

Undergraduate Major and Minor  
Certificates in Public History and Dual Language Historical Research

I. Program Overview

The undergraduate program in history occupies a unique position at Sonoma State University because it contributes so much to the B.A. and receives so little support for its programming. The study of human history has always been at the foundation of a university education, all the way back to the Islamic institutions of the ninth century, on which the great European universities modeled themselves. History was fundamental to liberal arts education and to the denominational colleges of the United States that dominated American higher education into the nineteenth century, until the development of the modern research university, especially in Germany, where the study of history in seminar format was central. As the public university system in the United States grew along with the land-grant colleges established by the Morrill Act of 1862, again, history was always essential. The study of the human past is a critical foundation for understanding the human present. One simply cannot become a conscientious citizen—at the community, state, national, or global level—without an empirical awareness of what came before.

Therefore, the state of California has repeatedly directed its public universities to require the study of American history and governance in order to earn the Bachelor's Degree that launches graduates into civil and professional opportunities and responsibilities. Until Fall 2020, Sonoma State's General Education curriculum required not only the one-semester survey of American history but also a semester of World History, which made the department's tenure-line faculty workloads generally equitable, as each has been required to teach a 68-student GE every semester. The bulk of this GE teaching, however, falls on non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty, who carry staggering loads to help the department serve its disproportionate share of Sonoma State students.

Not only do history department faculty process this high number of SSU undergraduates per term, they do so with extraordinarily conscientious attentiveness to the students and to what they should achieve in each course. GE courses are one of the few places at SSU where undergraduates from different majors and different backgrounds sit together, and in history

courses they also talk about what it means to be an American, for example, how to interpret things they read, how to communicate across divides. History professors—including NTT professors—do not take the easy way through their courses; they do not give multiple-choice exams that can be run through a machine in a minute. They require complete sentences, full paragraphs, arguments supported by evidence, and quotations from primary sources. History courses do more for SSU grads' cover letters than any form of assessment could ever reveal. History professors set up debates between opposing sides so that students learn about objectivity and why an ad hominem attack is never acceptable. Students learn to think about themselves in relationship to the long human past, the more immediate national heritage, the principles of democracy, and the California public that supports us all at Sonoma State. Students find these courses so memorable, they will stop their professors years later—at a restaurant, outside a high school, in a coffee shop—and thank them for having such a positive impact.

Balancing this basic, essential work in GE courses, SSU history faculty run a rigorous major and minor, requiring graduates to master a slate of topics and to accomplish an original piece of their own research, presented as a thesis in the capstone course, the thematic senior seminar (HIST 498). History courses all require challenging reading and stringent writing, so students who self-select to become majors and minors are drawn to that intensity of preparation; they are intellectually curious, outside the mainstream, genuinely interested in facts and ideas, eager to devise their own arguments, and increasingly capable—as their semesters in the program progress—of expressing themselves clearly and backing their claims with evidence. As a group, they express satisfaction in their education and admiration for their professors; as individuals, they move on from SSU into a wide variety of careers, in which they quickly become contributors.

In this way, the history department is intimately aligned with SSU's stated mission, fulfilling every point: history majors and minors develop the tools and curiosity for life-long learning; every history course broadens cultural perspectives; intellectual and aesthetic achievements are central to the study of the past; historians train their students to think about citizenship and leadership; those who major and minor in history are fitted for careers in banking and firefighting, teaching and social work, the law and political office and much more. Most importantly, history teaches students to think beyond the self and to consider wider collective identities rooted in region, nation, and human-ness itself. Graduates of the history program serve

both regional and state needs by their service in professions, especially the public schools, their involvement at the community level, and their citizenship and civic engagement up to the state level and beyond.

The department is clear in its mission, and although the expertise of the historians in the department rarely overlaps, they are in accord on the mission and consistently teach all the learning objectives in every course. As explained in the catalog,

The study of history involves the study of all human thought and action, ranging from the economic and the political to the psychological and the artistic. Combining the perspectives and methods of the social sciences and the humanities, it seeks to comprehend the problems and challenges faced by individuals and societies in the distant and recent past, nearby and far away. This understanding of the human experience provides the necessary historical perspective to explain the present.

In the process of making sense of our collective and individual past, the student of history develops research, analytical, and communication skills which can be drawn upon in a variety of careers.

The history major is designed both to provide the basis for a solid liberal arts education and to meet the needs of individual students. Within the specific requirements of the major, students receive basic instruction in the history of the United States as well as that of other countries. They are also introduced to methods of historical inquiry, techniques of historical writing, and differing philosophies of history and historiography, past and present. ([http://catalog.sonoma.edu/mime/media/3/1045/2019-20\\_SSUcatalog-FINAL-web.pdf](http://catalog.sonoma.edu/mime/media/3/1045/2019-20_SSUcatalog-FINAL-web.pdf))

The learning objectives for the department are also clearly stated and clearly vital to a functioning citizenry:

The History Department at Sonoma State prepares its students to analyze primary and secondary sources and understand the subjectivities inherent in such texts. During their final year, students must take Senior Seminar (HIST 498), where they write and orally present twenty- to forty-page research papers, which are based on primary and secondary sources, and which identify key historiography.

#### **Objectives**

**1. Analyze and use primary and secondary sources.**

Students learn to differentiate between primary and secondary sources and to evaluate the reliability of such sources.

**2. Understand historical debate and controversies.**

Students learn to understand diverse interpretations and to examine different sides of historical debates.

**3. Gain an understanding of historiography in given regions and time periods.**

Students learn to understand the ways historians in given regions and time periods have approached history and how the field has changed as new evidence is uncovered and re-examined.

**4. Understand how to use evidence in writing research papers.**

Students learn to understand the ways historians in given regions and time periods have approached history and how the field has changed as new evidence is uncovered and re-examined.

**5. Productive skills: writing and oral expression.**

Students hone their writing and speaking skills and learn to articulate an argument regarding key historical events.

