



# BOSTON COLLEGE

MORRISSEY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

## **Graduate Student Handbook**

The Boston College History Department attracts talented students from the United States and around the world. The MA program prepares students for a broad range of careers in public history, education, publishing, and elsewhere. The goal of the PhD program is to produce historians who are both leading scholars and distinguished teachers. While many graduates of the doctoral program become academic historians, the department is committed to assisting students who are interested in positions in university administration, museums, archives, education, research institutes, and historical societies.

### **Program Administrators**

The Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) is chair of the Graduate Committee and oversees admissions and teaching placement, advises students, and is the liaison between graduate students and the department and university.

The Graduate Programs Assistant (GPA) is the administrative coordinator for the graduate program and maintains all student records, processes all student applications and forms, proctors language exams, processes tuition remission and all fellowships, and assists the DGS in all administrative matters.

The Graduate Placement Director is the faculty member who supports students through the placement process by arranging workshops and mock interviews, advising students on cover letters and applications, and providing information on various opportunities.

### **Academic Policies**

The History Department adheres to and enforces all the Graduate School of the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences policies and procedures as outlined on their webpage (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/policies-and-procedures.html>).

**Academic Standing:** Students in the BA/MA and MA programs are expected to maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5. Students in the PhD program are expected to maintain a 3.7. Students are also expected to make timely progress towards fulfilling all program requirements. The DGS will review all student records at the end of each semester. Students who are not in good standing will meet with the DGS and may be asked to take remedial action or leave the program.

In addition to the GPA requirement, to maintain academic standing, doctoral students must complete a seminar in each of their first two years and receive a minimum grade of B+ in both. Students who do not satisfy this requirement in the first year are placed on academic probation. If they fail to satisfy this requirement in the second year seminar, they will be asked to leave the program. They will be eligible to receive an MA if they successfully complete the MA oral exam.

Every May, the DGS will send all doctoral advisers a report on their students' academic progress and any faculty concerns will be communicated to the student. If a student's academic standing is in jeopardy, the case will be reviewed by the Graduate Committee, which will recommend a course of action.

**Grievance Procedure:** A student with a grievance should register his or her complaint with the faculty member(s) who gave rise to the grievance as soon as possible, but by no later than the conclusion of the following semester. If, upon registering the complaint, a solution is found that is acceptable to the student and faculty member(s), the matter will be considered closed. If either party wishes to have a written statement to this effect, the parties shall put the solution in writing, sign it, and each retain a copy.

If a mutually acceptable solution cannot be reached, the student may present the matter in writing in a timely manner to the chairperson of the department. The written statement must specify: (a) the nature of the complaint and (b) the requested remedy. The chairperson will take action in accordance with the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences grievance guidelines.

**Leave of Absence:** Graduate students who do not register for coursework, Interim Study, or Doctoral Continuation must request a leave of absence. Leaves of absence are typically granted for two semesters, but they may be renewed. Students must submit a Leave of Absence Form, which may be found at <https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/policies-and-procedures.html>, to the Associate Dean of GSAS for approval. Leave time will normally be included in the time towards degree, and thus be considered a portion of the total time limit for the degree, unless an alternative arrangement is made at the time that the Leave of Absence is granted.

Students returning after a Leave of Absence must file a re-admission form with the Associate Dean of GSAS at least six weeks before the start of the semester in which they wish to re-enroll. The Associate Dean will decide on the re-admission application, taking into account the best interests of both the student and the University.

**Academic Integrity:** Students in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Any student who is found guilty of cheating or plagiarism is subject to dismissal from GSAS. Cases involving academic integrity will be referred to the dean for adjudication.

### **Certificate in Digital Humanities**

In our increasingly digitized world, the question isn't whether to use digital technology, but how. Institutions of higher education, as well as employers in many other sectors, recognize that digital humanities skills such as text analysis, mapping, and coding have transformative potential. BC's Graduate Certificate in Digital Humanities offers a coordinated curriculum that is feasible for graduate candidates to complete alongside existing degree requirements. The program combines interdisciplinary methodological training with discipline-specific coursework to provide students with training and institutional recognition of their accomplishments in this fast-growing field.

