History Department

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Degrees Awarded
M.A. in History; Ph.D. in History

Web Site
http://history.sunysb.edu/

Description of the History Department

The Department of History has a faculty of 33 distinguished researchers and teachers. Each year we admit 9 to 12 students into the doctoral program and 4-6 students into the terminal master’s program. The department currently has approximately 100 full- and part-time graduate students.

While the department has strength in a number of traditional areas of historical study, it also has a long tradition of comparative, interdisciplinary, and theoretically informed research. The graduate program has been structured around four areas of thematic inquiry—1) Empire, Colonialism, and Globalization; 2) Nation-State, Civil Society, and Popular Politics; 3) Environment, Health, Science, and Technology; and 4) Gender, Race, and Sexuality—to bring these theoretical issues to the fore and insure that our students learn how to apply such concepts as class, gender, race, culture, power, religion and environment in an explicit and sophisticated manner to the study of the past. To further these interests, the department maintains close connections with the Stony Brook Humanities Institute, the doctoral program in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, the Women’s Studies Program, Africana Studies, the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program, and the Center for Global History, as well as the departments from which these programs draw their core faculty.

The master’s program, which requires students to complete 30 credits of graduate study with a grade of B or higher, allows students to explore the history and historiography of their chosen area of concentration. Students in the master’s program follow the same basic course of study as that followed by doctoral students during their first year, and the oral examination serves as the capstone experience for the master’s program.

The Ph.D. program is designed to prepare students to carry out original research and to ultimately pursue a career at the university level. Doctoral students may choose to focus their study on a particular region and period or they may concentrate in one of the thematic areas of study described above, and all students are encouraged to work with faculty in other departments. Full-time students in the doctoral program typically take courses for their first six semesters in the program and take their Oral Examinations at the end of their third year.

Admission to the M.A. and Ph.D. Programs

In addition to the requirements of the Graduate School, the minimum requirements for admission to the graduate program in history are:

A. A bachelor’s degree in history or its equivalent with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (B) in all undergraduate coursework and in history courses.

B. Three letters of recommendation that address the applicant’s potential to succeed in a rigorous course of graduate study.

C. Submission of scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test. The subject area test in history is not required.

D. Students whose first language is not English must submit scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Students must score at least a 550 (paper), 213 (computer), or 90 (iBT).

With the approval of the dean of the Graduate School and the History Department, a student holding an M.A. degree from another accredited institution may be admitted directly to the Ph.D. program at Stony Brook. In special cases, students who do not have a bachelor’s degree in history or whose GPA does not meet the requirements stated above may be admitted on a provisional basis for M.A. study only. After completing the master’s program, such students may apply for admission to the doctoral program.

Please note that students are only admitted to the M.A. and Ph.D. programs for study beginning in the fall semester.

Requirements for the M.A. Degree in History

In addition to the requirements imposed by the Graduate School, the following are required:

A. Coursework

1. Core Seminar (HIS 525/HIS 526, 3 credits each semester): This course provides an intensive, year-long introduction to historical theory and research and familiarizes students with the thematic organization of the Stony Brook graduate program. All full-time students in the master's and doctoral programs are required to take this course, which is offered only as a fall/spring sequence, during their first year.
2. Two Field Seminars (3 credits each): The department offers a number of field seminars designed to familiarize students with the history and historiography of specific regions: Europe, U.S., Latin America, and Asia. These courses include HIS 501/HIS 502, HIS 521/HIS 522, HIS 541/HIS 542, and HIS 561/HIS 562. These courses are offered, at a minimum, on a two-year cycle, though many of these are offered each year. Students choosing to concentrate in the history of a specific region are encouraged, but not required, to complete both parts of the field seminar sequences where available.

3. Two Theme Seminars (3 credits each): The theme seminars are the heart of the department's commitment to the theoretically informed, interdisciplinary study of history. These seminars are offered in the following areas: (1) Gender, Race, and Sexuality; (2) Nation-State, Civil Society, and Popular Politics; (3) Empire, Colonialism, and Globalization; and (4) Environment, Health, Science, and Technology. A minimum of two theme seminars are offered each semester. Topics change regularly, and students are free to choose among the theme seminars being offered.