([http://catalog.sonoma.edu/mime/media/3/1045/2019-20\\_SSUcatalog-FINAL-web.pdf](http://catalog.sonoma.edu/mime/media/3/1045/2019-20_SSUcatalog-FINAL-web.pdf))

[For a curriculum map, see Appendix 1.]

The department has been part of SSU since its founding and once enjoyed significant institutional support for its vital mission. In 1969, the department had 14 tenure-line faculty members; by 2013-14 (the date of the last Program Review), it was down to 8.5 tenure-line faculty members, all tenured. And now, serving roughly the same number of majors, it has 7 only. In fall 2020, when two faculty members will be on (well-deserved) sabbaticals, 5 individuals will have to do all the service and advising work of the entire department.

In addition to the capstone course, the senior seminar, a number of other departmental fixtures have been in place for some time. The department also services an M.A. in history, a degree often sought by secondary schoolteachers, midlife career-changers, and new graduates. While that program is undergoing its own, separate review process, it is relevant to the B.A. because Sonoma State graduate students help enrich the minds of undergraduates and add to the instruction in critical ways. Graduate students take upper-division courses with history majors and minors, often writing longer essays to fulfill their graduate requirements, and they immensely raise the tone of discussions and the standard of preparedness for the class as a whole. They serve as accessible, relatable, positive role models for history students, who are often hungry for a full scholarly experience but dragged down by the orientation at SSU toward the quickest path to graduation. Graduate students also serve as teaching assistants and graders, which gives them another intermediate position between the undergraduates and the professor. They will give

assistance on how to think about the readings, how to write, and how to prepare for exams, benefiting undergraduates tremendously. When a single professor is responsible for a 68-student GE course plus two more courses of 30-35 each (the typical load for a tenure-line faculty member; for NTT it is more like 200 students), it is impossible to give every student the guidance and attention they deserve. Graduate students help extend the mentoring power of professors while getting trained in higher education, themselves.

For many years the department has produced an annual journal, *The History Journal at Sonoma State University*, which it publishes in a bound volume and unveils at a launch party to which it invites authors, editors, faculty, staff, and friends. The library houses a copy and hosts an electronic edition that authors include on their resumes. The editorial team—the students who enroll in the course for two units per semester—completely create each year’s edition. Under faculty supervision, Sonoma State students (including non-history majors) devise a theme that will invite submissions on any period, area, or theme in human history; publicize their call for papers; receive and evaluate submissions through blind review and dialogue to consensus; work with authors to develop their essays; and design, lay out, and print each issue. This year, because of the COVID crisis, it will be an online issue only, but as with the fires of 2017, the *History Journal* will provide a chronicle of first-hand accounts of the crisis, an archive of primary sources—including the narrative of an SSU student who traveled all the way to Canada to be with her family, was detained for twelve hours, and then got shipped back to campus, where she lives virtually alone. The *History Journal* provides records for generations to come about the intellectual and cultural life of Sonoma State University.

The department also offers an honors track, the supervision of which the tenure-line faculty take on as overload. Internships in history are overseen by a tenure-line coordinator, who links students with positions in the community where they accrue volunteer hours and valuable experience and connections. The department also hosts an annual outside speaker who lectures on a topic from their own research, which gives SSU undergraduates the sort of intellectual opportunity that students at better-endowed institutions are offered routinely. Finally, the department continues to oversee an honors society, Phi Alpha Theta, and to help connect students with scholarships.

## II. Outcome of the Previous Program Review

The department's last B.A. review was in 2013-14, a time when a retirement had recently occurred and two more were imminent. The external reviewer was impressed by the quality of the faculty and concerned about the load it was then carrying. Kate Transchel of CSU-Chico observed that "[t]he History Department carries substantially higher SFRs than the university average," a figure that was "up by over 10 percent in every case since the last review cycle, and 23-43 percent greater than the University's average." She urged the dean and provost "to work with the History Department to find more equitable ways to distribute the GE load—either by putting enrollment caps on GE courses (which would lead to impaction if no hires are forthcoming), or to compensate faculty who carry excessive SFRs with release time." Neither the deans nor the provosts over the intervening years have responded to this suggestion in any way.

Transchel expressed particular concern over the depletion of tenure-line faculty and what the impact would be of not replacing the impending retirees. Sonoma State had already hardened its commitment to the anti-intellectual policy of wresting control over tenure lines from the departments, leading to cannibalization over hires within the School of Social Sciences. When the archaeologist and specialist in ancient Egyptian and Mayan societies William Clay Poe retired in 2012, the department sought to hire an assistant professor in Middle Eastern and African diaspora history. The university declined. Transchel recommended either such a hire or a hire in the Global South. The university declined. Two more professors moved through the FERP program and finally the department was granted one hire, Samuel Cohen, a specialist in late antique and early medieval European history. Then, the only faculty member trained in the history of Asia retired, and then, unexpectedly, the historian responsible for Latin America took early retirement. The department is down to three Americanists and four Europeanists: a travesty of a history department. All members of the faculty are of Euro-American descent and none think either that this is right or that it is ethical to teach Euro-American history as though it were human history. NTT faculty cannot fill this chasm; the university provides no funds for NTT to teach courses once taught by retirees. And at least one more retirement is expected during the next review cycle.

At the time of the last Program Review, Transchel recommended against further reliance on NTT faculty, another recommendation the university chose to ignore. “Declining tenure density within the department,” Transchel observed, “could easily create serious problems that would affect the integrity of the department, especially in the area of service–search committees, personnel committees (RTP, adjunct evaluations), and so forth.” Indeed, history faculty are under-represented in school-wide and university-wide committees because the simple demands of running the department are so stringent on faculty time. “Moreover,” Transchel noted, “the vetting, hiring, and evaluating of adjunct faculty creates increased demands on already overburdened faculty.” To illustrate: this semester (Spring 2020), it is taking more than half the department’s person-power (with one tenured faculty on sabbatical and one on medical half-leave) to run tens of hours of interviews to fill an adjunct pool there may or may not be funds to use.

