The History Graduate Students' Survival Guide

Prepared by the History Graduate Student Association (HGSA) and last updated in July 2025. Also useful is the "[Unofficial Guide to Life in Chambana](https://history.illinois.edu/system/files/inline-files/Booklet-Chambana-Guide-2016.pdf)," prepared by the Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO).

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# Advisors

You will deal with a few different advisors during your career at UIUC. You will likely have the most contact with your primary advisor, but you will also interact frequently with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the Graduate Program Coordinator. The DGS is a professor in the history department who is responsible for evaluating the progress of all the graduate students in the department, while the graduate program coordinator handles administrative and logistical business for History graduate students. The graduate advisor can be the best source of information on department and graduate college regulations. The DGS also provides general advising for all graduate students in the department and serves as a liaison for resolving any issues between graduate students and the department. If you are having issues with your primary advisor, it is your responsibility to go to the DGS to seek guidance about any problems that have arisen between you and your primary advisor. Petitions for waiving different requirements go to the Graduate Studies Committee, but these can also be sent to the DGS. Approximately every three years there is a new DGS.

Your primary advisor is responsible for providing you with personalized guidance throughout your graduate career at UIUC. If you are a PhD student, you will already have selected an advisor before being admitted to the program. If you are an MA/MS student, you ought to be assigned a primary advisor upon admission, but in years past, some students have needed to work with the DGS to find an advisor in the History Department. If the direction of your research changes drastically or you have significant conflicts with your advisor, it is recommended that you reach out to the DGS to consider changing your primary advisor. If possible, you should take a course with your prospective advisor during your first year here.  Even better, take an Independent Reading Course (Hist 597) or an Independent Research Project (Hist 596) with your potential advisor because it is of the utmost importance to see if you and that professor work well together on major writing projects.

It is also a good idea to check with the professor’s other advisees (if there are any) to see what their experience has been. If the professor you have in mind has no advisees, reach out to other graduate students who have either similar research interests to that professor or students who have taken classes with them in the past. Other things to take into consideration include the following: the standing of the faculty member within the broader academic community; the number of other advisees and major commitments the professor has, which may determine how much personal attention you will get; and whether the professor has tenure in the department.

# Courses

PhD students take 12 credit hours per semester if they do not hold an appointment such as a PGAship, RAship, TAship, or Grader Position. PhD students who are RAs, TAs, and Graders normally take 8 credit hours of coursework per semester in addition to their appointment. MA/MS students typically take 12 credit hours regardless of their appointment. (MA/MS Students are typically not eligible for TAships in the History Department, but they may find TAships in other departments.) Students may find it helpful, especially early on, to consult with their advisor about possible courses prior to registration.

The History Department offers courses ranging from the 100-level to the 500-level. 100- and 200-level courses are designed for undergraduates and concern you only if you are teaching one of them. 400-level courses are typically lecture-based surveys for advanced undergraduate and sometimes graduate students. The department discourages graduate students from taking too many 400-level courses. However, they may prove useful if you want to orient yourself to a new field or if you are in one of the smaller fields where graduate courses are not offered as often. 400 level courses outside the History department may also be excellent opportunities to learn interdisciplinary methodologies, particularly if they offer a graduate section in addition to the undergraduate section. Graduate students taking a 400-level course are often expected to complete extra work and sometimes meet separately with the professor teaching the course. Talk with the professor beforehand to get a sense of what will be required. You can also sometimes, with the permission of the professor, take the 400-level course as a 500-level independent study. 500-level courses are generally restricted to graduate students. The geographic and chronological range of the courses offered by the History department is frequently limited. So, while you should make sure that you are taking enough courses to satisfy your requirements for the PhD portfolio, it can also be a very rewarding experience to take a course or two outside your typical area of study. Except for courses in historical methods, courses at this level are of two types: “problems courses” and “research seminars.”

## Problems Courses

Problems courses focus primarily on familiarizing graduate students with secondary sources related to a given topic. These classes will also help you develop your historiographical essay writing skills. They will be the most useful in preparing you for your preliminary exams. If you get the opportunity, consider taking a problems course with your intended preliminary examiners, since these courses give you a major insight into what the professor thinks are the most important issues in the field that the class is focused on. Students can also arrange to take a reading course, History 597, where you (and possibly a few other students) work with a professor to oversee your work in a given area. The workload of the course often depends on the standards of the specific professor who is running the course for you, so be sure to have a conversation with the professor about what the expectations for the course are early in the semester (if not before the beginning of the semester). Depending on the period or region you study, you may need to take more History 597 courses than some of your peers do. Additionally, if you are having trouble finding courses that focus specifically on your research interests, History 502: Problems in Comparative History courses often cover a wide range of regions and periods. Professors often consider the interests of graduate students enrolled in the History Department when planning these courses.