4. Four Electives (3 credits each): The remaining 12 credits can be selected from Field Seminars, Theme Seminars, the graduate courses offered in conjunction with other departments (e.g., sociology, Africana studies, and comparative literature and cultural studies), and workshops.

B. Language Requirement

Master's students with a concentration in European history must pass a written exam in an appropriate foreign language, and masters students in Latin American history must pass a written exam in Spanish or Portuguese. The other areas of concentration currently do not require a foreign language for the masters degree.

C. Oral Examination

By the second semester in the program the student in consultation with her/his advisor should name one other member of the department to be on her/his examination committee. The two-person committee will help the student define her/his examination field based on her/his coursework and reading in the program.

The oral examination is taken at the end of the student's course of study. By the end of the semester that precedes the examination, the student shall present a list of books and topics to both members of the examining committee. At that time the committee shall advise the student of any additional reading to be completed before the examination. This reading may be completed as part of an Orals Workshop during the semester of the examination. The student should see the Graduate Program Coordinator to set the time and date of the examination. The committee will grade the examination "pass with distinction," "pass," or "fail."

Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in History

The Stony Brook doctoral program offers an intensive, far-ranging education, culminating in an original research and writing project. It prepares students for a professional career in higher education, or for jobs in media, government or other fields which rely upon the skills and knowledge of the historian. In addition to acquiring thorough training in a chosen specialty defined by time (medieval, early modern, 18th, 19th, or 20th centuries) and by place (Latin American, U.S., European, Asian or African), students of different periods and regions of the world take many of the same courses, on topics drawn from the department’s thematic areas. Our innovative approach, now taken by other history departments as a model, prepares students for research and teaching about the past not just for a single corner of the world, but in its relationship and interdependence with other places. At Stony Brook, many courses and much teaching now revolve around fundamental sets of ideas which are continuing to reshape historical scholarship about many times and locales. Our graduate students still receive solid grounding in the national or regional histories and periods of their choosing. Whether Europeanist or Latin Americanist or Asianist or Americanist, graduate students have ample chances to study with faculty in their own geographic specialty, as well as to work with other faculty specializing in the thematic clusters of interest them. And our thematic emphasis enables them also to think across and beyond these boundaries, in ways that make for cutting-edge scholarship, as well as timely and insightful teaching. Our current thematic clusters are Empire, Colonialism, and Globalization; Nation-State, Civil Society, and Popular Politics; Environment, Health, Science, and Technology; and Gender, Race, and Sexuality.

The first phase of doctoral program consists of coursework. During their first year, all students take a Core Seminar that covers fundamental readings in several thematic areas, as well as basic methods of research and historical writing. Early on, students also take Field Seminars in conventional geographic and chronological specialties. Theme Seminars devoted to readings in the department’s topical areas of specialty, as well as a Teaching Practicum. In the second year, they may begin taking Research Seminars, organized around the production and presentation of major research papers. During the third year, all students must take a comprehensive oral examination in their primary and secondary fields. In addition, all students must take the Dissertation Prospectus Seminar, in which they compose and discuss their dissertation projects and prepare preliminary fellowship proposals. Upon satisfactory passage of the required courses, the orals, and any language requirement, students are then “advanced to candidacy.” In the final phase of their doctoral education, students work closely with a faculty advisor to research and write the Ph.D. dissertation—a book-length manuscript that offers a significant contribution to the historical literature. In accordance with Graduate School rules, the official “time limit” is seven years, from a student’s “advancement to candidacy” to the defense and submission of the dissertation.