Transchel further observed the high caliber of the department’s faculty. “The scholarly activity of the department as a whole is, in a word, stellar,” she said—and this was before the publication of two more monographs, the completion of another, and the signing of a fourth to a prestigious press. Unlike scholarly activity in some disciplines, scholarship in history requires years of immersive research, the mastery of foreign languages, trips to archives, and days and weeks in libraries. Transchel understood this, which is why she recommended that the School of Social Science provide more funding for faculty research, conferences, and publication costs “in the name of *long-term strategic planning*.” Not only has this not happened, but the sort of research that gets privileged in funding at Sonoma State is that which involves undergraduates, which is not the model for historical scholarship, especially when it involves archives in Latin and Russian. Somehow, despite the primacy of historical instruction for the integrity of the B.A. at Sonoma State, and despite the alignment of departmental objectives with the university’s mission, the sort of work historians do seems to be misunderstood and undervalued here.

Even with a skeleton crew, the History Department has undertaken significant, time-intensive reforms of its program since the last review. First, during the chairship of Kathleen Noonan, the faculty completely redesigned the structure of the major to ensure that graduates will achieve the mental breadth that the study of history makes possible. The prior major was simple: take the core courses or approved substitutes, get courses in Europe and outside of Europe and the United States, and choose upper-division courses to fulfill the required units. This worked, but the

department felt it was inadequate because of how some students evaded the professors rumored to be the strictest graders and others never went earlier than the twentieth century in their studies. The department studied what comparable institutions were doing with their majors and thought deeply about the meaning of their discipline and how the curriculum could better guide students through the major. With the aid of an unpaid weekend retreat at the Fairfield Osborn Preserve, the faculty devised a new structure for the major that requires courses both before and after 1800, as well as courses that cover geographic diversity and thematic approaches.

Along with the complete redesign of the major, tenure-line faculty in the department undertook to create two programs for Certificates, which help distinguish Sonoma State graduates in the eyes of prospective employers. The Certificate in Public History, designed by Professor Steve Estes (now chair), “is a 22-unit interdisciplinary program designed to give students concrete research, writing, and interviewing skills that are applicable in a number of professions including museums, libraries, city/county governments, historic preservation organizations, and corporations. Students take core courses in history and elective courses in at least two other disciplines.” The Dual Language Historical Research Certificate, designed by Professor Stephen Bittner (now graduate coordinator), “is a minimum 14-unit program that combines advanced language training with historical study and research, allowing students to broaden their topics of study by making use of primary and secondary sources in other languages. Students are required to demonstrate language proficiency, take a historical research methodology course, and two 4-unit history electives, portion of which includes reading and research in non-English language sources.” Both certificates provide significant advantages to those who fulfill the requirements.

The department has also sharpened its sense of mission and how to communicate with students since the last review. Faculty collaborated on new wording for the catalog and website, revised the Program Learning Objectives, and agreed to highlight learning objectives on course syllabi. In agreement with wider efforts in the CSU to improve the effectiveness of survey courses in particular, faculty have designated signature assignments that allow them to assess student mastery of learning objectives and track their progress over time. All history department faculty continually assess their students through required written assignments, which they monitor to evaluate progress toward learning outcomes. Each also continually revises their courses to heighten their impact and maximize learning.



In addition, the department has undertaken the necessary trainings to offer its senior seminars as Writing-Intensive Courses (WIC), relieving those enrolled from needing to take the WEPT exam to prove writing proficiency for graduation. There is the potential for history faculty to expand their WIC courses to serve students from other majors, but not if such teaching would only overload an overlaid faculty even more.

Another significant change in the department since the last review relates to the collegial life of its faculty and students. For many years the *History Journal* launch party and the refreshments after commencement next to Stevenson Hall were the only opportunities for students and faculty to mix in a collegial way. In the last few years, the department has added a social event for graduating seniors and a meet-and-greet for graduate students and prospective graduate students, which naturally often include many recent graduates or soon-to-be graduates. History faculty continue to mentor their majors even beyond graduation.

Promisingly, one of these volunteer ventures seems to have developed some momentum of its own. For many years the department sponsored a history club for undergraduates, which waxed and waned with the enthusiasm and availability of students. After assistant professor Sam Cohen arrived, he started hosting “Mediocre Movie Nights,” in which he screened Hollywood flicks that used historical scenes and narratives in dubious ways, which he and any students who showed up viewed while eating popcorn and pizza, saving time to discuss afterward. This spawned such a sense of fellowship among student historians that they started The History Society, sought funding, started meeting regularly even without the presence of Prof. Cohen, and were even planning a historical symposium when the world shut down. (They will be publishing a newsletter instead.) This kind of undergraduate interest in the life of the mind is quite valuable and too rare at Sonoma State. These are the most valuable sort of graduates this institution has. The episode also illustrates how vital it is for departments to receive continual fresh infusions of new faculty. Cohen was the first new tenure-line faculty since 2007; there has been no new hire since. When he becomes tenured and promoted in a month or two, there will be no probationary tenure-line faculty in the department, no junior faculty at all.

### III. Student Profile

The number of students in the major has declined since the last review period. In spring 2013 there were 204 majors; in spring 2020 there are 158, plus 17 minors (the fall numbers are different; from 241 in fall 2012 to 173 in fall 2019). There were 56 degrees awarded in 2019, down from 71 in 2012. This drop partly reflects nationwide trends as the bachelor's degree is cheapened to the level of a vocational degree and the history major is wrongly construed as prohibitive to careers outside teaching.<sup>1</sup> SSU is struggling with declining enrollments in general and the coronavirus crisis is sure to make this problem more acute. In the case of history, the decline also reflects the tangible impact of lacking faculty outside Euro-America. Today's students want to know about Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and beyond; this department's inability to guarantee courses outside Euro-America severely limits its undergraduate appeal.