A joint effort of the History and English Departments and the Boston College Libraries' Digital Scholarship Group, the program offers M.A. and Ph.D. students the opportunity to diversify their skill-sets and produce projects such as digital archives, data visualizations, online exhibits, and scholarly websites. This project-based approach puts a premium on collaboration and interdisciplinary inquiry. In the process, Certificate holders will enhance their employment prospects in both traditional academia as well as in publishing, government, museums, libraries, archives, and other alt-ac fields.

### **Graduate History Alliance**

The Graduate History Alliance is a BC student-run organization which helps organize academic and social events. From monthly writing groups to social gatherings at local pubs or catered events on campus to help students unwind, the GHA is busy year round. Useful resources are available at the GHA website, including various tips about being a graduate student at BC and in Boston more broadly.

## **PhD Program**

### **Course Requirements**

Students entering into the Ph.D. program are required to complete 39 credits, 36 of which are taken prior to comprehensive exams. All students in the Ph.D. program are required to pursue two semesters of full-time study during the first year and must, in the course of their studies, complete at least two seminars and at least two colloquia (one in the major and one in a minor area) in addition to the required Introduction to Doctoral Studies.

Only history courses at the 4000 level or above count towards the doctoral requirements. By the end of the third year, PhD students should have completed all 39 credits. After the Dissertation Proposal is signed and filed, students officially enter into doctoral candidacy (informally known as All but Dissertation or ABD).

The typical plan for the first three years of study is:

#### **Year 1**

3 courses/semester

#### **Year 2**

2 courses/semester

#### **Year 3**

2 courses in the fall

Comprehensive Exams in November

Dissertation Seminar in the spring

Dissertation Proposal submitted in May

### **Readings and Research Courses**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the departmental course offerings, but in exceptional circumstances students may benefit from the study of material that is not contained in any course. In such cases, students may arrange a Readings and Research (R&R) course with a faculty member. Such courses may count as colloquia or as seminars but only with prior approval from the faculty member and DGS. For an R&R to count as a seminar, the student should undertake a significant amount of original research and produce a substantial paper. Students need to arrange the schedule of readings, writing assignments, and meetings in consultation with the faculty member with whom they will be studying. Students must fill out an R&R form, which must be approved by the faculty member and the DGS.

### **Cross-Registering**

Students can take up to three courses outside of the department. At Boston College such courses are usually from another Arts & Sciences department. A student wishing to take courses outside A&S (e.g.

the Lynch School of Education or the School of Theology and Ministry) must obtain written permission from administrators of that program as well as the DGS. All courses must be numbered over 4000 in order to be counted towards the doctoral degree.

BC is also part of the Boston-Area Consortium which includes Brandeis, Tufts and Boston Universities. Students can take one course per semester at one of these universities at no additional cost. Since the consortium greatly expands the graduate course offerings, students are encouraged to explore classes at the member universities. To register for one of these courses, students must first receive approval from either their advisor, the DGS, and the professor teaching the course and then submit the cross-registration form found here: [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/offices/student-services/registrar/crossregform\\_2021-editable.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/offices/student-services/registrar/crossregform_2021-editable.pdf).

### **Transferring Credits**

It is possible for a PhD student who has completed graduate coursework before coming to Boston College to transfer a maximum of six credits towards their BC degree. This is not advisable, however. The courses at BC are meant to help students cover material for their comprehensive examinations and explore potential topics for dissertation research. For these reasons, students must receive permission from the DGS, the chair of the department, as well as their advisor to transfer graduate credits.

### **Advising**

Students will be assigned an advisor upon admission to the program. The student may change advisors with the permission of the DGS until they are ABD. The role of the advisor is to meet regularly with the student to review academic progress. The advisor is typically the chair of the oral comprehensive examination committee and is frequently chair of the dissertation committee. During the dissertation stage, the advisor monitors progress towards the degree.

### **Plan of Study**

By the conclusion of the first semester, and after full consultation with their professors and the Director of Graduate Studies, students file a plan of study leading to the comprehensive examination. This plan of study consists of three areas of concentration. Usually faculty require that students take at least some formal coursework in each field and expect students to develop and master a reading list of important books and articles. With the approval of the advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies students may select a discipline related to History or a topic within that cuts across traditional geographical or chronological boundaries. When considered necessary to a student's program, the department may require advanced-level work in a related discipline, either as a minor field or as supplemental work. This plan of

study may be reviewed, evaluated and revised whenever necessary. However, changes must be approved by the faculty advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **Fields of Study**

The Ph.D. degree in History is offered with concentrations in United States, medieval, early modern European, modern European (including British/Irish/British Empire), Asian, and Middle Eastern history. We also offer coursework in African and Latin American history.