## Research Seminars

What the department defines as a “Research Seminar” is somewhat more ambiguous than what it defines as a “Problems Course.” While almost all problems courses are listed as such on the course catalogue, only some courses that can be counted as research seminars towards your degree requirements are listed as such. The three most common types of “Research Seminars” are as follows:

* A full seminar class devoted to learning research methodologies. These usually focus on the research methodologies needed for a specific field or region. One example of a seminar like this that has been offered in the past is “Hist 521: Research Seminar - China”
* History 596: Independent Research Project. Like History 597, the coursework of the History 596 course is often dependent on the standards of the professor you are working with. Similarly, you should talk with the professor running the course before the first meeting of the class.
* Writing a research paper for a “Problems Course.” Sometimes, professors teaching problems courses will give their students the option to choose between doing a historiographical essay or a research paper for the final project. If you choose to do a research paper, the department will likely allow you to count that “Problems Course” as a research seminar.

# Supportive Resources

There can be many sources of stress and insecurity that arise at various points in your graduate studies, sometimes unrelated to your academic work.

## Financial Emergency Support

* [Graduate Student Emergency Grants from the Graduate College](https://grad.illinois.edu/funding/fellowships/fellowship-competitions/graduate-student-emergency-grants) for unforeseen expenses, up to $500.
* For GEO Members: In cases of unforeseen emergency expenses, union members can apply for the Kathryn J. Oberdeck Hardship Fund. Contact one of your [department stewards](https://history.illinois.edu/people/committees) to apply.
* For international students:  International Student & Scholar Services [emergency loans for educational expenses](https://isss.illinois.edu/resources/finaid.html).
* A current list of local [food banks](https://www.eifoodbank.org/map.html) and allied forms of assistance for students facing food insecurity.
* A list of [temporary job postings](https://osfa.illinois.edu/types-of-aid/employment/virtual-job-board/), especially useful for the summer and available to international students, as well. The Graduate College also has a [job board](https://grad.illinois.edu/funding/campus-job-boards).

In addition, please, if you find yourself in a tight spot, don't hesitate to reach out to the DGS, Chair, office staff, or any faculty member with whom you feel comfortable. Even if the department can't offer immediate material assistance, they may be able to help in other ways.

## Crisis and Mental Health Resources

If you are seeking support or resources related to sexual misconduct, [WeCare](https://wecare.illinois.edu/) can direct you to confidential and non-confidential resources. You can also utilize the rape crisis hotel for central Illinois at 217-384-4444.

Students may find [The Counseling Center](http://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/) a useful resource. At 610 E. John St., the Counseling Center provides individual counseling, couples counseling, therapeutic services, and self-help groups, and the services are fully paid for through student fees. The Counseling Center also deals with rape counseling as well as alcohol and drug assessment and counseling, eating disorder counseling, study skills development, and more.

## Other useful offices/services

* Child Care: [Child Care Resource Service](http://ccrs.illinois.edu/): 333-3252; 244-9666 (TTY) 905 S. Goodwin Ave., 314 Bevier Hall, Urbana
* [ID Center](https://icard.uillinois.edu/public/urbana-idc.cfm): (244-0135) 214 Technology Plaza, 616 E. Green St., Champaign
* [Illini Union](http://union.illinois.edu/): 1401 West Green St., Urbana; Info Desk: 333-0691
* Lost and Found Information, Illini Union 333-0691
* [Office of Admissions and Records](http://admissions.illinois.edu/): 333-0302
* [Records Service (Registrar)](http://registrar.illinois.edu/): 333-0210
* [Registration Assistance](https://registrar.illinois.edu/contact-us/): 333-6565
* [Office of Diversity, Equity and Access:](http://diversity.illinois.edu/) 100 Swanlund Admin Bldg, 601 East John Street, 333-0885; 244-9850 (TTY)
* [Office of Student Financial Aid](http://www.osfa.illinois.edu/): 333-0100 Student Services, 620 E. John St.
* [Student Health Insurance](https://www.uhcsr.com/illinois): 333-0165 506 S. Wright St., Room 100A
* [Student Legal Service](https://studentlegal.illinois.edu/): 333-9053, 324 Illini Union, 1401 W. Green St.
* Non-emergency: 333-1216; 244-7209 (TTY)
* Emergency: 9-911 (on campus); 911 (off campus)