Course of Study and Program Requirements

A. Coursework

Students in the doctoral program are expected to complete three years of coursework distributed in the manner outlined below. All students take the team-taught Core Seminar, as well as Field, Theme, and Research seminars. At the end of the third year, students take a comprehensive oral examination designed to assess their mastery of the subject matter, conceptual tools, and research skills necessary to undertake independent research for the dissertation. The dissertation is to be a substantial piece of original research completed independently by the student, and all students are required to defend their dissertation orally before their Doctoral Defense Committee at the end of their course of study.
1. Core Seminar (HIS 525/HIS 526, HIS 524/HIS 527: 3 credits each semester): This course provides an intensive, year-long introduction to historical theory and research. It also familiarizes students with the thematic organization of the graduate program. All full-time students in the masters and doctoral programs are required to take this course, which is offered only as a fall/spring sequence, during their first year.

2. Two or Three Field Seminars (3 credits each): The department offers a number of field seminars designed to familiarize students with the history and historiography of specific regions and periods. These courses include: Medieval and Early Modern Europe (HIS 501) and Modern Europe (HIS 502); Early American History (HIS 521) and Modern American History (HIS 522); Colonial Latin America (HIS 541) and Modern Latin America (542) are offered frequently. In addition, Field seminars are offered in African and Asian history: Introduction to African and/or Asian History (HIS 562), South Asian History (HIS 563), Chinese History (HIS 564), and Japanese History (HIS 565). Some of these Field Seminars are populated with students in the Masters in Teaching Program (M.A.T.), as well as with M.A. and Ph.D. students. Students may choose to take either two or three field seminars, in accordance with their intellectual interests and needs.

Most of these Field courses are offered on a one- or two-year cycle, though some are offered less frequently. Students choosing to concentrate in the history of Europe, U.S., or Latin America are encouraged to complete both parts of the field seminar sequence in their area of concentration. If more survey or focused reading is required in a specific area, students have the option of taking a third Field seminar or a relevant Theme seminar. With the approval of the Graduate Director and Advisor, students may also satisfy their Field Seminar requirements by taking an appropriate course in an outside department or institution.

3. Three or Four Theme Seminars (3 credits each): The theme seminars are the heart of the department’s commitment to the theoretically informed, interdisciplinary study of history. Topics, approaches, and instructors vary, but these seminars generally fall within the rubric of our program’s theme clusters: Gender, Race, and Sexuality; Nation-State, Civil Society, and Popular Politics; Empire, Colonialism, and Globalization; and Environment, Health, Science, and Technology. On occasion, students may apply to take seminars in outside departments or institutions (that is, other universities in the NY Consortium) that may serve as a Theme Seminar. There is also some flexibility for those students wishing to take either three or four themes. On occasion, students may also wish to “convert” a Theme Seminar into a Research Seminar (by completing the readings and writing a research paper, with the prior arrangement of the seminar professor and the student’s advisor).

4. Two Research Seminars (3 credits each): One Research Seminar, “Text and Context,” is offered each semester. It gives students the opportunity to carry out individual research projects using primary sources in areas related to their developing scholarly interests. Research seminars are generally taken during the second and third years. Third-year students often use the Research Seminar to begin preliminary work on their dissertations.

5. Supervised Teaching (HIS 581, 3 credits): All students who hold teaching assistantships must register for this course.

6. Teaching Practicum (HIS 582, 3 credits): Required of all Teaching Assistants, as well as those expecting to TA for undergraduate courses in the future. It is generally taken during Fall semester of Year 1. This course gives students the opportunity to discuss the pleasures and pitfalls of undergraduate classroom teaching in a large, diverse public university. Stony Brook offers a laboratory for future college teachers to develop and try out “lesson plans,” as well as to broach such universal concerns as classroom authority, student participation, student-teacher relations, the problem of plagiarism, sexual harassment, etc. Students may be required to attend teaching workshops offered by the Graduate School in addition. These workshops, as well as the Teaching Practicum, are also open to students who do not hold teaching assistantships.

7. Dissertation Prospectus Workshop (HIS 695, 3 credits): This course must be taken by all students and should be completed in the Spring semester of Year 3. Students are expected to work closely with their own advisors during the semester, as they prepare their dissertation plan. By the end of the course, students will produce and present to the History Department a formal Dissertation Prospectus (usually a 15-20 page proposal). The prospectus must be acceptable both to the instructor of the workshop and to the student’s advisor. Completion of the workshop and the dissertation prospectus are required for advancement to candidacy. The course grade is S/U.

