

# Student Handbook

Critical Approaches to Science, Technology and Medicine  
(CAST-M) MA Track

2023-2024 Academic Year

The Department for the History of Medicine

Johns Hopkins University

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## **Introduction**

CAST-M is a fully-funded MA program within the JHU Department of the History of Medicine, which supports paths to further doctoral study for emerging scholars from backgrounds that are traditionally marginalized in STEM-adjacent humanities fields. We aim to help CAST-M students develop incisive analytical skills for research in fields such as science studies, medical humanities, medical anthropology, history of science and technology, and history of medicine. In order to best support students' intellectual and personal development, the program offers a range of financial, academic, and interpersonal resources including full funding, personalized advising, a close-knit and collegial environment.

This handbook outlines standards, regulations, expectations, and resources for CAST-M students. The first section clarifies the program timeline and academic requirements. The second section describes CAST-M's community values, concretized in the CAST-M Charter and in Program Seminar. The third section lists research, writing, institutional, and professional development resources for CAST-M students, both within the Department and across the institution.

## CAST-M Program Rules and Requirements

### Types of Courses

Typically, courses are of the following types:

1. Undergraduate Courses (100-400 level): Either lecture courses or seminars aimed primarily at undergraduate students. Graduate students may take these courses only when necessary and with permission of their advisor and/or the Director of Graduate Studies. Graduate students are expected to have additional assignments or readings when taking an undergraduate course.
2. Graduate Seminar (400-600+ level): courses structured around readings and discussions led by a faculty member and aimed primarily at graduate students.
3. Research Seminar: graduate courses structured around independent research on a topic related to the course theme and under the supervision of the teaching faculty. Research seminars almost always require the completion of a research paper.
4. Reading Course (Directed Readings): a tutorial-style graduate course supervised by one or more faculty members. Students meet with the faculty in 1-on-1 or similar arrangements. Meeting frequency and assessment differ based on the topic and the teaching faculty.
5. Online Program in the History of Medicine (OPHOM) courses: CAST-M students can enroll in OPHOM research seminars and count them towards their requirements. OPHOM courses are Term-courses. Two-term courses count as a single-semester course.
6. School of Public Health and other term courses: CAST-M students may enroll in courses offered by the School of Public Health and other term (not semester) courses. If these courses are for fewer than three credits, students are allowed to enroll only in one such course every semester.

Requirements and Expectations by Year:**I. First Year:**

During their first semester in the Program, all students are advised by the CAST-M program director and the program postdoctoral fellow. They guide students in choosing courses, managing their requirements, and navigating life in graduate school. During the second semester and thereafter, each student is also advised by a faculty member whose interests and expertise intersect with the student's. Students should plan to identify a faculty advisor by early in the Spring semester. The advisor, as well as the program director and postdoctoral fellow, will support and guide the student in selecting courses, preparing for doctoral program applications, and completing their MA thesis. Students may choose to change their advisors and will be assisted by the program director.

First-year students are expected to complete the following courses (at least three 3-credit courses each semester)

1. Theories and Methods in Medicine, Science, and the Humanities: Students attend the undergraduate lectures and a 2-hour/week seminar meeting. The course is offered in the Fall.
2. At least one unit of the four HSMT survey courses: Students attend undergraduate lectures and a 2-hour/week seminar meeting.
  - a. History of Medicine I–Antiquity to Early Modern Medicine (Fall semester)
  - b. History of Science I–Scientific Revolution (Fall semester)
  - c. History of Medicine II–Modern and Contemporary Medicine (Spring semester)
  - d. History of Science II–Rise of Modern Science (Spring semester)
3. One of the HSMT Historiography or Methods Seminars: The HSMT Historiography Seminar and the Methods Seminar are offered alternately yearly. Students complete one of the two in their first year and the other in their second.
4. Three research or graduate seminars of their choice.
5. HSMT colloquium: attendance and participation are required.
6. CAST-M Program Seminar: the program seminar meets weekly and helps students develop various academic skills.
7. Ethics training for medical historians: 8 hours of ethics training supervised by The History of Medicine Department Director of Graduate Studies.