# Grades

Passing grades for graduate students are “A’s” and “B’s.” Anything less indicates unsatisfactory work. Although you do not want to receive a “B+,” you can receive 1 or 2 while you are in the program. A “B-” suggests a greater problem that needs to be addressed. The pluses and minuses affect your GPA, which may be considered when the department makes funding decisions. The department does not include foreign language courses in its GPA equation. History 599, Thesis Research, is not graded until the dissertation is completed.

## Incompletes

If you are unable to complete work in a particular course during the semester, you can usually ask the professor to give you an incomplete, an “I.”  You still need to complete the coursework, and you will be equally pressed for time, if not more pressed, in the semester following the semester in which you took an incomplete.  A best practice is to finish the work during the semester break, before the next term begins. You must also have finished all incompletes before you take your prelims. In addition to the time disadvantages, incompletes may affect your departmental funding. Consult the graduate program portion of the website for more information and be sure to communicate well with your advisor and the professor of the incomplete course.

## Auditing

One way to gain knowledge without writing papers or taking exams is to audit classes. It is a good idea to audit 400-level lecture classes in your fields that you cannot take otherwise. This helps you determine what different professors think is important for their fields. You should ask professors for their permission before auditing classes. 500-level courses can also be audited, although this is not as common.

# Gregory Hall

Gregory Hall at 810 South Wright Street in Urbana houses the Department of History on the third and fourth floors. It is on the corner of S Wright St and Armory Ave, nestled between Lincoln Hall and the Main Library. The accessible entrance to Gregory Hall can be found on the North side of the building next to the parking lot. The first floor of Gregory is the Communications Library, a small library with printing needs, the New York Times Crossword and is a nearby pick-up location for books ordered from the campus library. The Main Library, which is right next door, includes the History, Philosophy, and Newspaper Library (HPNL). There is a bus stop right outside of Gregory Hall, and the YMCA across the street houses “Y-Thai,” which serves Thai-fusion food during lunch hours. All this makes Greg Hall a convenient campus location.

## Room 309

309 Greg Hall is the main department office housing the Chair's Office, Business Office, the Graduate Secretary, and the department lounge. In the lounge there is hot water, coffee, tea, and hot chocolate for a nominal price.  If you are a TA, the printer and copier and office supplies can also be found in the main department office. The friendly office staff are very helpful!

## Hall 300-306 Mailboxes

Just across the hall from the main office, you will find the mailboxes for all Faculty and all registered graduate students in town. This hallway is open during business hours Monday - Friday 8 am - 5 pm. Coordinate with the Graduate Program Coordinator to gain 24-hour access to this hallway after hours with your student ID.

# International Research

## In preparation

* Look well in advance if your international research will require a visa and, if so, what the visa requirements are for your places of research.
* Ask another student/professor in the department who has gone to the same country/archives for tips.
* Research ATM and credit card conditions.
	+ ATMs could be difficult or dangerous to access and may charge your account foreign transactions fees and exchange rate charges. Cyber security could be low and credit cards may not be accepted in many places, so you may have to figure out if you need cash before you go and to exchange it here/there and keep it safe while away.
	+ Look into credit cards with no foreign transaction fees.
	+ Having a separate debit card and a separate credit card are important, should one get blocked, stolen or lost.
* Research archives you plan to visit and their opening times/dates. They may have an online catalogue, though it is always useful to build relationships with archivists as they may know about documents not reflected in the catalogue.
* If applicable, find out from Grad College if you need an IRB for Oral Interviews as requirements have recently changed.
* Check what, if any, vaccines you may need for the country you are travelling to, a great resource for that is McKinley Health.
* Make connections.

## Making Connections

One of the best ways to find out about archival culture, academic culture and living/cultural information is by making contacts before leaving on research or during your pre-diss research. You might consider an affiliation with a local university or contact with a local scholar/department. Please note that some institutions may have a fee for affiliation. These connections and affiliation can help with gathering information about archives, travel and even living arrangements (i.e. university dorms, knowledge of where to look for an apartment, etc.).