Those who do major in history generally choose it for sheer intellectual interest. "I chose history because I am interested in the past and what makes the world what it is today," says one graduating senior. "History is an important field," says another, "and the program teaches valuable skills." Others describe the helpfulness of faculty, the value of what they learn, and the ways it helps them develop and to "learn different perspectives." "I chose to study history because the past influences the present and future," writes one student. "I picked a history major because I am very interested in the intersection of history, politics, and sociology." History students understand that everything is included in the past and that they can work on the problems that most engage them.

All agree that that the lack of diversity in the department is a problem. "I wish there were more classes offered." "I feel like the vast majority of classes focus on European history and that there is a shortage on Latin America." "My only real complaint with the history program is a common and well-known one: the lack of diversity in history classes available, different regions of the world and different times, with an emphasis on why events happen."

One studious graduating senior offered a more expansive critique. "The department budget is horrifying, SSU wastes funds on smoothie machines, recreation, and imaging events (SeaWolf Day)—All of which could go to support the dwindling department." "Half of the courses,

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<sup>1</sup> For the nationwide view, see the article by James Grossman of the American Historical Association, "History Isn't a 'Useless Major,'" *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 2016: <<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-grossman-history-major-in-decline-20160525-snap-story.html>>.

if not more, are not open for enrollment because the department lacks the professors educated in that course.” “SSU officials rarely attend or focus on the history department at their events.” “The department has a staff of 7 while other functions and departments on campus have an abundance of staff or resources.”

Graduates of the history program move into a wide variety of careers, very capably, some remaining local, others spreading across the state, and others spreading across the country and around the world. A steady top portion of each graduating class goes on to graduate school—the M.A., law degrees, and the Ph.D.—and not only in history. SSU history grads have also pursued higher degrees in Museum Studies, public policy, journalism, international conflict management, clinical psychology, and curriculum planning. Of the many who go on to law school, one got a scholarship to Cornell, another reports back that he now works for labor rights in the East Bay representing longshoremen, and another was profiled in *The Press Democrat* while working as a public defender.<sup>2</sup> The civic-mindedness of SSU history grads is striking, with many opting to work as public schoolteachers from the elementary through high school level across California. History grads also become entrepreneurs—one opened a bakery in LA—and work for companies large and small, including Google, Facebook, Disney, and tech startups. The department even has some of its own graduates now back at the department, serving as NTT faculty.

#### IV. Faculty Profile

The department is composed of six full professors and one soon-to-be associate professor (four women and three men), with several NTT faculty who have been with the department for years and others who are newer. All have the PhD and many have become quite distinguished in their fields despite the extreme difficulty of keeping scholarly life alive under very challenging circumstances, such as the campus’ distance from research libraries and a general lack of institutional support for or recognition of historical research. Many institutions at least provide their faculty with an allowance for books and professional memberships, but not this one.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/news/3300911-181/empire-college-recognized-for-community>

Three members of the department were hired in 2000: Mary Halavais, a specialist in early modern Europe with an emphasis on Spain and its empire; Kathleen Noonan, who studies the Atlantic World and the Anglo-American empire; and Michelle Jolly, who is an Americanist with an emphasis on women and the West. Two members of the department were hired in 2002: the current chair, Steve Estes, who works on race and sexuality in 20<sup>th</sup>-century American history; and Stephen Bittner, who specializes in Russia and the Soviet Union. One member was hired in 2007: Amy Kittelstrom, who does American intellectual history. Finally, Cohen arrived in 2015.

The utter lack of faculty outside Europe and North America is a distinction of Sonoma State compared to every other CSU, a deterrent to prospective first-year and transfer students. Almost all other CSU history departments have tenure-line faculty in both Latin America and Asia, and many include Africa and the Middle East as well. [see Appendix 2]

The most shocking finding of the last program review was how much the percentage of instruction delivered by NTT faculty had risen from the time of the previous program review in 2007. Then, tenure-line faculty accounted for 70% of the department's FTES. By fall 2013, that figure was down to 41%. Now it is under a third.

Here is the data:

Fall 2019

58% History Students taught by NTT (901 of 1543 students)

71% of GE History Students taught by NTT (841 of 1181 students)

Spring 2019

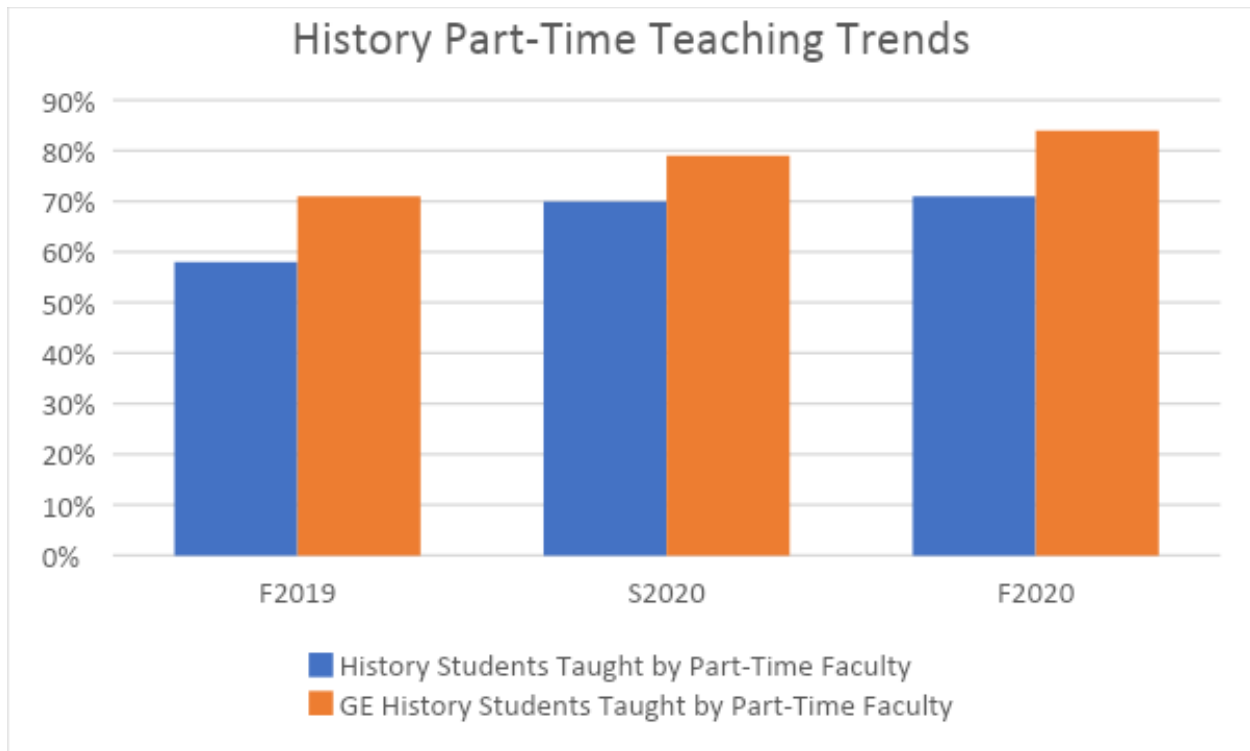
70% History Students taught by NTT (1016 of 1445 students)