8. Reading Workshops (3 credits each): On the rare occasion that a student’s needs are not met by the department’s Field and Theme seminars, he/she may wish to arrange with an individual faculty member to undertake a specific set of readings on a topic of mutual interest.

9. Orals Workshop (HIS 684, 3 or 6 credits): This workshop provides a space for students to work semi-independently in the scholarly literature of their developing fields of specialization. Normally, students enroll in the Orals Workshop (for either 3 or 6 credits, depending on their remaining course requirement needs) in the Fall semester of Year 3. To prepare for the Orals, students have to define three areas of specialization (two areas in their major geo-political field, and one examiner in a comparative field). Ideally, students should develop their Orals book lists and topics on the basis of the most relevant Field and Theme seminars they have taken and in consultation with their Orals committee. Students may use the Orals Workshop to read independently or in small affinity groups, as well as to meet periodically with Orals committee members. All students should make sure they have dress rehearsals before the exam actually takes place. (See below for details on the Oral Exam.)

10. Courses in Other Departments and Institutions: Students are encouraged to take courses in other departments in order to acquire the theoretical tools offered by other disciplines and gain an interdisciplinary perspective on their fields of interest. Many of our students take courses in such departments as Sociology, English, and Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, as well as such interdisciplinary programs as Women’s Studies, and Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Such courses should be selected in consultation with the student’s advisor. In addition, Stony Brook belongs to a NY-area Consortium of universities. Students are welcome to take graduate seminars for credit at Columbia, NYU, or other institutions. The Graduate School has a form for this (what else is new?!), and the student should obtain prior permission from his/her advisor and the graduate director. Whether the outside course is to count for a Field, Theme, or Research course is negotiated on a case-by-case basis.
Below is a sample course of study that might be followed by a first-year student without a master’s degree who also holds a teaching assistantship. (New students must take 12 credits per semester during Year 1; those students with MA degrees or who have obtained at least 24 credits at the graduate level are required to register for only 9 credits per semester.):

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<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
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<th>Spring</th>
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<td>Core Seminar II (HIS 526)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Seminar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Supervised Teaching (HIS 581)</td>
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<td>Teaching Practicum (HIS 582)</td>
<td>3</td>
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**B. Full-time Status**

Students who have not yet advanced to G4 status are required to take 12 credits in order to maintain full-time status. Full-time enrollment for students who have achieved G4 status is 9 credits. Students acting as teaching assistants must carry a full-time load (including the 3-credit Supervised Teaching, HIS 581). Once a student has advanced to candidacy, s/he must register for 9 credits of dissertation research (HIS 699, HIS 700, HIS 701) each semester until the degree is awarded in order to remain on full-time status.

**C. Award of Master’s Degree**

Doctoral students who have completed the requirements for the master’s degree may petition the Graduate school to be awarded the master’s degree while continuing in the doctoral program.

**D. Foreign Language Requirement**

All students (except native speakers of the language of their field of specialization) must demonstrate proficiency in at least one relevant foreign language before being advanced to Ph.D. candidacy. This is a Graduate School requirement that may not be waived. Minimal proficiency in a language means the ability to translate a given passage clearly and accurately with the aid of a dictionary. Relevant language(s) are determined by the student’s area of specialization.

Proficiency may be demonstrated either through a written exam administered by the department or a satisfactory grade in a graduate language course (e.g., French 500). The in-department exam consists of translating a passage from a scholarly work in History, with the aid of a dictionary. It is administered and evaluated by an appropriate faculty member. The results of the Language Exam must be reported to the department’s Graduate Coordinator and entered into the student’s file.

At the discretion of the advisor, a student may be required to study additional languages as part of his or her degree program. It is the student’s responsibility to establish with her or his advisor which foreign languages are necessary for the completion of the Ph.D. and to make sure they have completed the language requirement in a timely fashion so that they may advance to candidacy. Ideally, students take their written language exams by the Fall semester of year 3.