### **Foreign Language Exams**

The language requirement is specific to PhD candidates' major field of study. Medievalists must pass three language exams, one of which must be in Latin. US historians must pass one language exam. In all other fields (Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East), PhD candidates must pass two language exams. Students will pass one language exam during the first year in the program, and the second (and third, if applicable) exam before taking the oral comprehensive examination.

Language exams are offered at the start of the fall semester through June 1<sup>st</sup>. Students should contact the GPA at least one week in advance to schedule an exam. The exams consist of a few pages of text, which students have two hours to translate into English. The use of dictionaries is permitted. Students who fail an exam are welcome to retake the exam until they obtain a passing grade.

Students may substitute competency in a field of particular methodological or theoretical relevance to their program of study for competency in a second foreign language. To do so, students must petition the Graduate Committee and explain the nature of the field and its importance to the plan of study, particularly the dissertation. Work done in that field must be documented. The student's faculty advisor is responsible for certifying that the student has satisfactorily acquired the appropriate skills and knowledge.

### **Oral Comprehensive Exams**

The student's oral comprehensive examination will be conducted by an examining board composed of three faculty members. A written examination may be substituted for an oral exam at the joint discretion of the student and the student's committee.

Students must take their oral comprehensive exam before the start of the spring semester in their third year of study. No exceptions to this timeline will be permitted. As preparation for the comprehensive exam, students select three areas for study and complete the necessary coursework for those areas. They must ask three different faculty members to serve as examiners and, in consultation with the faculty,

prepare a reading list for each area. Students are advised to constitute their orals committee by the end of their second year so that they can prepare for orals during the summer before their third year. Each student is responsible for setting an exam date and time in consultation with the faculty examiners. After doing this, students should contact the GPA who will reserve a room and prepare the necessary paperwork. The exam itself will last two hours, and each professor will have a chance to ask a number of questions regarding their field.

On the department's internal wiki page, students can find sample reading lists that PhD students have used for their oral comprehensive examinations. Please note that some of these reading lists date back as far as ten years, and thus will not include recent literature in the field.

<https://bcwiki.bc.edu/pages/viewpage.action?spaceKey=HDGS&title=History+Department+Graduate+Students+Home>

### **Interim Master's Degree**

Upon completion of the oral comprehensive exam, students are eligible to receive an MA degree. This degree may be either terminal for students who choose not to complete the PhD or supplemental for those who continue to the dissertation. Students interested in receiving an MA should complete the Master's Degree Option Form and submit it to the GPA

(<https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/schools/mcas/gsas/pdf/Master%20Degree%20Option.pdf>)

### **MA Students Entering the PhD Program**

Students admitted into the doctoral program after completing an MA at BC enter as either second or third year doctoral students. The student must make the decision on status in consultation with the DGS and the advisor. All such students must take Introduction to Doctoral Studies in the fall of their first year in the doctoral program. Other coursework will be devoted to preparing fields for the comprehensive exam.

Although these students will have taken an MA exam, they must take doctoral exams in three fields with three examining professors. They must also take any additional language exams required prior to the oral comprehensive exam.

### **The Dissertation Proposal**

In the spring semester of the third year, students take the Dissertation Seminar in which they write their dissertation proposals. Dissertation proposals must be approved by the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. Proposals must be completed by the end of the semester following the passing of comprehensive exams and filed with the department. During the dissertation seminar, students will ask three faculty members to serve on their dissertation committees. Two must be from Boston College; the

chair must be a tenured or tenure-track member of the departmental faculty. Committee composition is subject to departmental approval.

### **Doctoral Candidacy**

After a student has completed all coursework, passed all language exams and the oral comprehensive exam, and has received approval for the dissertation proposal, the student is admitted to doctoral candidacy.

### **The Dissertation**

Upon admission to doctoral candidacy, students research and write their dissertation, which is an original contribution to knowledge based on extensive primary and secondary research. The completed dissertation must be defended at a public oral defense and approved by the dissertation committee and the Director of Graduate Studies.