Satisfactory completion of Year 1 requires:

1. Passing all the required courses with an A/A- average. Students should maintain a grade point average of 3.6 or higher (no more than one B per semester). Graduate course GPA demonstrates aptitude for further doctoral study and is a crucial component of admission

to competitive doctoral programs. Students whose GPA falls below this threshold in any semester will be expected to discuss their program progress and goals for future doctoral study with their advising team.

2. Writing at least one original research paper each semester. The paper should demonstrate independent research skills and analytical/argumentative writing skills. It is to be reviewed and approved by the program director and postdoctoral fellow. If the paper is deemed unsatisfactory, students will have until the beginning of the next semester to rewrite or expand as needed so that the draft adequately demonstrates the necessary skills. The paper may be based on a final term paper prepared for a course.

Satisfactory completion of both of these benchmarks is necessary for advancement to the second year of the program.

## **II. Second Year:**

Upon successful completion of the First Year, students' enrollment and funding are renewed as appropriate. During their second year in the program, students work closely with the program director and a department faculty advisor, who support their work toward applications to doctoral programs and completing their MA thesis.

Students may decide to graduate in either May of their second year OR August of their second year. Graduate decisions impact timelines for thesis completion. Theses must be completed by early March to qualify for May graduation, or by early June to qualify for August graduation. If a student graduates in May, they will be eligible to walk in the JHU commencement that month. NOTE that stipend payments will not continue over the summer for students with a May graduation. If a student graduates in August, stipend payments will continue through the summer. August graduates will be eligible to walk in the JHU commencement in May of the following year. HoM also runs its own graduation celebrations for the department's MA and PhD August graduates. Students are encouraged to discuss their ideal graduation timeline with the Director of Graduate Studies and their thesis advisors early in their second year.

Regardless of completion month (May or August), second-year students are expected to complete the following courses (at least three 3-credit courses each semester)

1. One of the HSMT Historiography or Methods Seminars: The HSMT Historiography Seminar and the Methods Seminar are offered alternately yearly. Students complete one of the two in their first year and the other in their second.
2. Two research seminars of their choice.
3. Two semester-long Directed Reading Courses supervised by a faculty member (the two courses can be replaced by a single year-long reading course with a faculty member)
4. One directed thesis research course in the Spring semester.

5. The second-year program seminar: the second-year program seminar is offered in the Fall semester, is supervised by the program director, and focuses on helping students prepare their applications to doctoral programs.
6. HSMT Colloquium: attendance and participation are required

Requirements for second-year satisfactory progress:

1. Completion of the required courses with an A/A- average. Students should maintain a grade point average of 3.6 or higher (no more than one B per semester). Graduate course GPA demonstrates aptitude for further doctoral study and is a crucial component of admission to competitive doctoral programs. Students whose GPA falls below this threshold in any semester will be expected to discuss their program progress and goals for future doctoral study with their advising team.
2. Satisfactory completion of MA thesis. The thesis must be approved by the advisor, the CAST-M program director, and the postdoctoral fellow. It must demonstrate significant independent research; advance a clear scholarly argument; and meaningfully engage with bodies of secondary literature. Theses should be approximately 25,000-30,000 words (80-100 pages double-spaced). Other stipulations for satisfactory completion should be discussed with students' advisory teams.

