

Opperman Fellowship Handbook

Fall 2024

This handbook is for students who have been awarded the Opperman Fellowship in History. Careful reading of this handbook will familiarize you with the requirements associated with the Opperman Fellowship and provide forms and other helpful resources. This guide is a supplement to, and not a substitute for, the Graduate Student Handbook for the M.A. in History Handbook, the University Graduate Catalogue, and the EMU Student Handbook.

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1. Opperman Fellow Contact Information:

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2. Opperman Fellowship Objectives

The Opperman Fellowship was established with the goal of providing financial and academic support for qualified graduate students pursuing the M.A. in History degree at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). The fellowship is designed to facilitate the completion of the M.A. degree in two years and give the fellow numerous opportunities to develop professionally as a historian. In addition to providing the fellow with a stipend and paying for twenty-seven hours of graduate tuition, the fellowship includes a stipend for travel to professional conferences and summer support for scholarly research and writing. In the first semester, the fellow is paired with a faculty mentor who will serve to advise in academic preparation and choice of research topic.

The main objectives of the Opperman Fellowship are:

- Learning historical research methods
- Leadership development
- Community engagement
- Professional and personal growth
- Mentorship from faculty members
- Networking

The combination of financial and academic support is designed to ensure that the fellow has the resources, training, and support to succeed in the M.A. in History program at EMU.

3. Application Qualifications

To be eligible for the Opperman Fellowship, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

- Be admitted into the M.A. in History program at EMU
- Have an undergraduate GPA of 3.5 or above

Along with the application form, the applicant must also submit.

- An essay outlining the area of scholarly interest and how the M.A. in History will further the applicant's career plans. This essay should be no longer than 750 words.
- A writing sample of ten to thirty page in length, such as undergraduate historical research paper or other piece of substantial writing
- Two letters of recommendation from faculty who are familiar with the applicant's work

4. Advising for the Opperman Fellow

a. Advising with the History Graduate Coordinator

The incoming Opperman fellow must arrange an initial orientation advising session with the History Graduate Coordinator to plan a program of study in detail.

During this initial advising session, the coordinator will go over the M.A. in History program requirements and work with the fellow to establish two areas of concentration. The coordinator will also review the expectations for the Opperman Fellowship and lay out the proposed plan of coursework, research, and thesis writing. The coordinator will also help the fellow to identify a faculty member to serve as the his or her mentor while in the program.

After this initial advising session, the fellow should meet with the History Graduate Coordinator each semester before enrolling for classes in order to make sure that he or she is on track to fulfill the requirements for the M.A. in History degree in a timely fashion.

The fellow should confer with the coordinator toward the end of the second semester in the program to begin discussing the application process for admission into the thesis track of the

M.A. in History program.

b. Advising with the Faculty Mentor

In the first semester, the fellow will be paired with a faculty member who will mentor and work closely with the fellow during his or her time in the program. The fellow should consult frequently with the mentor regarding opportunities for professional development, coursework, and to identify a thesis topic. The faculty mentor will serve as the chair of the fellow's thesis committee, help put together thesis committee, and help prepare thesis prospectus. The faculty mentor will also serve as the fellow's advisor if he or she would like to apply to a Ph.D. program in History. The fellow is encouraged to consult with the faculty mentor on a regular basis in order to take advantage of the mentor's academic and professional expertise.

5. Expectations for the Opperman Fellow

a. Coursework and GPA

In the first year, the fellow takes nine credit hours of coursework in the fall and nine credit hours in the winter semester. In the second year, the fellow takes six credit hours of coursework each semester including thesis credits. Opperman fellows are required to maintain a GPA of 3.5 in coursework, and failure to do this may result in the loss of the fellowship.

b. The Thesis

The Opperman fellow is expected to write a thesis as the culminating project for the M.A. in History degree. The fellow should make extensive use of primary sources in researching and writing the thesis. Chapters from the thesis can be used when applying to Ph.D. programs. The fellow will not be able to graduate until he or she has completed the thesis.

c. Participation in Professional Conferences

As part of his or her professional development, the fellow is expected to attend at least one professional conference. Ideally, the fellow will present original research at the conference. The fellow is also encouraged to consider presenting work at local conferences such as the Graduate Research and Creative Activity Conference held every winter at EMU. Participation in conferences is an ideal way for the fellow to make contacts with historians and others in the profession. The Opperman Fellowship includes a \$1,000 stipend to help pay the fellow's expenses to present at a conference. If expenses for attending a conference exceed the stipend, the fellow should ask his or her mentor about further sources of available funding.

d. Leadership in the Department

While in the program, the fellow should take advantage of the opportunities to develop his or her leadership skills by participating in the various student groups. The Alpha Beta Mu chapter of Phi Alpha Theta at EMU is very active, and fellows have often held leadership positions in this organization. The History Graduate Writing Workshop provides a venue for fellows to share written work with other graduate students and receive useful feedback on chapters or papers.

