DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PHD) DEGREE IN THE FIELD OF ART HISTORY

Program Learning Outcomes for the PhD Degree in the field of Art History

Upon completing the PhD degree program in the field of Art History, students will be able to:

1. Apply disciplinary methods for the visual interpretation and critique of art to produce scholarship and communicate about art using appropriate disciplinary vocabularies and primary and secondary texts where appropriate.
2. Understand art not as an isolated incident but in relation to the contexts which not only shape art, but are shaped by art, including: history, society, culture, geography, and politics.
3. Understand art as a multicultural issue.
4. Develop and apply understanding of major artistic movements, artists, and art pieces by identifying and situating individual artists and works of art within major movements.

Requirements for the MA and PhD Degrees in the field of Art History

For general university requirements, please see Doctoral Degrees (ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-policies-procedures/regulations-procedures-doctoral-degrees). The PhD in Art History program at Rice University trains students for academic research and teaching, curatorial positions, and other careers in the visual arts. Program requirements include two years of coursework and the demonstration of two language proficiencies in addition to English, as well as the successful completion of a graduate research paper, oral and written qualifying exams, a dissertation prospectus, and a doctoral dissertation. All students entering the PhD program must complete the full curriculum, regardless of the degrees and coursework completed prior to the student’s admission to Rice’s doctoral program.

The MA degree is a non-thesis master’s degree. For general university requirements, please see Non-Thesis Master’s Degrees (ga.rice.edu/graduate-students/academic-opportunities/degrees). Although all students are admitted into the doctoral program, and no MA program is available, an MA degree may be conferred upon the successful completion of the first two years of coursework, the passing of at least one language exam, and the completion of the graduate research paper.

In addition to the traditional degree timeline, the department also offers a Museum Professionals track, which is designed for students who currently hold professional appointments at local museums. All requirements for the program remain the same; however, graduate students who continue to hold their position at museums have a longer timetable for completing requirements.

The program is overseen by the Graduate Committee in Art History. The committee is comprised of department faculty and supervised by a Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). The DGS is responsible for advising students on coursework and degree requirements, and the department’s Graduate Program Administrator oversees completion and documentation of program requirements, as well as financial matters concerning graduate students.

All incoming students will be assigned to the DGS for the first semester of enrollment. The DGS will assist in explaining departmental guidelines, choosing courses, and beginning to strategize about primary and secondary fields. Primary and secondary fields are later finalized by the student in consultation with his or her advisor and with a view towards the requirements of the job market. First-year students need to identify a potential faculty advisor in their primary field, approach the faculty member for permission, and, with the advisor’s agreement, declare a permanent advisor by the end of the first week of classes in the Spring semester of the first year.

Code | Title | Credit Hours
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Minimum Credit Hours Required for the PhD Degree in Art History | 90

Courses

Satisfactory completion (grade C+ or above) of at least 36 hours (12 courses) of graduate coursework (500 or 600 level) is required; at least half of these courses need to be seminars. All incoming students are required to take HART 590 (Methods in Art History), an introductory seminar, in the Fall term of their first year, as well as HART 503 (Graduate Research Paper), an independent study, in the second or third year, according to the degree timeline. Both of these courses count toward the 12-course requirement.

Of the 12 required courses, at least 4 courses must be taken in the student’s primary field of interest and at least 2 courses in the secondary field. Students should work with their advisors to identify primary and secondary fields by the end of the second year. Up to 3 graduate courses may be taken outside the department, as approved by the student’s advisor.

If a student chooses to enroll in an independent study course, the student and course supervisor should establish and document the format and expectations for the course by the second week of the term. Additionally, research hours leading to candidacy and a thesis are also required, but do not count toward the 12-course requirement. HART 600 (Qualifying Exams) and HART 601 (Dissertation Prospectus) are taken in preparation for candidacy, and HART 800 (Dissertation Research) is taken in preparation for the thesis and for defense.

Code | Title | Credit Hours
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Required Coursework | 87
HART 590 | METHODS OF ART HISTORY | 3
Total Credit Hours | 90

Foreign Languages

Reading knowledge of at least two languages other than English is required. These languages must be relevant to research in the student’s field of study and must be approved by the student’s advisor. A third language may also be strongly recommended by the student’s advisor. The first language proficiency exam must be taken by December 15 of the first semester of the first year, and the second exam taken by May 1 of the second semester of the second year. If the student fails either exam, s/he may retake them no more than two additional times. The first exam
must be passed within a year of the original exam. The second exam must be passed for the student to enter into candidacy, and no later than September 15th of the fourth year. If necessary, students are strongly encouraged to begin study of their second language at the start of their first year.