### Program Timeline

Semester/Period	Courses/Activities	Expectations
First Semester	Program Seminar (“Grad School 101”) Theories & Methods 1 survey OR 1 methods 1 other course HSMT colloquium	A/A- (3.6) GPA Prepare 3 final papers Develop analytical + communication skills Begin brainstorming for thesis topic
Second Semester	Program Seminar (“Research & Writing Methods”) 1 survey OR 1 methods 1 other course HSMT Colloquium	A/A- (3.6) GPA Prepare 3 final papers Develop thesis proposal + summer research funding application Pick a thesis advisor
Year 1 Summer	Thesis research	Pursue independent, funded research for MA thesis
Third Semester	Program Seminar (“Doctoral Application Workshop”)	A/A- (3.6) GPA Draft thesis

	<p>1 survey OR 1 methods (if not already complete)                  1 or 2 research seminars                  1 or 2 directed reading courses                  HSMT Colloquium</p>	<p>Prepare + submit doctoral program applications</p>
<p>Fourth Semester</p>	<p>Program Seminar (“Thesis Workshop”)                  1 research seminar                  1 directed reading course                  1 directed thesis research course                  HSMT Colloquium</p>	<p>A/A- (3.6 GPA)                  Complete + submit MA thesis                  Gain admission to doctoral program/s</p>
<p>Year 2 Summer</p>	<p>Graduate in May OR August</p>	<p>Be celebrated by the CAST-M and HoM community!                  Transition to doctoral program</p>



## Community Norms and Values

### CAST-M Charter

The Department for the History of Medicine Graduate Student Handbook outlines the Department's goals for program atmosphere: "We work hard to foster an atmosphere of **relaxed respect** and **camaraderie** within the program and within the university. In our long institutional memory, serious conflicts among students or between students and faculty are rare. However, an easygoing environment is only possible in an **atmosphere of trust**. Maintaining such an atmosphere demands that students (like faculty and staff) in our program be held to the **highest standards of collegial, professional, and research ethics**" (page 1).

In order to foster the respect, camaraderie, and trust that are essential for successful graduate study, CAST-M students, in collaboration with the postdoctoral fellow and faculty, have developed a "CAST-M Charter" that outlines community norms and values. These norms and values were unanimously developed in Program Seminar during the first semester of CAST-M's operations to serve as a model for interpersonal interaction in Pro Sem. CAST-M program members are expected to pursue scholarly community in alignment with these norms and values.

1. Egalitarianism: CAST-M community members of all professional stages are learning together in pursuit of knowledge and the development of boundless curiosity.
2. Grace: Care and support are expected for all program members, rooted in an understanding that graduate school entails any number of professional and personal challenges.
3. Openness: The CAST-M community is inclusive of varied viewpoints, life experiences, and academic trajectories, in order to allow non-judgemental space for questioning and struggle with new material.
  - a. No question is stupid.
  - b. No topic has "been done before."
  - c. Criticism should be constructive and helpful, oriented to amplifying the best rather than critiquing the worst.
4. Validation: It is important for CAST-M community members to recognize effort, build a space to share wins and breakthroughs, and otherwise celebrate intangible but deeply valuable progress in intellectual development.
5. Non-disposability: CAST-M aims to cultivate a culture grounded in the dignity of all participants. CAST-M is cognisant of the often-lifelong value of relationships forged during graduate study. Should disagreements arise between community members, conflict resolution will aim to preserve individual dignity as well as collective goodwill.
6. Clarity: Expectations should be clearly communicated so that all students can pursue graduate study with full understanding of workload, benchmarks, and standards.

7. Minimize assumptions: CAST-M aims to encourage reflexive mindsets that challenge preconceived notions. Community members should enter program spaces with open minds geared toward more thorough understanding.

The Charter is intended to be a living document as the program grows and changes. It is therefore open to amendment by CAST-M community consensus.

### Program Seminar

Program Seminar is a keystone of the CAST-M program. It is a weekly meeting where students learn the fundamentals of graduate work, facilitated by the CAST-M program director and postdoctoral fellow. Program Seminar's curriculum is designed to guide students as they develop skills in scholarly reading, communication, and research.