6. Duties and Expectations for Graduate Assistantship in History

As part of the Opperman Fellowship, the fellow is awarded a graduate assistantship for two years. In the first year, the fellow is required to work twenty hours of per week for the department. In the second year, the fellow is required to work ten hours per week. The fellow may be assigned to help faculty members in the classroom or be assigned to help a faculty member with scholarly research. The fellow may be assigned other duties as well such as helping to write the History Section Newsletter or undergraduate advising.

7. First-Year Performance Evaluation

At the end of the fellow's first year in the program, he or she will be evaluated by the History Graduate Coordinator and History Graduate Committee. This evaluation will be based upon feedback from faculty with whom the fellow has worked as a graduate assistant, and upon the fellow's performance in the classroom. The fellow is expected to excel in the classroom, maintain a 3.5 GPA, and discharge his or her duties as a graduate assistant in a professional manner. Failure to meet these criteria may result in the fellow being dismissed from the Opperman Fellowship.

8. Projected Timeline

Fall	Winter	Summer	Fall	Winter	Summer
Fellow enters program	Fellow identifies thesis topic; writes prospectus	Fellow submits prospectus and is admitted into thesis track	Fellow begins to write thesis	Fellow continues to write thesis	Fellow finishes writing thesis and graduates from program in August
Fellow is paired with faculty mentor	Fellow takes 9 hours of coursework including HIST 688	Fellow conducts research at archives or library	Fellow takes 3 hours of coursework and 3 hours of thesis credits (HIST 692)	Fellow takes 3 hours of coursework and 3 hours of thesis credits (HIST 692)	
Fellow takes 9 hours of coursework including HIST 505	Fellow applies for external fellowship	Fellow applies to present at a conference	If fellow wishes to pursue a Ph.D., fellow applies to programs		

9. Applying to the Thesis Track

During the fellow's second semester in the program, he or she will work closely with the faculty mentor to identify a thesis topic. They will then put together the thesis committee. Once the thesis committee members have been selected, the fellow assembles the application to the thesis track. The application includes a thesis prospectus which outlines a historical question, discussion of historiography, primary sources, methodology, outline of chapters, and timeline. The fellow will then discuss the prospectus with his or her thesis committee at a thesis prospectus defense. If the committee deems the defense to be satisfactory, then the fellow's application materials will be forwarded to the History Graduate Committee, which makes the final decision regarding the fellow's application for admission into the thesis track of the M.A. in History program.

The application form and guidelines for writing the thesis can be accessed via this web link: [Application](#).

Before writing a prospectus, the fellow should be aware of the rigorous demands of this undertaking:

- The final product will be a highly polished, well researched and written work
- The final draft of the thesis should be around one hundred pages in length
- The fellow should expect to spend eight to ten months researching, writing, and revising the thesis
- The fellow may incur sizeable expenses by traveling to archives, making photocopies, and other activities involved in research
- There is a five-step process involved in applying to the thesis track:
 1. Selection of thesis advisor
 2. Writing of ten-page thesis prospectus
 3. Creation of thesis committee
 4. Defense of prospectus before thesis committee
 5. Approval of application by History Graduate Committee

The above five-step process typically takes two to three months. The fellow may wish to ask the History Graduate Coordinator for an example of a successful thesis prospectus.

The fellow is required to take six hours of thesis credit hours while working on the thesis. The fellow writing their thesis will need to contact the thesis advisor to help them set up the necessary credit hours. The fellow may not enroll in thesis credits until the History Graduate Committee has approved the prospectus.

The fellow working on a thesis should consult with the Graduate School thesis manual to make sure he or she is following the proper guidelines for writing, formatting, and submitting the thesis in a timely manner. The graduate school thesis manual can be found here: [Thesis Manual](#).

10. Summer Support

Upon the successful completion of the first year, the Opperman fellow will travel to achieve, explore the historiography, and complete the thesis prospectus. The fellow should aim to defend the prospectus and enter the thesis track by the summer after the first year or early in the fall of the second year. When the prospectus is approved by the History Graduate Committee, the fellow will be admitted to the thesis track of the M.A. in History program and can begin writing the thesis and enroll in thesis credits (HIST 690, 691, and/or 692).

In order to support the fellow during the summer after the first year, the Opperman Fellow Thesis Prospectus Summer Support Grant will provide a \$3,500 stipend.

11. Future Career Avenues and Ph.D. Programs in History

In the fall of the fellow's second year in the program, he or she should consult with the thesis advisor and graduate coordinator about goals after graduation. Should a fellow seek out a career, he or she should schedule an advising appointment with EMU's Career Center. The career advisor can help the fellow understand their available career paths, build his or her resume, and establish connections with the professional world. For more information, go to: [Advising and Career Development Center](#).

Should a fellow seek to enter into a Ph.D. program, he or she should contact the thesis advisor and graduate coordinator to learn more about the application process, ask for letters of recommendation, and gain general advice on the completion of the application.