79% of GE History Students taught by NTT (936 of 1188 students)

Fall 2020

71% History Students taught by NTT Faculty teaching (1138 of 1597 students)

84% GE Students in History classes taught by NTT faculty (1078 of 1282 students)



Reliance on NTT faculty is bad for the students and their education; it is bad for the program and the tenure-line faculty; it is bad for the university; it is bad for the NTT faculty themselves. The reason SSU is following the national trend away from permanent, salaried, benefited positions is obvious: NTT faculty are much less expensive. The reason this trend is harmful is because NTT faculty—learned, trained, and capable as they are—lack the conditions of true intellectual freedom and cannot contribute as full members of the department. Tenure is not only a perquisite of academic service; it is the foundation for principled public speech, risk-taking in research, and truth-speaking in the classroom and beyond. Historically, universities funded departments to teach comprehensive programs by the best in their fields, covering the breadth of the past with specialists who had mastered their field by the time they arrived on campus, with adjunct instructors brought in only once in a while: when a tenure-line professor was on leave; when a superstar lived near campus; when an unexpected departure left a gap in the curriculum. Sonoma State at its founding hired broadly and maintained a tenure-rich department for over forty years until the administration chose to starve the academic wing of the university and deny replacements for departing faculty. Now, the university expects NTT faculty to do the bulk of the teaching in

history, which means that students mostly encounter faculty who are not involved in the decision-making of the program, cannot do advising, and are teaching so many classes just to pay their bills, they are overworked no matter how efficient they are. They have become the factory workers of higher education, churning out grades.

Yet even the NTT faculty are productive in this department; one has a review coming out in the *Journal of American History* (JAH), the journal of record for the field. The tenure-line faculty are tenacious in continuing to live the life of the mind: one served on the editorial board of the JAH for three years; another helped curate an exhibit of artifacts that came to the Sonoma State Library; another oversaw an oral history project about the pioneering feminists of Sonoma County.<sup>3</sup> The scholar-teachers of the faculty know that in order to infuse their courses with fresh intellectual curiosity, they need to stay active by reading current journals and important new monographs, doing their own research in both physical and online archives; publishing essays and books and engaging with critical feedback. The historical profession's devotion to the principle of objectivity—which is not neutrality but an active discipline of dispassionate consideration of opposing points of view—means that history faculty are constantly fielding criticism from across the country and around the world, and incorporating the insights of outside scholars into their own findings.<sup>4</sup> SSU history department faculty also engage with the curricular demands of their institution, serving on committees and spearheading initiatives to improve student learning. At the very same time, they are competing for prizes and funding, often achieving coveted awards in competition with scholars from the most well-endowed universities.

How many faculty members in the history of this university have won a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities? Stephen Bittner has, and he used it to complete—laboriously—his second monograph (and third book; he edited a memoir also), a history of the wine industry in Russia that took him twelve years and multiple trips to archives and research libraries to complete. It is now forthcoming from Oxford University Press as *Whites and Reds: Wine*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://library.sonoma.edu/about/gallery/revolutionizing-world>;  
<https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c8qf90cv/>.

<sup>4</sup> On the principle of objectivity, pillar of the historical profession and so needed in our times, see Thomas L. Haskell, "Objectivity is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*," *Journal of American History* 29.2 (May 1990): 129-157  
<[https://www.jstor.org/stable/2505222?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2505222?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents) >.

*in the Lands of Tsar and Commissar*, a completely original analysis of how the Russians, and then the Soviets, used the wine industry to advance their geopolitics.

Other books published since the last program review include Amy Kittelstrom's *The Religion of Democracy: Seven Liberals and the American Moral Tradition* (Penguin, 2015), which achieved the rare crossover between academic and trade publishing, and Steve Estes, *Charleston in Black and White* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018), which used oral histories to tell the history of South Carolina's most prominent city. Estes has already moved far enough along on his next book, a history of surfing, that he has achieved an advance contract from UNC Press and written an article, forthcoming from the notable *Journal of Southern History* in December of this year. These and other faculty members regularly publish research essays, review essays, articles in edited collections, and short pieces in academic journals; they evaluate manuscripts for university presses and academic journals; they sit in meetings on boards devoted to their areas of scholarly interest; they travel to conferences and comment on the work of junior scholars and peers; they arrange anniversary volumes for important figures and mentors; they connect with scholars at other universities across the country and around the world, debating topics of common interest and expanding their breadth in both intra- and inter-disciplinary ways. Almost all of this work is uncompensated.