**E. Oral Examination and Advancement to Candidacy**

By the end of the second year in the doctoral program, each student should name a Ph.D. advisor, and in consultation with that advisor, name two additional members of the department who agree to serve on his/her Oral Exam Committee. The committee will help the student define his or her examination fields, language requirements, and course work, as well as monitor the student’s progress on the dissertation. In some cases, the committee will review and endorse the student’s dissertation prospectus, as well.

The student’s statement of fields or form is available in the Graduate Program Coordinator’s Office. It is the student’s responsibility to coordinate the examination date and time with his or her committee. The examination may not be taken until all University and History Department requirements have been met. Students should check with Roxanne Fernandez, our Graduate Coordinator, to make sure his/her records are up-to-date and to process the paperwork.

Full-time students are expected to take their Oral Exam no later than the end of the sixth semester of graduate study. The student, in consultation with the examination committee, will arrange the day, time, and place of the Oral Exam. In addition, the student shall present to each member of the examination committee–no later than the middle of the semester that precedes the Ph.D. oral examination–a suggested list of books and topics. Committee members will advise the student of any changes or additional reading that is to be completed for the examination. The Oral Exam usually lasts about 1 ½ or 2 hours and is graded as “pass with distinction,” “pass,” “weak pass,” or “fail.” Students who fail the Oral Exam may petition to take the exam a second time at a future date.

**F. Dissertation Committee**

As the doctoral student is near completion of the dissertation, he/she must constitute a four-person Dissertation Defense Committee. The Advisor plus three other faculty members (including one “outside faculty” member) compose the Dissertation Committee. If, in the rare case, a Ph.D. advisor is no longer willing to serve as dissertation advisor or if the student wishes to work with a new advisor, the student must identify some other faculty member in the History Department to serve. The new Advisor must declare in writing his/her willingness to serve as dissertation advisor before the student may be advanced to candidacy. Normally, the dissertation advisor meets with the student at least once each semester (or, if the student is not in Stony Brook, will correspond) to discuss progress on the dissertation.

**G. Dissertation and Defense**

Following Advancement to Candidacy, students are required to enroll for one credit of dissertation research each semester until the dissertation. Teaching assistants will register for 9 credits of Research for the Ph.D. (HIS 699). The student must present the completed dissertation in such
a way that the dissertation committee has a reasonable period in which to read, critique, and suggest changes to be incorporated into the final version before the dissertation defense.

The dissertation is the basic requirement for the conferral of the Ph.D. The completed dissertation must be in the hands of the committee at least one full month before the scheduled date of the dissertation defense. Ideally, the dissertation committee has one or two months to read and correct the dissertation and to give the student their written criticisms and suggestions. These comments must be in the student’s hands one month before the dissertation defense. If the criticisms are not written out, the student can assume the dissertation is approved in the form submitted. The student must answer all written objections and corrections by revising the dissertation to the faculty member’s satisfaction before it is submitted to the Graduate School.

The Dissertation Committee is composed of four faculty members, including the student’s Advisor and one faculty member outside the field of History or the institution of Stony Brook. The Defense is also open to interested students and faculty. The Graduate School must give advanced approval of the Dissertation Committee. (The same form used for the oral exam will be used for the defense. These forms are available in the Graduate Program Coordinator’s Office and must be forwarded to the Graduate School at least ONE MONTH BEFORE the scheduled date of the defense.) All the paperwork for both the Oral Exam and Dissertation Defense must go through the History Department’s Graduate Coordinator.