### **Graduation Deadlines**

Boston College offers graduation dates in August, December, and May for doctoral students. To receive the degree in August, all requirements must be fulfilled by August 1. To graduate in December, the deadline is December 1. For May, the deadline is April 1. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will grant extensions under exceptional circumstances, but in general a student who misses a deadline must wait until the next graduation date to receive the degree.

### **Teaching Assistants**

PhD students serve as TAs in the second, third, and fifth years in the program. Teaching Assistant duties include leading small discussion groups for undergraduate students who are enrolled in large courses, chiefly in the university core curriculum, grading assignments and exams, and holding office hours for students. TAs must stay in regular contact with their students and with the faculty with whom they are working. TAs are required to abide by all university policies and procedures. Please visit the Center for Teaching Excellence site for important resources for TAs (<http://cteresources.bc.edu/documentation/new-instructor-resources/tatf-faqs/>).

### **Funding**

All PhD students receive funding for five years, contingent upon satisfactory academic standing and satisfactory teaching. Service stipends are offered for students serving as Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants and are paid in monthly installments via direct deposit throughout the year starting in September and ending in May. Non-service stipends such as the Presidential Fellowship, University



Fellowship, and Dissertation Fellowship, are distributed twice a year, in September and January. In order to get paid, students must complete the necessary employment paperwork at the Human Resources Service Center.

Doctoral students who are on fellowship may not accept outside teaching or other full time employment unless it is approved by the DGS and Associate Dean. Outside employment will not be approved if it delays the student's progress toward the degree or interferes with the responsibilities of their fellowships.

- First year students serve as **Graduate Assistants**, providing research assistance to their advisors. The commitment is typically no more than 10 hours/week.
- Second, third, and fifth year students serve as **Teaching Assistants**.
- Fourth year students are granted **University Fellowships** which offer stipends to support their independent research.

Additional Fellowships include:

### **Presidential Fellowship**

This fellowship is awarded at the discretion of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences to an incoming PhD student who possesses a superior academic record. Recipients of this award receive it for a total of five years.

### **Dissertation Fellowship**

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences provides a limited number of full year fellowships in support of student research. To be eligible, students must have been admitted to doctoral candidacy and plan on completing their dissertation by the end of their fellowship year. Students will be ineligible for further university funding subsequent to having received a dissertation fellowship.

## **MA Program**

### **Course Requirements**

M.A. students are required to take a total of 30 credits or 10 courses. Students are required to take at least one colloquium and one seminar, in addition to the required Colloquium for Master's Students. Classes with a number above HIST4000 count toward the degree. Students are not allowed to complete the M.A. program by attending only summer sessions; at least four courses (12 credits) must be taken during the regular academic year.

All candidates for the M.A. in History are encouraged to pursue an individual course of study developed in conjunction with their faculty advisor and selected by the student during the first year in the program. In making their selection of courses and seminars, students are urged to widen their chronological and cultural horizons while deepening and specifying one special area of concentration.

### **Fields of Study**

Students must choose a major and minor field. As many as seven courses (21 credits) can be taken in the major field. The M.A. degree in History is offered with concentrations in United States, medieval, early modern European, modern European (including British/Irish/British Empire) history. We also offer coursework in Asian, African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern history.

The minor field is made up of a minimum of three courses (nine credits), at least one of which must be at the HIST7000 level or above. Minor fields can be chosen from the same list of major fields or can be thematic or topical. Such fields, for example, could include social or labor history; or could concern race, gender, or sexuality in the writing of history. Minor fields must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies.

In addition to the departmental offerings, it is possible to do minor fields in archival management and in cultural heritage/public history through the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences at Simmons University. Note: for these minor fields two courses are sufficient, not the three as is the case with minor fields done in the department.

### **Readings and Research Courses**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the departmental course offerings, but in exceptional circumstances students may benefit from the study of material that is not contained in any course. In such cases, students may arrange a Readings and Research (R&R) course with a faculty member. Such courses

may count as colloquia or as seminars but only with prior approval from the faculty member and DGS. For an R&R to count as a seminar, the student should undertake a significant amount of original research and produce a substantial paper. Students need to arrange the schedule of readings, writing assignments, and meetings in consultation with the faculty member with whom they will be studying. Students must fill out an R&R form, which must be approved by the faculty member and the DGS.