Look for a research center/research institute. This is a great way to make connections to help you with several travel issues. Some may be affiliated with universities, others may be totally independent. American scholars have research centers all around the world and coming from an American university you have access to these centers. Often you also have access to British/Canadian or other Centers/Institutes as well that are in your place of research, as a student-scholar affiliated with an American university. Many of these centers/institutes have dorms or apartments you can rent, have libraries if they are thematically linked to your research, hold events with other scholars and universities/institutes in the region and can generally help you to navigate around the city/place and archives.

## Preparing for Archival Research

* Contact the archives you intend to research in to confirm hours and if they require advanced bookings to visit.
* Budget for archival fees. Some archives will charge for photographs, with rates widely varying. If this is the case, remember to budget for such fees,
* For some, you may need specific documents to work there. For example, you may need a letter from the department or your advisor. The letter may need to be in the local language. You may need a research visa or note from some official body. The graduate program coordinator can provide you with a research letter to bring with you. Take one regardless of whether you end up needing it as proof of university affiliation.
* Consider language requirements in your early years of the PhD; take your language skills seriously because many places outside of the English-speaking world will not be able to accommodate you. Take language classes at UIUC, or even consider taking private lessons/classes in country during pre-diss/diss research
* Consider research periods and holidays (which can be more abundant abroad) in other countries, find out when archives are closed for the summer, the winter, religious holidays, state holidays, certain days of the week, general hours of operations, and if any current political situation affects accessibility.

## Option of ‘In Absentia’ Registration

If you intend not to return to Urbana-Champaign and make use of McKinley, student health insurance, dental insurance, or the workout facilities, you may fill out an [In Absentia form](https://grad.illinois.edu/academics/registration-and-records/petitions-and-record-requests/find-form) that will relieve you of most of these fees. You will still have access to the library website and through it JSTOR and other catalogues from abroad.

To register while on fellowship, use the HIST 599 CRN connected to your advisor, the Graduate Program Coordinator can email that to you and provide you with registration information

In Absentia forms must be filled out each semester you are away.

## International Travel Insurance and the Study Abroad Office

[The Safety Abroad office](https://safetyabroad.illinois.edu/) is an office at the University that is solely responsible for UIUC students who are travelling abroad (regardless of if you are an American citizen or an international student).

Should anything happen in the region that you are living in at the time, they will check in on you and be able to help with any problems.

If you experience a health crisis, or an emergency and need to be evacuated from the country, through contact with them and the use of their insurance, the Study Abroad office will arrange everything you need to be removed from the country.

For every address change, update the office with your new address.

### Required Insurance

Whether for pre-dissertation research or for dissertation research, if you are going abroad, it is university policy to buy the travel insurance provided through this office, which will automatically enroll you with the Study Abroad office, who tracks events in regions abroad containing Illinois students. Please [consult the website](https://safetyabroad.illinois.edu/insurance/coverage/) for information on fees, coverage, and benefits. The required International Safety and Security Insurance includes some medical expense benefits. Contact their [staff](https://safetyabroad.illinois.edu/about-us/staff/) with questions.

## UnitedHealth Student Insurance

As of Fall 2024, for UnitedHealth Student Insurance, treatment in a foreign country is considered for out-of-network coverage. Coverage out of network is covered at a rate of 80 percent, up to the allowed amount. You will want to contact UnitedHealthcare customer service to determine how much will be covered via email at customerservice@uhcsr.com or phone at 888-224-4883. The service must be paid for upfront. When submitting reimbursement on your ‘my account’, it must include the date of the services, reason for treatment (provider notes, etc.), the charges, and that the balance was paid in full. If it is paid in cash, you will need a receipt. If it is paid by credit card, please provide a copy of the bank statement and receipt. If the service, for example, is for a stomachache, this would be processed as out of network. If the service is for an emergency like a car accident, or heart attack, services will be considered in-network. We encourage students to confirm this information in preparation for research, in case of any updates or chances.

If there is an emergency, and it is a global- natural disaster, or evacuation, there is global coverage in which case you will need to contact United Healthcare directly. There is a phone number on the back of the insurance card, or you can access information by visiting their My Account, select My Benefits/Additional Benefits/UHC Global Emergency Servies. Global assistance is through United Healthcare, not Student Resources.