Faculty of History Department

Professors
Gootenberg, Paul, Ph.D., 1985, University of Chicago: Modern Latin America (Andes and Mexico); economic, state-formation, commodities, drugs.
Landsman, Ned, Ph.D., 1979, University of Pennsylvania: Early American History and Scotland.
Larson, Brooke, Ph.D., 1978, Columbia University: Colonial and modern Latin America; Andean rural societies; race, ethnicity, and nation-making.
Lebovics, Herman, Ph.D., 1965, Yale University: Modern Europe; intellectual and cultural history; Germany and France.
Marker, Gary J., Ph.D., 1977, University of California, Berkeley: Russian social and intellectual history; history of printing; European labor history.
Roxborough, Ian, Ph.D., 1977, University of Wisconsin (joint appointment with Sociology): social history of Latin America; modern Mexico; war and the military.
Schäfer, Wolf, Dr. Phil., 1983, University of Bremen, Germany: history of technoscience, social history, and global history.
Tomes, Nancy J., Ph.D., 1978, University of Pennsylvania: American social and cultural history; medicine, nursing and psychiatry, women and the family
Wilson, Kathleen, Ph.D., 1985, Yale University: British social, cultural and political, 17th-19th centuries; cultures of imperialism; gender studies; cultural, feminist, and postcolonial theory.

Associate Professors
Cooper, Mary Alexandra (“Alix”), Ph.D., 1998, Harvard University: Early Modern Europe/world; history of science, medicine and technology; environmental history; cross-cultural encounters.
Farmer, Jared, Ph.D., 2005, Stanford University: Environmental history and policy; geography; U.S. cultural history; history of the U.S. West.
Frohman, Larry, Ph.D. 1992, University of California, Berkeley: European intellectual history; history of welfare and social policy; social studies education.
Hong, Young-Sun, Ph.D., 1989 University of Michigan: Modern Germany; social theory; culture and politics in Germany; culture and politics in modern Europe; gender history.
Lim, Shirley, Ph.D., 1998, UCLA: Asian American women’s cultural history.
Lipton, Sara, Ph.D., 1991, Yale University: Medieval cultural and religious history, Jewish-Christian relations, gender.
Man-Cheong, Iona, Ph.D., 1991, Yale University: Modern China; Late Imperial China; women and gender; Chinese Diaspora.

Masten, April, Ph.D., 1999, Rutgers University: U.S. cultural history, 19th century.

Mimura, Janis, Ph.D., 2002, University of California, Berkeley: Japan.

Owens, Leslie H., Ph.D., 1972, University of California, Riverside: African-American history; U.S. southern history.

Rilling, Donna J., Ph.D., 1993, University of Pennsylvania: Early national U.S. history; business, legal, urban and labor history.

Sellars, Christopher, Ph.D., 1992, Yale University; M.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1992: U.S. environmental, industrial and cultural history; history of medicine and the body.


Assistant Professors

Anderson, Jennifer, Ph.D., 2007, New York University: Atlantic history; Early American history.

Beverley, Eric, Ph.D., 2007, Harvard University: South Asia; colonial and postcolonial studies; Muslim world.

Flores, Lori, Ph.D., 2011, Stanford University: U.S. history; immigration, ethnicity, and civil rights; labor history; Latino history.

Lecturers


Emeriti Faculty

Bottigheimer, Karl S., Ph.D., 1965, University of California, Berkeley: Tudor-Stuart England and Ireland; early modern Europe; modern Ireland.

Cowan, Ruth Schwarz, Ph.D., 1969, Johns Hopkins University: modern science, technology and medicine.

Garber, Elizabeth, Ph.D., 1966, Case Western Reserve University: Social and intellectual history of science; 19th- and 20th-century physics; European intellectual and social history.

Goldenberg, Robert, Ph.D., 1974, Brown University: Jewish history and religion in late antiquity; rabbinic literature and exegesis; history of Jewish thought; rabbinic hermeneutics; ancient history.

Lemay, Helen R., Ph.D., 1972, Columbia University: Medieval and Renaissance intellectual history; paleography; history of science and medicine; women’s history.

Rosenthal, Joel T., Ph.D., 1963, University of Chicago: Medieval history; medieval England; social history.


Weinstein, Fred, Ph.D., 1962, University of California, Berkeley: Theory in history; Russian and European history.

Williams, John A., Ph.D., 1963, University of Wisconsin: British Empire; Africa; the Commonwealth; expansion of Europe.

Wishnia, Judith, Ph.D., 1978, Stony Brook University: Modern Europe; France; labor history; women’s history.

NOTE: The course descriptions for this program can be found in the corresponding program PDF or at COURSE SEARCH.