### **Cross-Registering**

Students may take up to three courses outside the Department of History. Most students take courses in other Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences departments; these do not require approval. If a student wishes to take courses outside of Arts and Sciences, (e.g. the Lynch School of Education and Human Development or the School of Theology and Ministry), then the student must obtain written permission from administrators of that program as well as the Director of Graduate Studies. Boston College is also a member with Boston University, Tufts University and Brandeis University of the Boston Area Consortium. Students are allowed to enroll in one course per semester at one of these universities.

To register for one of these courses, students must first receive approval from either their advisor, the DGS, and the professor teaching the course and then submit the cross-registration form found here: [https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/offices/student-services/registrar/crossregform\\_2021-editable.pdf](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/bc1/offices/student-services/registrar/crossregform_2021-editable.pdf).

### **Advising**

By the end of their first semester, students will need to select an academic adviser. The role of the MA adviser is to meet periodically with the student to go over their academic progress in the program. The adviser will also typically chair the student's comprehensive exam or thesis committee.

### **Foreign Language Exams**

M.A. candidates are required to pass one foreign language reading examination before graduation. Students who are concentrating in Medieval History must take the Latin exam. Language exams are offered at the start of the fall semester through June 1<sup>st</sup>. Students should contact the GPA at least one week in advance to schedule an exam. The exams consist of a few pages of text, which students have two hours to translate into English. The use of dictionaries is permitted. Students who fail an exam are welcome to retake the exam until they obtain a passing grade. Exams must be completed by April 1 of the second year of study.

## **Comprehensive Exercises**

Students must complete a comprehensive exercise by April 1 of the second year of study. Students can choose to take an oral examination or write a thesis. Prior to the end of the first year of study, students must indicate their choice as well as their fields and advisors.

- An oral comprehensive exam is administered by the student's advisor and a faculty member from the minor area.
- A 6-credit thesis in the final year in the program culminates in an oral defense of the thesis before a committee of two faculty members. The thesis should be an original piece of research, in the realm of publishable quality and roughly article-length (60-100 pages) and must be submitted to the university in accordance with the graduate school policies (<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/graduate/current-graduate-students/thesis-checklist.html>).

## **Graduation Deadlines**

Boston College offers graduation dates in August, December, and May for graduate students. To receive the degree in August, all requirements must be fulfilled by August 1. To graduate in December, the deadline is December 1 and in May, the deadline is April 1. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will grant extensions under exceptional circumstances, but in general a student who misses a deadline must wait until the next graduation date to receive the degree.

## **BA/MA Program**

The BA/MA Program allows selected students to earn both a BA and an MA in History in 5 years. Students may carry in up to 4 history courses taken as an undergraduate toward their MA degree: any 2 upper-division undergraduate courses, plus 2 more courses taken for graduate credit in the senior year. Students in the BA/MA program must meet all the specific course requirements for the undergraduate major as well as the formal requirements for the MA, including the completion of the MA colloquium, another graduate-level colloquium, a research seminar, demonstrated proficiency in a foreign language, and comprehensive exercises.

The application deadline is the end of spring semester of a student's junior year. Students interested in the program should first consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies, who will review the student's academic record and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the program. Prospective applicants should have an overall GPA of 3.33 and a GPA of 3.5 in History. Applicants should complete the online application process and submit at least 2 recommendations. There is no GRE requirement. Once accepted

into the BA/MA program, students should meet with the Director of Graduate Studies to devise a plan of study.

For students in the BA/MA program, 4 courses taken as an undergraduate count toward the MA: 2 upper-division history courses + 2 taken for graduate credit during senior year.

- TWO upper-division courses\* taken as an undergraduate are double-counted, ie) they count towards both the BA and the MA. (Courses that can NOT be double-counted are the Honors Seminar, the R&R for thesis writers, and the senior colloquium.)
- A BA/MA student should also take TWO courses for graduate credit during their senior year. These can be either 7000-level courses OR upper-division electives\* taken for graduate credit.

\*Upper-division electives are mainly 4000-level courses but Making History Public, a 5000-level course, can also be applied towards either of these requirements.