## In the event of an emergency

In an emergency, please contact the University of Illinois Police Department (UIPD) using the emergency number below. UIPD will link travelers abroad with the Study Abroad staff. (+1-217-333-1216 (from a cellphone); From a land line: 001-217-333-1216)

Be prepared to provide:

* Caller name and contact information
* Traveler name and contact information (if you are not the one calling)
* Traveler location (City and Country)
* Program or reason for travel
* Nature of the emergency and what assistance is needed

We suggest keeping a small card with all this info on it in your wallet, just in case. Study Abroad provides cards to carry in your wallet with this information as well.

You might also register with the US state department for alerts through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program. Even if you are going to a low-risk country, this registration also provides information such as the occurrence of country-wide strikes or events that could impact travel, such as extreme weather and so on. The website also determines if you are travelling to a ‘high risk’ country. If it is a very high-risk country, you may need to fill out a permission and waiver form to go and still be able to receive travel insurance.

All of this is found on the [Illinois International Safety and Security website](https://safetyabroad.illinois.edu/incident-response/management/).

## Some helpful websites

[US Department of State (DoS) Travel Website](https://www.state.gov/travel/): Contains links for information regarding passports and visas, specific countries, travel tips, emergency information and more.

[The DoS Traveller’s Checklist Website](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-checklist.html): This website provides more concise information regarding preparing to travel overseas.

# Stages of Graduate Education

This page is designed to orient you to the graduate experience of progressing through the program but may not reflect the latest departmental policies. Please see this page, [PhD in History](https://history.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-studies/phd-history), for the most up-to-date information.

You should also be aware of the University pay schedule: you will get your first check in mid-September and your last paycheck in mid-May. If you are not planning on another source of income, you will probably need to save money throughout the year.  Moreover, many summer jobs at the university do not begin payment until mid-June, which means you may not receive a paycheck for a month.

The graduate program at UIUC consists of three stages.  In a rough estimation, students typically spend 2-3 years taking courses, then 1 year completing preliminary examinations, and, finally, 2-4 years researching and writing the dissertation.  You should take the time that you need to do well in your coursework, examinations, research, and writing.  For many PhD candidates, however, the longer that they are here, the more difficult the program is to complete.

You may hear about expectations of completing the PhD in 5 to 7 years.  We urge you to keep in mind the following points if you choose to adopt that timeline.  First, although timely progress through the program is important, you will want to prioritize your mental health. You may need to find a balance between studying, working, and socializing that is different from the balance you struck as an undergraduate, a full-time employee, or other life stages. Second, graduate school serves as a forum for reading and really absorbing the fields that you will need to know for success on the job market. Gaining knowledge of a field is an enormous task for which you will not have time after you find employment. Finally, this should be a time when you make connections with your colleagues, to have a scholarly community within the department and the university, and with scholars at other institutions by attending conferences, workshops, etc.

It is important to keep in mind the paperwork involved in maintaining registration, funding, and financial aid if your studies go 7 or 8 years and beyond. Departmental guidelines are flexible to an extent. Nonetheless, be sure to acquire written approval for any variation in the program to avoid confusion and delays. You will certainly want to file all paperwork pertaining to this process in a safe place.

## Stage One: Coursework

You must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA in all semesters. Generally, a B+ or lower in a graduate course indicates some problem such as miscommunication between the student and professor, too many time commitments on the part of the student, substandard work, etc. In “Problems Courses,” (e.g. Problems in Comparative History) you will generally be expected to read one monograph paired with several required articles per week and to produce a historiography paper. In “Research Seminars,” you will also produce an original research paper like a publishable-quality article. There is more information about the courses below.

You will also have to fulfill foreign language requirements; these courses do not count towards credits for the degree. You must demonstrate language proficiency in one foreign language. Some advisors may encourage additional language proficiency.   “Language proficiency” usually means achieving an adequate reading knowledge of a language relevant to your field of study. Although UIUC offers a great array of languages, you can sometimes do more intensive language study during the summer at other universities, which may have funding sources. Consult with your advisor or experienced students in your field for advice on the best way to meet the department’s requirements and gain the necessary expertise to conduct research in a foreign language.

No graduate history courses are offered during the summer. It is possible, however, to arrange a reading course, designated as History 597, with a willing professor during the summer months. Teaching Assistantships are particularly difficult to come by in the summer because there are few TA positions, therefore some people take summer jobs.

If you decide that continuing in the PhD program is not for you, it is possible to leave UIUC with at least an MA. If you decide to leave, the department is supportive, but you should talk to the DGS as soon as possible.

