the section on the qualifying examination, below.)

If one minor field is in a discipline other than history, the outside member will come from that discipline. It is expected that students will make changes in their Graduate Committee whenever their intellectual interests change. If a committee member leaves Vanderbilt, it is the student’s responsibility to make certain that the committee composition conforms to the Graduate School requirements. The functions of the Ph.D. committee are (a) to help the student prepare for the qualifying examination and conduct the examination; (b) to administer the dissertation prospectus; (c) to aid the student and monitor the progress of the dissertation; and (d) to read and approve the dissertation and administer the final dissertation defense.

While the student is writing the dissertation, the full committee should meet with him or her at least once a year to assess what has been accomplished and help in planning the next stages of the project.

The Qualifying Examination

In consultation with the Ph.D. committee and the DGS, the student prepares for the qualifying examination, which will be taken by May of the second year, or in some cases, by December of the third year. By the end of the fall semester of the second year, students must file a “Fields for the Qualifying Examination,” signed by their committee members and the DGS, indicating their proposed fields for the examination.

The examination cannot be scheduled until the student has 30 quality hours, with at least a “B” average and no incompletes, and has met the language requirement.

In the examination, the student must demonstrate mastery of a major field and two minor fields.

- The major field is typically defined as a long time span and either a regional or a national geographic framework (for example, Europe 1600-1789 or modern Latin America). A large topical field such as modern medical history, Anglo-American legal history, or the Reformation may also be appropriate.
- One of the minor fields may be a subfield of the major field, defined by topic and/or geography. An example would be a major field on modern Latin America combined
with a minor field on Brazil. A topically or geographically defined minor may cover a shorter time period than the major field, e.g., a major field on the U.S. since 1865 and a minor field on American diplomatic history in the twentieth century, or major field on Europe, 1600-1789 and a minor field on France, 1715-1789. If the major field covers a sufficiently long chronological span, the minor field may be defined as a shorter time period within that span. An example would be Latin America/colonial Latin America. Except in the case of the U.S., a minor field should not ordinarily be a subfield of the history of a single country.

- The other minor field must be distant from the major field in terms of topic, chronology, and/or geography. Typically, this field will have theoretical, cross-cultural, and/or interdisciplinary components (e.g. comparative slavery, postcolonial theory and history, comparative nationalisms). This field may be primarily based in a department other than history or in an interdisciplinary program that trains students at the graduate level, such as African-American and Diaspora Studies, Jewish Studies or the Graduate Department of Religion.

Students prepare reading lists for each of their fields. Such lists ordinarily include both material students have already read, in courses and elsewhere, and new material read specifically for the qualifying examination. Students should consult reading lists prepared by graduate students who have already taken their examination. The length and character of the reading lists area determine in consultation with the appropriate members of the faculty. During their preparation for the qualifying examination, many students meet periodically with the members of their committees to discuss their progress. Students may also form reading groups with other graduate students to facilitate their preparation.

The examination, conducted by the student’s Ph.D. Committee, consists of a written and an oral component. The oral examination should be scheduled approximately two weeks after the written examination. The Graduate School must be notified at least two weeks in advance of the time and place of the oral examination.

The written portion normally includes two questions on the student’s major field and one on each of the minor fields. The oral component can cover any aspect of the student’s fields and may include follow-up questions on the written component. The emphasis should be on the general area in which the student plans to write his or her dissertation. The examination should not, however, focus on the student’s specific dissertation topic. The oral portion is not a public examination, and voice recordings of it are not permitted.

The qualifying examination results form, signed by the committee members and the DGS, shall be forwarded to the Graduate School immediately after the oral examination. When the student has passed both parts of the qualifying exam, the Ph.D. committee shall recommend to the Graduate School that the student be admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D.

A student who does not pass the examination the first time is entitled to take it again. A student may be judged to have failed the entire examination or parts of it. The re-test, which must be taken within six months of the student being notified of having failed, will include only the failed field or fields. If the student does not pass the examination as a whole at this point, he or
she will be asked to leave the program.

Following the qualifying exam, second year students will take the first half of the Prospectus Seminar, History 8200. This first half usually takes place during the course of several class meetings in the month of May.

-Third Year-

All students will take the second half of History 8200, the Prospectus Seminar in the fall, which aids students in preparing the dissertation prospectus and beginning work on the dissertation itself. It is graded on a regular basis (letter grades) and counts for 4 quality hours. All students also take History 6300, the Art and Craft of Teaching History. In the fall semester, students who passed the qualifying examination in May will take History 9999 (Ph.D. dissertation research) for their remaining hours. Students who will be taking their examination in December normally will take one additional graduate course and an independent study focused on preparation for the examination. In the spring, all students will register for an appropriate number of hours in History 9999.

History 9999 is graded satisfactory (S) and unsatisfactory (U). These grades reflect progress made within a given semester rather than the quality of the final product. A “U” grade means that no credit hours will be awarded for the course. One “U” grade requires consultation between the student and the dissertation adviser. A second “U” grade triggers a department-level intervention, involving at least the dissertation adviser, the Ph.D. committee, and the DGS. By graduate school rule, the accumulation of three “U” grades will lead to dismissal from the program and the Graduate School.