In students' first semester, Program Seminar is a "Grad School 101" course as an on-ramp to graduate study. In the second semester, Pro Sem time is dedicated to developing and refining thesis research questions and methodologies. In students' second year, it is a space to workshop doctoral applications, thesis chapters, and other in-progress work.

Program Seminar is also an important place to build CAST-M's close-knit, collegial program culture. Meetings are small, informal, non-hierarchical, and geared to low-stress exploration in a rigorous environment.

### Helpful Resources

This section is a non-exhaustive list of resources that may be of use to CAST-M students. For any questions not covered in the below sections, please see this table for guidance.

Issue	Person	Contact
Financial (Stipends, Reimbursements, Bonus Supplements, Payments, Tuition, Health Insurance)	Administrative Manager	Maggie Cogswell maggiecogswell@jhmi.edu
Academic (Registrations, Drop/Add, Upcoming Courses, Graduation Forms)	Administrative & Academic Program Coordinator	Marian Robbins myrobbins@jhmi.edu
Academic Program-Specific (Ethics requirements, Fields requirements, Course requirements per year, Thesis requirements)	Program Director & Postdoctoral Fellow	Ahmed Ragab aragab2@jhmi.edu  Gabrielle Robbins grobbin4@jhu.edu
Listservs, Social Media, & Website Updates or Issues (Publications, Awards, Events, Bio or pic changes)	Administrative & Academic Program Coordinator	Marian Robbins myrobbins@jhmi.edu
Library & Research	Medical Library Curator & Library Specialist	Michael Seminara michaelseminara@jhmi.edu  Zee Hinz shinz1@jhmi.edu

### Research Resources

CAST-M students are encouraged to take advantage of resources in the Welch Medical Library. Curator Michael Seminara and Library Specialist Zee Hinz are available to help students access the Library's extensive collections.

### Johns Hopkins Chesney Archives for Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health

Extensive collections from Hopkins affiliates working internationally and domestically

URL: <https://medicalarchives.jhmi.edu/>

### Library of Congress

Collections and Reading Rooms

URL: <https://loc.gov/>

### US National Archives

URL: <https://www.archives.gov/>

## Writing Resources

Scholars in History of Medicine, History of Science & Technology, Anthropology, and other allied JHU departments regularly run the **Collective Scholarship Working Group (CSWG)**. This is a space to workshop projects in progress and receive helpful feedback from peers. In AY 2023-2024, the CSWG meets every other **Wednesday, 5-6:30pm**, and is coordinated by HoM postdoctoral fellow Jason Chernesky (jcherne2@jhmi.edu). CAST-M students are encouraged to contribute to this collaborative writing space as well as take advantage of opportunities for feedback on their written work.

Other resources for writing include:

#### - KSAS Writing Center

Offers individual appointments for feedback on writing and development of writing skills

URL: <https://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/>

Resource page: <https://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/writing-resources/>

#### - School of Medicine Writing Accountability Groups (WAGS)

Small groups to work together for consistent progress

URL: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/faculty-development/career-path/wags>

#### - The Professor Is In Blog

Useful resource for writing academic materials, navigating the academic job market, and staying sane during it all

URL: <https://theprofessorisin.com/>

## JHU Institutional Resources

### Office of Institutional Equity

Response hub for discrimination and harassment complaints

URL: <https://oie.jhu.edu/>

### Ombuds Office

Neutral, independent third party for problem-solving and conflict mediation. “A safe space to raise concerns, ask questions and clarify resources and options. Sharing information with the Ombuds Office does not put the university on notice, nor does it trigger any action not approved by you.”

URL: <https://www.jhu.edu/ombuds-office>

### Office of International Services

URL: <https://ois.jhu.edu/>

## Professional Development Resources

### Hopkins Life Design Lab

Career services center regardless of academic stage or post-grad plans

URL: <https://imagine.jhu.edu/channels/life-design-lab/>

### SoM Professional Development and Career Office

Specific to the School of Medicine

URL: <https://pdco.med.jhmi.edu/>