**Graduate Research Paper**

In the Spring term of their second year, students are required to complete a substantial research paper, as part of HART 503 (Graduate Research Paper). In preparation for this paper, the student should submit a topic and preliminary bibliography for the graduate research paper to his or her advisor by the end of Fall term of the second year. The purpose of the paper is to demonstrate research skills in art history including the ability to develop a convincing argument, to use visual evidence, to undertake research in foreign languages where applicable, and to develop an original thesis. The paper topic should be the result of careful thought and planning between student and advisor. It should not be thought of as a preliminary version of a dissertation, but rather an opportunity to explore in depth a topic of interest, perhaps related to course work. It need not, however, be outside of the student’s primary field of study and may end up being related to an eventual dissertation topic. The topic of the paper, and a preliminary bibliography, should be discussed with the advisor before the end of the Fall semester of the second year.

**Teaching Assistantships**

All students in their third year will serve as Teaching Assistants (TAs). TAs will be assigned to courses based on course enrollments and numbers of TAs available, but in each semester some TAs will be assigned to HART 101 or HART 102. In some semesters, a TA may be assigned to a different course, based on interest/experience, combined with course size and professors’ needs. In both cases, the focus will be on a collaborative process in which TAs are an integral part of the department’s teaching, and will be supervised and trained in ways which will help in the development of their pedagogical skills. Students will gain experience by either leading discussion sections or taking over class sessions during the semester and the TA will be observed and given feedback.

**Qualifying Exams**

The doctoral qualifying exams (HART 600) consist of two written exams, followed by an oral exam. Preparation of the qualifying exams will begin during the summer term between the second and third years, and continue throughout the third year. The written and oral exams must be completed in the Spring semester of the third year. The exams will cover topics in the student’s primary field of study and secondary field, as agreed upon with the student’s advisor and based on the student’s interests and intended area of study for the doctoral dissertation. Passing the qualifying exams is necessary for continuation in the program into the dissertation phase.

**Dissertation Prospectus**

In the Spring semester of the third year, students will enroll in HART 601 and prepare a prospectus of 10-12 pages plus bibliography on their dissertation topic to be presented to their advisor and dissertation committee. Students are encouraged to think of the dissertation prospectus as a base document for their dissertation research and writing phases. It should clearly present the dissertation’s topic, significance and contribution to the field(s), historical context, methodology and archival sources, and preliminary structure. Format details should be agreed upon with the dissertation advisor, and the dissertation committee should be approved by the department’s graduate committee. Once the student has passed the doctoral exams and had the prospectus approved by the dissertation committee, the student will file a petition for approval of candidacy for the Ph.D. with the Office of Graduate Studies.

**Dissertation**

A dissertation represents independent and original research, equivalent to a publishable book, which makes a significant contribution to the current body of knowledge in the field. It must show a mastery of the literature in the subject, be written in acceptable literary style, and conform to the standards outlined on the Rice University Office of Graduate Studies website. Dissertations may be written on any subject that falls within the supervisory competence of a permanent member of the department.

**Policies for the PhD Degree in the field of Art History**

**Department of Art History Graduate Program Handbook**

The General Announcements (GA) is the official Rice curriculum. As an additional resource for students, including more detailed information regarding the PhD degree program policies and requirements, evaluation of student progress, and recommended timetable for degree completion for traditional students and those in the Museum Professionals Track, please see the Department of Art History Graduate Program Handbook, which can be found here:


**Additional Information**

For additional information, please see the Art History website: https://www.arthistory.rice.edu/graduate.

**Opportunities for the PhD Degree in the field of Art History**

**Prizes and Awards**

Information regarding graduate prizes and awards, as well as fellowship and internship opportunities at local museums, can be found on the department website, under the Prizes and Awards section:


**Co-Teaching**

A competitive co-teaching program will be available to in-residence students beginning in their fifth year, with applications due by January 15 of the preceding year. This is a chance to build on the teaching assistant experience of the third year, while giving students a means to build their teaching résumé during the dissertation stage of the program and as they prepare to go into the job market.

**Exhibitions, Lectures, and Arts Programs at Rice and in Houston**

Houston is fortunate to have some of the best art collections in the United States. The department enjoys a strong and ongoing relationship with the local museums, in particular the Menil Collection and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The department offers opportunities for students to study with local museums, galleries, and alternative art spaces by way of internship courses, summer internship working opportunities, fellowships, or collaborative events. The collections and
special exhibitions of local museums are often the focus of class lectures and research papers in art history.

The department sponsors the Katherine Tsanoff Brown Lectures, which bring leading scholars to Rice to speak on a wide variety of topics. The department also hosts occasional symposia and lectures in collaboration with other departments, presenting the ideas of top scholars, critics, and artists.

The Department of Art History houses the Visual Resources Center, which currently offers a broad and extensive collection of digital images related to the arts for teaching and research, serving both the department and the university at large. Additionally, exhibitions and related activities organized by the Rice University Moody Center for the Arts enrich the university and the Houston community. The Department of Visual and Dramatic Arts mounts several art and photography exhibitions each year and sponsors Rice Cinema, a public alternative film program.

**Additional Information**

For additional information, please see the Art History website: [https://arthistory.rice.edu/graduate](https://arthistory.rice.edu/graduate).

See [https://humanities.rice.edu/student-life](https://humanities.rice.edu/student-life) for tables of fellowships, prizes, and internships/practica that may be relevant to this degree.