## Stage Two: Prelims

Most of the coursework that you will take in your first 2 or 3 years of the program should prepare you to demonstrate, in both written and oral examinations, your knowledge of three fields and should prepare you to conduct dissertation research in your major field.

After you have completed the course requirements, you will begin taking prelims. Preliminary examinations are written tests of your competence – for teaching, interviewing for jobs, and attending conferences – in each of your three fields. Keep this in mind when choosing your courses, even in the early stages of coursework. As you select your examiners, the professors who will write and assess your prelims, in consultation with your major advisor, you want to be sure to take classes with them. You must have at least 5 different examiners for the 3 written exams. Your advisor must be one of the examiners for your major field. Remember that fields are generally broad, so you will not want to cluster all your coursework around one geographic, thematic, or chronological area. See the page “[Preliminary Field Examinations](https://history.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-studies-and-admissions/current-students/progressing-through-program/preliminary)” for more departmental information about prelims.

As you begin to prepare for prelims, talk to the professors you want to write your exams. A variety of factors can prevent you from getting your first choice, e.g. a professor going on leave. It is also a good idea to talk with students who have recently taken prelims and understand recent trends in each field. Your colleagues are also excellent sources for tracking down reading lists for some fields, as is this [departmental archive of reading lists](https://uofi.box.com/s/1e9v3ihffnd8kab3bou46idsmbkegaos). You will want to organize ideas and themes in your own mind and establish the approach you, as an individual, will take to mastering them.

If you fail in your first attempt at a prelim, you can petition the DGS to retake the prelim. People have been known to fail an exam the first time around and retake it successfully. In the fall, HGSA typically hosts a panel of graduate students who have passed their prelim exams.

### Dissertation Proposal

While preparing for your prelims, you should also be developing a dissertation proposal. In one of your prelim semesters, you may also participate in the dissertation proposal writing workshop, which is usually held each semester. The workshop meets regularly under the direction of a professor and provides a valuable opportunity to get feedback from students and faculty on your research proposal. The dissertation proposal will be important for grant applications, departmental funding, the oral prelim, etc. Some students in the past have benefited from multiple sessions of the workshop.

### Oral Proposal Defense

The oral examination is, by the designation of the Graduate College, the official preliminary examination. The major and minor field prelims of the History Department do not fulfill the requirements of the Grad College You must have at least one faculty member from each of your fields on your oral preliminary examination committee, plus a fourth faculty member who may be one of your written prelim examiners or who may come from outside the department. The oral prelim must occur during the semester in which you take your final departmental prelim. Clearance of this date from the Grad College can take 2 to 3 weeks, so do not wait until the end of the semester to schedule your oral or you may run out of time. You must distribute a dissertation proposal to your four examiners one week prior to the oral prelim. After completing coursework, prelims, and the oral prelim, you are considered ABD, or ‘All But Dissertation.’ As always, policies are subject to change, so consult the DGS for the most current departmental and university requirements.

## Stage Three: The Dissertation

This stage consists of researching, writing, and defending your dissertation. You must establish your Doctoral Examination Committee within 1 year after reaching the ABD status. You will develop this committee in consultation with your advisor. It can be the same as your oral preliminary examination committee, but many students choose different committees at this stage to reflect the changing needs of research and writing. While writing, you may wish to participate in the dissertation writing workshop, in informal writing groups, in grad college writing workshops, and in departmental reading groups (which often read and discuss chapters). Before your final dissertation defense, there will be a "pre-defense," in which your committee members will review and discuss a draft.

# Student Organizations

See a list of History Department Groups [here](https://history.illinois.edu/academics/graduate-studies-and-admissions/current-students/graduate-student-organizations-and).

The [Humanities Research Institute](https://hri.illinois.edu/) hosts many events of interest to History students, including a Graduate Student Mixer and various reading and writing groups.

Members of the History Department often organize reading groups for faculty and graduate students, such as the Premodern World and History of Science reading groups. There are also opportunities to engage with interdisciplinary groups through [area studies centers](https://igi.illinois.edu/).

# University Student Services

## The Graduate College

[The Graduate College](http://www.grad.illinois.edu/) serves the needs of prospective and current graduate students. The college offers numerous workshops about professional development, including managing graduate school experience, CV critiques, dissertation writing seminars, and thesis depositing workshops. Check the campus calendar for more details.

