HISTORY - DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD)

Historians study the past, in all of its complexity, to better understand our contemporary world and the forces that created it. Historians analyze change over time, and they use archival and other primary-source evidence to build interpretations that explain change and put it into context. In seeking to understand historical subjects on their own terms, and by appreciating the diverse perspectives of past actors, students of history develop empathy even as they rigorously engage with the ethical dimensions of past human decisions and actions. When students understand the past, they recognize their power to shape the present and the future.

History faculty conduct research and teach courses in a wide range of eras—from ancient to modern times—and across most major world areas including Africa and the Middle East, South and East Asia, Europe and the Americas. History faculty also pursue multiple methodologies and approaches, including cultural, diplomatic, demographic, economic, environmental, ethnic, gender, intellectual, legal, political, religious, social and transnational history.

At CU Boulder, history graduate students are trained in the central principles and research methods that characterize the discipline of history through class instruction and professional development seminars. They also gain a thorough grounding in their particular geographical area of study as well as an ability to situate that area of study in a larger global context.

All PhD students focus their studies in two equally weighted fields:

- a regional/national field (i.e., American/U.S. history, European history or Asian history)
- a global/thematic field, for which students are required to take a variety of courses that examine global and transnational history through specific thematic lenses

For the purposes of the comprehensive examination (portfolio), students are expected to work with their faculty advisors to craft subfields of emphasis within both the regional/national and global/thematic fields.

Students wishing to pursue graduate work in history leading to candidacy for an advanced degree should read the Doctoral Degree Requirements (catalog.colorado.edu/graduate/degree-requirements/doctoral-degree-requirements) section carefully. For more information, visit the department’s Graduate Students webpage.

Requirements

Admission

For purposes of admission to the graduate program, the general Graduate Record Examination is required and a score in the 85th percentile or above on the verbal component is generally expected.

Prerequisites

Students who wish to work toward the PhD degree in history must indicate knowledge of certain fields of history, acquaintance with the fundamental tools of historical scholarship and the ability to do original work. The PhD program does not require the completion of a master’s degree, but directly admits those qualified applicants who hold an undergraduate history degree or who have completed appropriate undergraduate history preparation and who have been recommended by the graduate admissions committee.

Residence

At least three years of graduate study, two of which must be spent in residence, are required for the PhD degree.

Degree Requirements

A total of 45 post-baccalaureate credit hours, at least 36 of which must be taken at this university, and a dissertation are required for the degree. A minimum of one foreign language is required; however, students must be able to use those languages essential to research and advanced study in their respective fields. In addition, as required by the Graduate School, those students pursuing a PhD should complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of dissertation work beyond the minimum coursework requirement.

After completion of the coursework requirements, each candidate for the PhD degree must assemble and defend a PhD portfolio before proceeding to the dissertation stage of the program. The dissertation must be an original contribution to the discipline. An oral defense of the dissertation must be successfully completed in order for the degree to be conferred.