Other faculty in the department have been more oriented toward developing curriculum and serving on school-wide and university-wide committees. Michelle Jolly has made particularly significant contributions in this regard, having chaired the University Standards Committee for many years, while serving on the Academic Advising Committee, several search committees, and the GE Reform Subcommittee. Since 2012, Jolly has devised and started running a program geared toward the retention of students in the Social Sciences: the Sophomore Year Experience (SYE), which offers a curriculum to second-year students that trains them to think like social scientists with 3 core academic courses, a research program housed in the School of Social Sciences, and staff under the Director of Transfers & Transitions. This work has led to presentations at conferences and a chapter in an edited volume.

The newest member of the department has also been active on a number of school-wide and university-wide committees since arriving; most recently, Sam Cohen served—along with Kathleen Noonan—on a strenuous search for a new dean for the School of Social Sciences that

lasted two academic years. This service has neither hindered Cohen's scholarly productivity nor his commitment to his students. He has already published (or is about to publish) peer-reviewed research articles in such important journals as the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, adding up to fourteen published papers, twenty conference presentations, and a prestigious research fellowship at the University of Tübingen. He is currently choosing a press to publish his monograph, *Heresy, Authority, and the Bishops of Rome in Late Antiquity*, which expands upon the research he accomplished for his dissertation. Also, indicating the high esteem Cohen has earned from his scholarly peers, he and a colleague will be editing a special issue of the renowned bilingual journal, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, in which yet another original piece of his own research will appear. On top of all that, Cohen won Sonoma State's Excellence Teaching Award for 2017-18, a well-deserved recognition of his tremendous skill in the classroom.

## V. Assessment

As previously discussed, the program learning outcomes are clear and consistent, demonstrated by every professor and every course [<http://history.sonoma.edu/courses/learning-objectives>; [http://catalog.sonoma.edu/mime/media/3/1045/2019-20\\_SSUcatalog-FINAL-web.pdf](http://catalog.sonoma.edu/mime/media/3/1045/2019-20_SSUcatalog-FINAL-web.pdf)].

WASC requires written and oral communication, as does the history department, and critical thinking—as also previously explained in a footnoted article—is exactly what students of history do when they analyze primary and secondary sources and evaluate the perspectives of authors. Information literacy is also basic to the study of history; one must master facts and texts, and learn how to convey their meaning, in order to present historical research. Quantitative reasoning may not seem so central to historical study, but chronology is. Students must learn to order events and to reason arithmetically about causes and effects.

As aforesaid, history faculty teach all the learning objectives in each of their courses, carefully analyzing students' work to instruct them where they need improvement. Generally, students will not learn about historiography until upper-division courses, once they have already laid a foundation of basic understanding in a region or period. They learn about



primary and secondary sources all along, but generally will not undertake an original piece of their own research until the senior seminar. [See Appendix 1 for Curriculum Map.]

Students generally enter Sonoma State with weak writing skills and limited stamina on reading, which history faculty work strenuously to correct in their courses. History faculty read every word their students write, correcting grammar, usage, and syntax. They check for structure and argumentative flow, the marshalling of evidence, style, and the all-important thesis. Their assessment is seamlessly enmeshed with this constant work of evaluating, giving feedback, hearing feedback, and proceeding. Since upper-division courses remain relatively small, up to 35 students—too small for budgeteers’ preferences, too big for optimal learning—professors can oversee students’ improvement on an individualized basis, prodding them forward semester after semester. These assessment methods do not produce the sort of data that slots into a spreadsheet, but they do produce graduates who know how much they have improved over their time in the program.

Certain institutional considerations complicate the work of the history department. A high percentage of history majors are transfers from junior colleges, generally very bright and eager students who enjoyed their introductory history courses and want to learn more. These are fun students to teach, but they are only in the program for two years, so their immersion is intense. The course HIST 391, which covers methods in history, used to be required for majors and remains on regular rotation among faculty members because it is so valuable for absorbing transfer students and helping all majors succeed in their courses.

## VI. Program Quality and Integrity

As previously discussed, enrollments in the program are down, which seems to stem from a misunderstanding about history majors only being fit for teaching as well as the severe deficit in departmental offerings beyond Europe and the United States. The department has made some efforts to publicize how many diverse careers graduates in history go on to enjoy, but the blinkered ideas about history are taught to parents and families through popular media depictions of certain degrees as “useless.” This campaign is part of the wider anti-intellectual campaign that classes academics with intellectual elitists, out of touch with the people. Like other SSU faculty, history

faculty are in fact quite in touch with the diverse public that streams through its classes. SSU's status as a Hispanic-serving institution makes the department's lack of a Latin-Americanist all the more mortifying, but a lot of Latinx students become history majors, anyway; one is writing a senior thesis on African-American women who were civil rights activists, another is using archived newspapers at the Library of Congress (online) to reconstruct public opinion of voting rights in the late nineteenth century.

In general, students switch to a history major or minor rather than away from it, and they progress in a timely way to graduation. Sometimes a personal crisis will prevent a student from continuing in the program, but generally these are factors far beyond the reach of faculty and not particular to the program.

As explained earlier, students are pleased with the program, proud of themselves, and go on to a variety of careers. Two places their pride is most evident are the senior seminar and the History Journal. When students turn in that senior thesis, they use thick paper and cover sheets, fancy binders. They carry the thesis to the professor with a grin; they can't believe how much they wrote. They feel so proud. Similarly, when the History Journal unveils the new edition at the yearly launch party, the editorial team acts like hosts to the authors and guests, and everyone turns the pages to see how their words, their names look in print. The satisfaction of SSU history majors beams from them at such times and at commencement. History faculty remain in touch with students through email, visits, and LinkedIn and other social media.

## VII. Instruction, Advising, and Resources in the Program

As aforesaid, there are currently under 200 students in the program, with instruction heavily weighted toward NTT faculty. Tenure-line faculty generally teach three courses per semester, one GE and two upper-division, which brings their number of students per semester up to 130, which creates an onerous burden of the judgment-intensive grading historians do and makes it hard even to learn all the students' names, which is an essential task for classroom management. As a rule, faculty in the department value face-to-face instruction and, despite long commutes for over half the department, have resisted both hybrid and online instruction

until the coronavirus crisis. While different instructors have different methods, in general history faculty assign a blend of primary and secondary sources, generate discussion in their classrooms, structure activities to foster engagement, utilize peer review, and keep their students focused on the subject and off their devices during classtime. These methods have a positive impact, steering the students toward retention of content and facility with the skills of reasoning and expression.