The Dissertation Prospectus

The summer between the second and third years of the program should be devoted to preliminary dissertation research and initial drafting of the dissertation prospectus.

In general, the prospectus includes:

1. A clear statement of the topic and a formulation of the particular historical problem that the project will address. It should position the topic within the existing historical literature, explain the research approach or methods to be used, and discuss the sources to be consulted
2. A tentative chapter outline with brief summaries of the proposed contents
3. A preliminary bibliography, listing the principal secondary sources and the major archival or other primary sources to be used
4. A tentative schedule for research, writing, and completing the project

For students passing the qualifying exam in the spring of the second year, the prospectus is due mid-fall semester of the third year. Students sitting for the examination in the fall of their third year should complete the prospectus by spring break. The committee meeting to approve the prospectus will ordinarily be scheduled two or three weeks after the prospectus is received.
ABD Status

Although the term “ABD status” is not in official use at Vanderbilt, many agencies and foundations that award grants and fellowships require applicants to have reached this point in their graduate career. To be certified as having attained ABD status, a student must have completed literally everything but the dissertation: passed the qualifying examination, had the dissertation prospectus approved and received 72 hours of credit, including 45 quality hours. The DGS can also write a letter noting that we expect a student to have reached ABD status by the end of the semester or the academic year.

The Dissertation

The dissertation must constitute an original and unique contribution to knowledge, based on independent primary research. The student’s adviser directs the research and supervises the writing of the dissertation; other members of the dissertation committee may read preliminary drafts and suggest changes where appropriate. Students should aim for a final length of approximately 250 to 350 pages, double-spaced.

Timetable

Failure to complete the dissertation in a timely manner can result in a student being removed from Ph.D. candidacy. Under the regulations of the Graduate School, the dissertation should be completed within four years after admission to candidacy. Upon petition to the Graduate School a one-year extension of candidacy may be granted, if the student can present evidence of significant progress toward completion. If such a period has expired without successful completion of the dissertation, the student may be dismissed from the Graduate School. Readmission to the Graduate School, and to candidacy, requires application to the Graduate School, with the approval of the program faculty. In such cases the student may be required, by the Graduate School or by the Ph.D. committee, to demonstrate competence for readmission by taking a qualifying examination or additional course work.

-Fourth Year-

From the fourth year forward, students will normally enroll in History 9999 Dissertation Research each semester they are in residence. It is graded satisfactory (S) and unsatisfactory (U) and counts for “0” hours. (The provision for zero hours is part of the Graduate School’s method for keeping students in the full-time category.) Students in residence will also participate in the departmental Dissertation Writers Group.
-Fifth Year and After-

Students register for “0” hours of 9999. Students in residence will also participate in the departmental Dissertation Writers Group. Students may register as half-time students in History 9995 if they are devoting a minimum of 20 hours per week to their dissertation; it is graded on the same basis as History 9999. All students who have completed the 72 hours required for the Ph.D. are subject only to the minimum tuition charge, currently $200 per semester.

The department runs professional workshops for academic job seekers and also has a dedicated placement officer to assist students on the academic job market with interview preparation and job dossiers. Other resources are available to those considering non-academic careers, including the office of Dr. Ruth Schemmer, Assistant Dean of Career Development in the Graduate School.

Completion of the Dissertation

As they near completion of the dissertation, students should consult with the Graduate Secretary about University deadlines and filing procedures. An “Intent to Graduate” form must be submitted to the Graduate School about three months before the date on which the degree will be conferred. The Graduate School calendar gives the precise date.

The student should provide the members of the Ph.D. committee with a complete draft of the dissertation well in advance of scheduling the defense, and no later than three weeks prior to the defense date. All members of the committee must find it acceptable and so report to the GDS before the defense can go forward.

Note: The Department recommends scheduling the defense for at least two weeks before the deadline for submitting the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate School (see below). The interval will give the student time to make minor corrections and ensure that the copy conforms to Graduate School rules on formatting and related matters.

The DGS, after consultation with the candidate, will notify the Graduate school at least two weeks in advance of the place and time of the examination and the title of the dissertation. The Graduate School then formally notifies the Ph.D. committee and submits the defense notice to Vanderbilt’s electronic calendar. The public is invited to attend.

Dissertation Defense

The defense is a collegial conversation between the student and the members of the Ph.D. committee. The DGS will designate a member of the committee other than the dissertation
director as the chair pro tempore, who will run the session and serve as timekeeper. The student begins the defense with a brief explanation of the project before fielding questions and comments from the members of the committee. The student is expected to demonstrate an understanding of the larger context of the specific subject of the dissertation as well as answer questions about the dissertation itself. Members of the committee will often offer advice on how to revise the dissertation for publication. A defense ordinarily lasts approximately two hours. At the conclusion of the defense, the committee will briefly confer and then notify the candidate of the result (pass or fail). The dissertation defense results form, signed by the committee members and the DGS, will be forwarded immediately to the Graduate School.