## The Graduate Employees Organization (GEO)

The GEO offices are located at the McKinley Foundation and its website is [www.uigeo.org](http://www.uigeo.org/).  The GEO is a democratic member-run union for all graduate employees. Through the GEO all TAs (Teaching Assistants), PGAs (Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants), RAs (Research Assistants) and GAs (Graduate Assistants) can negotiate with the university over healthcare, wages, and other working conditions. Graduate employees at UIUC have been working through the GEO since the early 1990s to secure tuition waivers, increase pay, improve benefits, and make other changes. The GEO has made significant improvements in graduate employee working conditions, including summer healthcare coverage, annual wage increases, fully subsidized vision and dental care, and strives for more. The GEO also handles grievances for all members of the bargaining unit. As such, history department membership in the Union has historically been high. To run the union, every graduate employee member covered by the contract is required to pay a “fair share fee” or “representation fee” to the union.

Please note, employees are entitled to “all-campus” holidays, like Labor Day and Martin Luther King Day. Most appointments are 9 months in duration. Payday is the 16th of every month, or the Friday before the 16th, if it falls on a weekend. Your first paycheck, whether as an employee or fellow, does not come until September 16th. Financial Aid may offer “emergency loans” to cover expenses until the first paycheck arrives. You will also want to keep in mind that unless otherwise noted in your funding package, you are only being offered 9 months of funding by the department.

If you would like more information or want to join, the GEO and the history department stewards would love to hear from you.

## [The Michael L. Jeffries Sr. Center for Access and Academic Success](https://jeffriescenter.illinois.edu/)

[The Jeffries Center](https://jeffriescenter.illinois.edu/) provides guidance and counseling support and services to minority students in all areas relevant to their success on the campus, including financial aid, academic issues, race relations, etc.  The office serves both undergraduate and graduate students on campus.

[Graduate College’s Educational Equity Programs](http://www.grad.illinois.edu/eep/diversity) Office (333-0038) works closely with the Jeffries Center as well as the Counseling Center, the Black Graduate Student Association, La Casa Cultural Latina, the Afro-American Studies and Research Program, and the African American Cultural Program.  That office's mission is to address questions of access to and participation in graduate education by individuals from groups currently underrepresented at the University of Illinois.

## [International Student and Scholar Services](http://www.isss.illinois.edu/)

Formerly known as the Office of International Student Affairs, the [ISSS](https://isss.illinois.edu/) provides advice and information on immigration, income taxes, employment, healthcare, and financial aid.  The ISSS is an advocate for international education and seeks to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment when international students arrive on campus.  If you are a new international student at UIUC, you will receive information from ISSS and must check-in with the staff upon arriving in Champaign-Urbana.  Do not hesitate to contact ISSS at isss@illinois.edu if you have any questions or concerns; they would love to hear from you.

## [Gender & Sexuality Resource Center](https://gsrc.illinois.edu/)

[The Gender & Sexuality Resource Center](http://www.gws.illinois.edu/) is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  This office is a resource for anyone who is interested in learning about LGBT people, issues, and concerns.  For the LGBT community, the office provides services and support for full inclusion for all within the university.  The campus environment mirrors homophobic and/or heterosexist attitudes of our larger society, therefore this office seeks to address homophobia on campus. It provides confidential forums and advocates for queer academic resources.  It also serves as a resource for various internal and affiliated groups on campus, including the Ally Network, Q-Connect, the Campus Union for Trans Equality and Support, and more.  Please visit their site for more information.

## The Gender & Women’s Studies Program

[The Gender and Women’s Studies Program](http://www.gws.illinois.edu/) trains students to identify where and how inequalities are produced and reproduced.  The program offers a graduate minor in gender and women’s studies, a graduate minor in queer studies, and some funding opportunities.

## The Women’s Resource Center

The Women’s Resource Center (WRC) is a resource for students of ALL genders and provides a variety of programming and services, including identity and career development initiatives, sexual and relationship violence prevention and awareness programming, confidential advising, and survivor advocacy and support.

# Health Resources

## McKinley Health Center

[McKinley](http://mckinley.illinois.edu/) serves the students and graduate spouses at UIUC.  Though there is a health service fee for McKinley, the GEO-negotiated contract states that the university waives this fee. McKinley coverage includes appointments with doctors, nurses and counselors; diagnostic tests done on-campus such as lab work and x-rays; eye exams; and medications prescribed by McKinley health providers and filled at their pharmacy.  The fee does not cover immunizations, or any costs incurred from off-campus services. In other words, if you have a problem McKinley cannot handle and they refer you to a local doctor or hospital, the health service fee will not cover those costs. Most prescription medications are offered at very low prices at the pharmacy. They also have diagnostic, mental health, and wellness programs.

