Department of History

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Austin Jersild, Chair

Master of Arts - History

Maura Hametz, Graduate Program Director

The Department of History offers courses of study leading to the Master of Arts with a major in history.

Admissions

Applicants must meet all University requirements and regulations for admission. Their applications must include a short essay of 500 words or less, addressing their academic interests and goals, and two letters of recommendation. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE), General Test, is required for all applicants.

An undergraduate major or minor in history is desirable but is not required for admission. Generally, 18 semester credit hours in history and closely related cognates are sufficient for admission on a provisional basis. These credit hours should include survey and upper-level courses. The graduate program director may prescribe certain undergraduate courses to be completed before recommending admission to the program. Under certain circumstances, students can be admitted to graduate courses while simultaneously completing an undergraduate prerequisite.

The requirement for admission to full standing (regular status) is 24 semester credit hours with an average of at least 3.00 in history and a general GPA of 3.00. Provisional admission requires 18 credits (as described above) with an average of 3.00 in history and a GPA of 2.70. Students with averages below these minimums can attempt to improve their standing in undergraduate courses approved by the graduate program director. However, they cannot be admitted to graduate courses until they have achieved acceptable averages in history. Applicants who are denied admission to the M.A. program in history are not permitted to enroll in history graduate courses as non-degree students.

Prospective applicants with questions about their admission status should contact the graduate program director in the Department of History. Those certain of their qualifications should apply through the Office of Admissions.

Admissions forms should reach Old Dominion University well in advance of the intended term of entry, but no later than November 1 for spring admission and April 1 for summer or fall. All required forms and documents should be sent directly to the Admissions Office, which creates a central file for each applicant. Only the one-page application for graduate financial assistance along with a duplicate copy of the 500-word essay should be sent directly to the graduate program director.

Graduate Financial Aid

Old Dominion University offers financial assistance to qualified graduate students. Types of aid include research and teaching assistantships, fellowships, grants, scholarships, and part-time employment. Nearly all forms of aid require that the student be engaged in full-time graduate study. Fellowships, assistantships, tuition grants, and small research grants may be available. Departmental funds may affect fellowship and assistantship amounts. The establishment of student need and academic promise also affect some grant amounts. The application deadline is February 15.

International students must pass the SPEAK test (or an equivalent) of spoken English to become eligible for teaching assistantships.

Degree Requirements

Two courses of study are available. One is a 30-credit program capped by written comprehensive examinations in two general fields and an oral examination. The other is a 30-credit program, comprising 24 hours of course work, a thesis for which students earn six credits (HIST 698-HIST 699) on a pass/fail basis, and an oral examination. Either alternative leads to an M.A. in history.

All candidates for the M.A. in history must meet the general graduate degree requirements established for the University. In addition, all students must complete HIST 600 during their first year in the program. No more than nine of the required 30 hours may be earned in 500-level courses. Students are permitted a maximum of six credits in other departments offering graduate courses if the work is germane to their historical studies; prior approval of the graduate program director is required. Students who have received two grades of C+ or below will be indefinitely suspended from the program.

Those students whose grade point average falls below 3.00 will be subject to the University’s probation/suspension policy.

Curriculum

Examination Option

Students pursuing the exam option must take course work as follows:

- 30 credits total: Hist 600 Historical Theory and Praxis (3 credits), 24 credits of Hist 500, 600, or 700 level classes thereof at least 6 credits American History and 6 credits Non-American History, and Hist 675 Exam Preparation (3 credits).

Students choose two fields of concentration for the Examination Option, which will conform to the expertise of two of the three committee members who constitute the student’s exam committee. The fields can be tailored to the following geographic areas: North America, Europe, Russia, Latin America, Asia, or Africa.

Students pursuing the examination option must complete HIST 675 during their last year in the program. Written comprehensive field examinations may be taken in conjunction with HIST 675. The two field exams are taken during a designated time over the course of two weeks with a two-hour oral examination following the completion of written exams. Exams are individualized by the student’s examining committee but competence in the entire field is essential. Examinations are completed no later than 30 days before the end of a semester, and thus are normally scheduled in March, July, and November. A field exam is judged in its entirety and is rated Pass or Fail by the examining committee; the same is true of the oral examination. Students who fail an exam can be re-examined in the next scheduled round of exams. Only one re-examination is permitted.

Thesis Option

Students pursuing the thesis option must take course work as follows:

- 30-36 credits total: Hist 600 Historical Theory and Praxis (3 credits), 21 credits of Hist 500, 600, or 700 level classes thereof at least 6 credits American History and 6 credits Non-American History, Hist 698 Thesis (3-6 credits) and Hist 699 (3-6 credits).

The thesis option will be recommended for those students who have maintained a high GPA and have the support of a faculty director. A review of the thesis prospectus is required before the completion of 18 hours of course work. The master’s thesis is written under the direction of a thesis advisor selected by the candidate in consultation with the graduate program director. The thesis is reviewed and the candidate examined by a faculty committee chaired by the thesis advisor. The thesis defense—normally a two-hour oral examination—focuses on the thesis, the historical context, and related aspects of the student’s concentration. Final approval of the thesis is the responsibility of the thesis advisor, the graduate program director, and ultimately of the dean of the College of Arts and Letters, who certify the candidate for graduation.