The history department has facilitated internships for its majors for years, partnering with local societies, museums, and other entities that can use undergraduate volunteers, who then get valuable experience on their resumes. Many history majors choose to study abroad; some go on to graduate school abroad.

The history department redesigned its major after researching how the major is run at a number of comparable institutions. Today, our program is comparable to similar institutions.

For example, The Metropolitan State University of Denver generally structures its major more like the SSU history departments old major requiring 42 units made up of the following:

- I. Required Courses: (12 hours) HIS 1040 World History since 1500 HIS 1210 American History to 1865 HIS 1220 American History since 1865 HIS 4820 Senior Seminar or in place of HIS 4820 (if student is in Secondary Education Social Science Licensure program) HIS 4010 Methods of Teaching Social Science: Secondary School And one course selected from the following: (3 hours) HIS 1030 World History to 1500 HIS 1035 The Medieval World HIS 1250 China and East Asia HIS 1270 India and South Asia HIS 1300 Introduction to Latin American History HIS 1940 Survey of African History II. Additional Courses: (27 hours) Besides the required courses, students must take 27 additional hours in History selected in consultation with a History advisor. At least 18 of the 27 additional hours must be upper-division (3000 or 4000 level) courses. Included in those hours must be at least three hours in American History (HIS 3400-3699), three hours in European History (HIS 3100-3399), and three hours in World History (HIS 3700- 3799).

The program at Western Washington University is also comparable:

For this program history courses are grouped into the following fields:

- United States
- Europe
- East and South Asia
- Africa and Middle East

- Ancient
  - Western Hemisphere (outside U.S.)
  - Thematic (A thematic field must be approved by a department advisor and may include but is not limited to the following:)
    - Transnational/Global
    - Gender/Sexuality
    - Environmental
    - Intellectual
    - Religious
    - Military
    - Imperialism/Colonialism
- Credits to be distributed as follows:
- Three courses in one of the above fields, one of which must be an upper-division class.
  - Three courses in a second field, one of which must be an upper-division class.
  - Three courses in a third field, one of which must be an upper-division class.
  - Electives under advisement.
- [HIST 499 - Historical Research](#) Credits: 5 (5 credits)
  - At least 30 of the 60 credits must be in upper division (300-400 level) courses, including at least one 400-level course in addition to HIST 499.

Finally, the history major at San Francisco State University is also comparable:

**Lower Division Requirements (12 Units):**

History majors must take twelve lower division units in History. Classes numbered 100-299, with the exception of History 107, can be counted towards this requirement.

**Upper Division Requirements (27 units):**

**Required Courses (6 units)**

History 300 GVAR with a grade of “C” or better. (3 units)

History 696 Seminar with a grade of “C” or better (3 units)

NOTE: Successful completion of History 300 GVAR is required before you can take History 600

**Upper Division Electives (21 units)**

The elective course of study must include:

- 3 Upper Division units of “US History”
- 6 Upper Division units of “Area Studies” (No more than 3 of which may be European History)
- 3 Upper Division units of “Chronological Breadth”

These institutions all administer their programs with enviably greater numbers of tenure-line faculty relative to enrollments. Tenure-line faculty in history at SSU advise up to thirty students per semester in the major as well as providing front-line support to GE students in mid-crisis. Again and again history faculty have heard, “no other professor cared about what was going on with me” when a student has been raped, or is having a post-traumatic response to a past abortion, or can’t stop thinking about their ailing relative, or can’t find reliable child-care. History faculty advise on their particular topics and the broader problems of student life as well.

Tenure-line faculty evaluate both one another and NTT faculty, with regular classroom visits and reports at every stage. Professional development at Sonoma State uniformly undervalues faculty time, but history faculty are constantly reading the latest journals and learning about updated pedagogical approaches to their subject. Since the university does not pay faculty for summer work, course development is voluntary, as is scholarship, and both of these history faculty undertake with conscientiousness and zeal. Professors volunteer their time for transfer orientation and other special days on campus and offer advising for students both in the major and in GE courses for their studies and careers.

There is no support in the department for research, but history faculty compete with other faculty in the School of Social Sciences for travel funds, which they often receive because they are presenting at important conferences in their fields, and for the dean’s summer research grants, which they also often receive because they are engaged in serious research that requires archival access. Community engagement is voluntary and is important enough that one member of the department was nominated by the dean and provost for a Rohnert Park Rotary Club award for their work coaching youth soccer. Another professor consulted on the Sonoma County Museum’s current exhibit on women’s suffrage, curated by an SSU graduate of the history department.

History faculty are keenly interested in attracting diverse students to their program. The basic idea of historical inquiry is the quest to understand people different from oneself, so historians are particularly motivated to transcend their own subject positions and engage across the lines of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, ability, and national origin, which so often divide. However, the shameful absence of faculty specializing in the Global South limits the faculty’s ability to model the representativeness they actually value. There is no remedial coursework in the department; the introductory courses provide a reasonable first gate for students.

Information technology works generally well for the department, and the library tries its best, too—but unfortunately a number of critical holdings for historians have been cut in recent years, hampering both research and instruction. There is not much point in commenting on instructional space when Stevenson Hall, where history is housed and teaches many of its classes, is slated for remodel starting this summer, but it is worth noting that the united voice of all Social Science faculty was not sufficient to convince the architects to design the new building to serve faculty needs.

The department is fortunate to have a wonderfully capable administrator in the person of Jill Siliznoff, who services several other departments at the same time, but she and a half-time employee are stretched very thin.

#### VIII. Summary Conclusion

Clearly, the program's strengths lie in the quality and conscientiousness of its faculty and their ability to hew to the learning objectives and educate the students. The weakness of the program is its slenderness, and utter lack of representation of most human history.