## Carle Foundation Hospital

Carle is a local hospital that provides services in the Urbana-Champaign area. It has a [financial assistance program](https://carle.org/patients-visitors/financial-assistance) that may cover up to 100 percent of medical expenses. Eligibility is based on income as reported in your Federal Tax Return, but even if you are a first-year international student with no tax return records, you can apply. Their applications are retroactive. If you incur any medical expenses at the hospital for an appointment or emergency, you can ask them to put your debt on hold until your application is approved. Once approved, your coverage includes appointments with doctors, diagnostic tests, and physical therapy, among other services.

## Major & Ongoing Health Issues

If you believe that you may have to miss large periods of classes or teaching due to an ongoing medical issue (e.g. a major surgery, a medical emergency, or a serious ongoing condition) be sure to notify your primary advisor and the DGS about this as soon as you possibly can. They will be able to work with you to develop solutions to ensure that you are still able to complete your degree despite any medical issues you may be dealing with. Additionally, if your medical issue is related to a disability, you may also be able to find accommodations from [Disability Resources and Educational Services](https://dres.illinois.edu/).

# Life In Champaign-Urbana

## Arts, Food, and Culture in Champaign-Urbana

You can find plenty of information about life in Champaign Urbana at [Experience Champaign-Urbana](https://experiencecu.org/), including details about arts & culture, the outdoors, sports & recreation, shopping locally, and the food scene. You should also check out [Smile Politely](https://www.smilepolitely.com/), Champaign-Urbana’s culture magazine.

## Housing in Champaign-Urbana

There are many housing options in Champaign-Urbana. Many graduate students choose to live in non-University housing, while others prefer the [University Apartments](https://housing.illinois.edu/Living-Communities/Apartments), including Orchard Downs, Ashton Woods, and Goodwin-Green. For more information on university housing for graduate students visit the [Graduate College Website](https://grad.illinois.edu/grad-student-life/living-and-visiting-cu/housing). If you have further questions, please email HGSA.

## Transportation in Champaign-Urbana

* [Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District](https://mtd.org/)

The Mass Transit District (MTD) is Champaign-Urbana’s public transportation.  The MTD buses are quite convenient, and since every student pays a fee to support the MTD, you are always entitled to unlimited access to all routes and services.  Simply show your student ID, or iCard, to the operator.  All MTD regular routes are served by buses that are equipped with wheelchair lifts. You can find information on routes and detours at [mtd.org](http://mtd.org/), and you can pick up maps onboard most buses and at the terminal.

* [Amtrak](http://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=am/am2Station/Station_Page&code=CHM) is located at the Illinois Terminal at 1101 E. University, which also contains the central MTD offices. Passenger trains run daily from Illinois Terminal to Chicago’s Union Station
* [Greyhound](https://www.greyhound.com/) is also located at the Illinois Terminal and runs to Chicago.
* [Peoria Charter](https://peoriacharter.com/) picks up in a few locations around town and runs to locations in the Chicagoland area, including the airport.
* UI Ride intercampus bus shuttle connects the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and the University of Illinois Chicago campuses. It makes two daily round trips (one in the morning, one in the early afternoon) every weekday. [See rates and schedules on the UI system website.](https://www.uillinois.edu/uiride)
* [Willard Airport](https://iflycu.com/)Willard Airport, located about 3 miles south of Champaign on Route 45, which is the extension of Neil St., is a regional airport operated by the University of Illinois, accommodating both private and commercial aircraft.  American Airlines and United Airlines are currently the only airlines which fly to Champaign. Parking costs $5 per day, and the MTD has a bus route from campus and the Illinois Terminal to the airport that operates 7 days a week. It is also easy to get there by taxi, Uber, or Lyft.
* Nearby International airports include: [O'Hare (ORD) and Midway (MDW)](http://www.flychicago.com/pages/landingpage.aspx) in Chicago, [Indianapolis International Airport (IND)](https://www.ind.com/), and [Lambert (STL)](http://www.flystl.com/) in St. Louis. There is also a great regional airport (with free parking) just 45 minutes away in Bloomington-Normal - [Central Illinois Regional Airport (BMI)](http://www.cira.com/).