**The Final Copy**

The date by which candidates must submit the final copy to the Graduate School is in late March or early April for graduation in May. Candidates are strongly advised to familiarize themselves with the rules and formatting procedures pertaining to the dissertation. Failure to abide by University guidelines may delay graduation.

All dissertations are microfilmed. Microfilming does not preclude publication by other methods, but it is tantamount to publication and a microfilmed dissertation, if not copyrighted, is in the public domain and may not subsequently be copyrighted in its original form. For students who choose to have their dissertation copyrighted, the Graduate School will facilitate the process. The abstract is published in *Dissertation Abstracts*, which publicizes the completion of the dissertation and announces its availability on microfilm.

**Fellowships and Financial Aid**

All history Ph.D. students receive five years of funding so long as they remain in good standing. Students must be enrolled full time, and are expected to meet departmental and Graduate School benchmarks in order to maintain their fellowship status.

In most cases, students will serve as teaching assistants in the third and fifth years of study, with the first, second, and fourth years designated as service-free. Students contemplating taking on any form of paid work must consult with their adviser and DGS for approval.

Funding comes from a variety of sources, among them the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Provost’s Office, and several departmental endowed funds, including the Albert H. Gordon Fellowship, the Herbert and Blanche Henry Weaver Summer Fellowship Awards in History, and the Ingram History Graduate Fellowship.

**Dissertation Finishing Year Support**

Students in their fifth year are eligible to apply for additional funding for a final year, if they can demonstrate that they will finish the dissertation during that time.

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities holds a fellowship competition each year
for students finishing their dissertations. These residential awards offer a service-free year of support to enable full-time work on the dissertation, providing tuition, health insurance, a stipend, a research budget, and affiliation with the Warren Center. Students are also strongly encouraged to apply for support from outside sources, such as the Mellon/ACLs Dissertation Completion Fellowship. A very useful listing of grants is maintained here. Grants officer Marion Pratt is also available for consultation with students: http://as.vanderbilt.edu/anthropology/bio/marion-pratt.

Research Support

The Department offers graduate students at all levels the opportunity to compete for small grants-in-aid for research travel and other expenses related either to the doctoral dissertation or for seminar papers and projected articles unrelated to the dissertation. There is no limit to the number of times a student may apply. Several of Vanderbilt’s centers and interdisciplinary programs, such as the Center for Latin American Studies, also fund research by graduate students. The College of Arts and Sciences also holds an annual competition for Summer Research Awards and a biannual competition for Dissertation Enhancement Grants.

Participation in Scholarly Conferences

Students who are the sole presenter of papers at major conferences may apply to the Graduate School for up to $500 support. Students must have completed at least one academic year in the Vanderbilt Graduate School. Grants are limited to a maximum of one award per budget year (July 1-June 30) and students are allowed a total of 3 travel grants from the Graduate School for their entire tenure at Vanderbilt.

Graduate students planning to present research at a conference, whether domestic or international, should apply in the first instance to the Graduate School for up to $500 in travel expenses. Students may apply concurrently to the History Department for up to $250 for a domestic conference of $1000 for an international conference. (Note: this rule pertains only to students who have not already exhausted their allotted number of Graduate School-funded trips.)

The History Department will also support one additional conference annually per student, up to $750 for domestic travel and $1250 for international travel. In all cases, students must submit a cover sheet, available from the graduate assistant, and a detailed budget of expenses, at least a month ahead of the scheduled trip.

Students interviewing for jobs at the AHA meetings may apply to the Department for support in the amount of $100.

Teaching Requirement

All students gain experience as teachers in the teaching practicum course in the third year (History 6300) and then as teaching assistants. Teaching assistants will be supervised by the faculty member who is the instructor of the course to which the student is assigned. The faculty member will report to the DGS on the student’s performance in the classroom.
Some advanced Ph.D. students will have the opportunity to teach their own courses in the summer sessions as needed by the Department and allowed by the Graduate School.

If a teaching assistant’s numerical course evaluations fall below the standards set by the College of Arts and Sciences, the student will be put on teaching probation. The Center for Teaching and the Department will provide the student with resources to improve his or her performance.

**Disciplinary Actions and Grievances**

If the Graduate Honor Council determines that a student has committed a violation of the Honor Code, he or she will be placed on probation for the remainder of the semester in which the violation took place and for the subsequent semester. At the end of that time, the Graduate Studies Committee in the History Department will review the student’s record to determine if the student should be allowed to continue in the program.

If a student submits work that is not entirely his or her own, either for a course or for the dissertation, the Graduate Studies Committee, in consultation with the student’s adviser, can recommend the student’s removal from the program. The final decision rests with the graduate faculty members in the department as a whole.

Students who believe their academic performance has not been judged reasonably or fairly, or who believe their intellectual contributions have not been fairly acknowledged, should discuss their concerns with the DGS or, as necessary, the chair of the Department. If the student’s concerns cannot be resolved at the departmental level, the student may then request a further review of the issues in question by the office of the dean in the College of Arts and Science. The student may appeal the outcome of the school-level review to the Graduate School.