One problem the department needs to solve is how to equitably distribute FTEs among its tenure-line faculty now that the Chancellor's Office has weakened the SSU B.A. by eliminating the World History requirement. Two of the department's seven tenure-line members taught courses that were part of the GE up to now, raising a question of how to keep SFRs equitable across the department. Making tenure-line faculty's GE courses into honors courses with limited enrollment would solve this problem, but the university is constantly shoving more FTEs at the department than its faculty can handle, so this would create a secondary problem.

In the middle of a global pandemic such as humans have never before experienced, making projections and intentions for improvement seems foolish. This semester marks the fourth and most major crisis in the last three years; the fires of 2017, 2018, and 2019 forced displacements, losses, and campus closures; now, faculty have been scrambling since the second week of March to serve their stricken students remotely. The extra preparation for faculty, who are often parenting at the same time as they are working, is indescribable, across the campus. In the history department, faculty have done a laudable job making their courses accessible for remote students and adjusting to extreme conditions. Ever since California led the nation's tax revolt with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, the CSU system has suffered funding declines, forcing administrators to

make hard choices that tended to tilt toward attracting students rather than supporting instruction. Now, even with budgets in severe doubt, the crisis is an opportunity to reaffirm what is actually valuable about a Sonoma State education. Three recommendations are clear. First: give the department four hires over the next seven years to restore its integrity. Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East must be represented by tenure-line faculty in order for the department to fulfill its own mission, as well as the university's. The fourth position should be another Americanist, in light of the GE service the department performs. Second, create a new status for NTT faculty that would enable them to perform departmental service for pay. This is the model at many other universities, where NTT faculty can serve on committees and be involved in decision-making without getting the full benefits of tenure. Finally, offer professional development money for reworking courses and producing scholarship. The university is able to offer lunchtime workshops and webinars that all seem to miss the point of what faculty need; could Sonoma State not value its productive faculty more tangibly?

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Sonoma County  
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Appendix 1: History BA Learning Outcomes for Major Requirements

Learning objectives	Lower-division required courses (HIST 201, 202, 251, 252)	Breadth requirement: upper-division European history	Breadth requirement: upper-division American history	Breadth requirement: upper-division world regional history	Breadth requirement: upper-division thematic, comparative, global	Breadth requirement: upper-division pre-1800 and post-1800	HIST 498 (Seminar)
Analyze and use primary and secondary sources.							
Understand historical debates and controversies.							
Gain an understanding of historiography in given regions and time periods.							
Understand how to use evidence in writing research papers.							
Productive skills: writing and oral expression.							
Student Learning Level	Developing		Developed		Mastering		
Developing:	Builds the fundamental skillsets for historical learning						
Developed:	Shows fluency in the fundamental skillsets for historical learning						
Mastering:	Applies fundamental skillsets for historical learning to culminating project						
Breadth European:	HIST 371/371, 392, 400, 401, 402, 406, 407, 408, 409, <b>411, 412</b> , 414, <b>415, 416</b> , 417, <b>418, 419, 420</b> , 422, <b>423</b> , 424, 426, <b>428</b>						
Breadth American:	HIST <b>345</b> , 351, <b>352, 355</b> , 375/375, <b>445, 446, 447</b> , 450, 451, <b>452, 454, 456, 457, 458, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 476</b>						
Breadth world regional:	HIST 335, 338, 339, <b>342, 348</b> , 373/373, <b>433, 435, 438, 449</b>						
Breadth thematic, comparative, global:	HIST 305, <b>378, 380, 381</b> , 382, 383, <b>384</b> , 482, 483						
Breadth requirement pre-1800 and post-1800 (in bold)							



## Appendix 2:

University	Dept Size TT	Dept NTT	Latin America	Africa 0.5	Middle East	Asia 1	Ancient 2	Europe	US 3	Pacific	size
<a href="#">CSU Bakersfield</a> <a href="#">CSU Channel Islands</a>	10	5	1	1	0.5	1		2	2.5		9800
<a href="#">CSU Chico</a>	8	6	1			1.5		1.5	4.5	1	6900
	12	10	1		1			3			16,000
<a href="#">CSU Dominguez Hills</a> <a href="#">CSU East Bay</a>	6	3		1				2	3		15,000
<a href="#">CSU Fresno</a>	8	14	2			1	1	1	3		12,600
	15	17	3		1			4	7		21,400
<a href="#">CSU Fullerton</a>	23	16	2		1	2	3	6	7		34,800
<a href="#">Humboldt State</a>	6	4	1		1	1		1	2		6400
<a href="#">CSU Long Beach</a>	23	28	2	1	1	3		5	11		32,800
<a href="#">CSU Los Angeles</a>	15	17	4	1	1	1	1	5	2		22,600
<a href="#">Cal Maritime Academy</a> <a href="#">CSU Monterey Bay</a> <a href="#">CSU Northridge</a>	17	10	2	1	1	1		5	7		N/A N/A 34,600
<a href="#">Cal Poly Pomona</a>	15	19	2		1	2	2	3	5		24,200
<a href="#">CSU Sacramento</a>	25	33		1	1	1.5	3	5.5	13		28,200
<a href="#">CSU San Bernardino</a>	13	16	1	1	1	2	2	1	5		18,100
<a href="#">San Diego State</a>	20	18	3	0.5	1	1	2	4	8.5		30,600
<a href="#">San Francisco State</a>	17	12	1	1	3	1		4	7		25,800
<a href="#">San Jose State</a>	10	9	1.5		0.5	1	1	2	3		27,800 1 comparative
<a href="#">Cal Poly San Luis Obispo</a>	14	9	1	1	1	2		3	5		20,500 1 science
<a href="#">CSU San Marcos</a>	13	10	1	1	1	1	2	2	5		13,900
<a href="#">Sonoma State</a>	7	6					1	3	3		8000
<a href="#">CSU Stanislaus</a>	10	5	2.5		1	1.5		2	2.5		9500