

M.A. IN HISTORY THESIS GUIDELINES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY, EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

The Department of History and Philosophy at Eastern Michigan University encourages exceptionally bright and motivated graduate students to consider completing a thesis as part of their graduation requirements. A thesis allows students to develop their research and writing abilities by investigating a historical problem in considerable depth. Students who intend on applying to a Ph.D. program after leaving EMU should strongly consider completing a thesis.

The thesis is an extensive individual research project. It requires the student to utilize both primary and secondary sources as well as interpret them in a critical and intelligent manner. It also requires the presentation of findings in a clear and effective manner that employs skillful writing.

A thesis usually has several chapters and is no more than one hundred pages. Typically, a student will spend about a year to complete the entire thesis. However, students should consult with their thesis advisor and other members of the thesis committee early in the application process about their expectations.

I. Prerequisites

Grade Point Average

A student must have a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 in graduate coursework in History in order to apply for the History Thesis Program. In exceptional circumstances, a slightly lower grade point average may be considered at the discretion of the History Graduate Committee.

Coursework

A student must have successfully completed fifteen hours of graduate coursework in History before applying for entry to the History Thesis Program. The student must have successfully completed HIST 505: Historical Methods and is strongly encouraged to have completed HIST 688: Historiography before beginning the thesis.

Foreign Languages

Admission to the thesis track for the M.A. in History does not require competency in a foreign language. However, the student is expected to have a reading knowledge of any foreign languages necessary to complete his or her research. The student should consult with his or her thesis advisor about the necessity of a foreign language.

II. The Committee

Thesis Advisor/Committee Chair

The candidate should approach a thesis advisor to discuss the potential thesis and identify other members of the Thesis Committee.

Thesis Committee

The Thesis Committee must consist of at least two faculty members of the History Section of EMU, one of which will serve as the Committee Chair. Additional faculty from outside the History Section or EMU may serve on the committee following consultation with the Committee Chair.

III. The Prospectus

The student will compose a thesis prospectus in consultation with the Committee Chair. The prospectus shall consist of a narrative and a bibliography. The narrative should be eight to ten pages in length and must be comprised of the following:

- Research Question: The student must include a statement of the historical problem upon which his or her research will focus.
- Historiography: The student should situate the research in a larger historiographical context, explaining how earlier scholars have dealt with the issue. The student should explain how his or her work will interact with, challenge, or confront the existing scholarship in the field. A statement of the contribution the thesis is intended to make to the field should also be included.
- Sources and Methodology: The student should identify the primary sources that he or she expects to utilize, where these sources are located, and how he or she intends to gain access to these sources. The student should also present a description of the methodology to be followed when analyzing and using these primary sources. Any existing scholarly works that might provide a model for analyzing and using these sources should be identified in this part of the narrative.
- Table of Contents: The student should provide a provisional overview of the table of contents as the work is currently envisioned. This table of contents should be annotated to explain why each chapter is being written.
- Schedule: The student should include a schedule of work that indicates a time frame for the completion of the thesis. In establishing this schedule, the student should consider the time needed for researching and analyzing the primary and secondary sources he or she plans to utilize. Sufficient time should also be allowed for writing each chapter as well. The student should keep in mind that committee members will want to see the initial draft of each chapter as it is finished and offer feedback on it. This may require revising parts of a chapter based on this feedback and so time should be allowed for this process as well.

In establishing a schedule for researching, writing, and revising the thesis, the student should keep in mind that the completed thesis—including all required revisions—needs to be submitted to the graduate school by the following [deadlines](#):

Graduation Date	Submission to Graduate School
Winter (April)	March 15
Summer (August)	July 15
Fall (December)	November 15

- **Bibliography:** In addition to the above-described narrative, each thesis proposal must include a bibliography of primary and secondary works. The bibliography should be broken down into separate sections containing primary and secondary materials.

IV. Thesis Prospectus Defense

The student is required to schedule a formal meeting with the members of the Thesis Committee to discuss the thesis prospectus. The student must submit the thesis prospectus to each member of the committee at least two weeks before this meeting. Upon meeting, the committee members will discuss the proposal with the student and may require changes. When all committee members are satisfied with the thesis prospectus, they will forward it, along with a completed thesis application form to the History Graduate Committee. In addition, the Committee Chair will submit a report evaluating the meeting, thesis prospectus, and candidate.

History Graduate Committee Approval

Following the Prospectus Defense, the following documents must be submitted to the History Graduate Committee:

1. Prospectus
2. EMU transcript
3. [Thesis application](#)
4. Written evaluation by Thesis Advisor

The History Graduate Committee will review the thesis prospectus and vote to accept or reject the application. Acceptance of the application will mean the student has been accepted into the thesis track of the M.A. in History program.

Non-Completion of Thesis

As part of the thirty credit hours required for the thesis track of the M.A. in History, the student is required to complete six credit hours of thesis work. Students should keep in mind that if they fail to complete the thesis, thesis credit hours cannot be used to satisfy the thirty hours of coursework required for the non-thesis track.