

**Review of the Graduate Program (MA)**  
**History Department**  
**Sonoma State University**

### **Program Context and Curriculum**

The History MA last underwent program review in 2008-2009.

The History MA at Sonoma State University serves important functions that align with the university's mission and strategic priorities. Designating mastery in one of the foundational liberal arts, the History MA is core to Sonoma State's identity as a liberal arts and sciences university. Requiring training in historical research methodologies and the completion of a culminating project (thesis or comprehensive exams) based upon research in primary and / or secondary sources, the History MA contributes to Sonoma State's strategic priority of academic excellence and innovation through research, scholarship, and creative activity. Trained by an accomplished and polyglot faculty, with national and international research interests and scholarly reputations, recipients of the History MA from Sonoma State University graduate with discipline-specific skills, including communication, critical thinking, and the cultural competencies set forth in Sonoma State's transformative impact priority. These skills have clear value in the professional world and contribute to the building of better local and global communities, as envisioned by Sonoma State's leadership cultivation priority.

While there is much institutional variation, the History MA remains a popular terminal degree and essential training for a variety of careers, because it provides a broad context for understanding human experience in the past. At SSU, the History MA curriculum is designed so students gain mastery over historical methodologies and specific regional and thematic areas of inquiry. Furthermore, because historical research is usually a solitary endeavor, performed in archives, libraries, and museums, the History MA promotes learning that is self-directed and autonomous.

The History MA at Sonoma State University fulfills important regional and state needs. As the only History MA in the north bay region, and one of six terminal MA programs in history at public universities in the bay area and northern California, the History MA serves constituencies in primary and secondary education, community colleges, museums and cultural institutions, NGOs and government, and the private sector. Alumni of the History MA program at SSU are strongly represented as teachers and administrators in primary and secondary schools in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Mendocino, Solano, Contra Costa, and Alameda counties. For students who enroll directly in the program after finishing their undergraduate degrees, the History MA offers the opportunity to undertake graduate-level work in history and the careers to which it leads at a formative moment in their lives. For a small number of students, this means polishing resumés and skill sets for the possibility of PhD-level study. Alumni of the History MA program have gone on to PhD programs at UC Santa Barbara, UC Irvine, UC Davis, the University of Texas, Austin, and elsewhere. The History MA at SSU thus helps address a longstanding inequity in PhD programs in history and other disciplines: the vast majority of students, particularly at upper-tier universities, are themselves graduates of highly-selective, elite colleges and universities. For students who enroll many years after finishing their undergraduate degrees, the History MA is often the first step—or even the precipitating factor—in a career change, often to secondary-school teaching.

The History MA is a 30-unit degree, of which a minimum of 15 units are at the 500-level, per CSU policy. The History MA is distinctive among graduate degrees at Sonoma State in the extent to which it is implicated in the undergraduate curriculum. MA students often take 15 units or more of 300- and 400-level coursework, in which professors assign extra readings

and / or conduct individual tutorials with graduate students outside of class. The History Department sustains the History MA with three graduate-student only classes that count against normal departmental teaching obligations (11 WTUs / semester / faculty member): the required methodology and historiography seminars (History 500 and 510, 4 units each, typically taught in fall and spring semesters, respectively), and an elective writing workshop (History 597, 4 units, which has come to function as a third-semester seminar for MA students, and thus is taught in fall). All other 500-level coursework, including a required TAsip (History 596, 1-2 units, often waived for students who teach in primary or secondary school) and either thesis research and writing (History 599, 6 units), or comprehensive exam preparation (History 598, 3 units, taken twice) are taught as overload by faculty members. In short, the History MA is an inexpensive degree to maintain. Its annual cost can be measured in the loss of three upper-division elective courses, which faculty members who are assigned to the graduate seminars might otherwise teach, and the annual course release that the graduate coordinator receives.

In 2017, in anticipation of changes in Title 5 regulations governing graduate education in the CSU, the History Department considered making History 597 a required course for the MA, thus raising the minimum number of 500-level units in the degree to 19 (65 percent). This was in response to news that the chancellor's office intended to raise the 500-level minimum to 60 percent of all degree units, with the intention of going to 70 percent at some point in the future. When the proposal stalled in Long Beach, the History Department backed off these discussions for reasons of cost flexibility, even as it remains committed to teaching History 597 when there is sufficient student demand. The Graduate Studies Office at Sonoma State has proposed assigning alternate, 500-level course numbers to 300- and 400-level undergraduate, elective courses in the History Department, as a no- to low-cost way of responding to the possibility of Title 5 changes. The History Department will explore this option after the policy on cross-listing undergraduate and graduate courses is released.

Coursework for the History MA is designed to produce the following learning outcomes, which reflect the American Historical Association's recommendations for the master's degree in history.

1. Base historical knowledge, combining both breadth and depth; familiarity with more than one historiographic tradition; and the ability to synthesize different types of historical knowledge, including comparative and global.
2. Research and presentation skills, evidenced by the completion of a substantial research project; familiarity with the tools of bibliography, the differences between academic and non-academic writing, new technologies for research and presentation, and where appropriate, foreign languages.
3. A solid introduction to historical pedagogy, in the broadest sense of the term: the cognitive processes involved in teaching and learning; how learners attain understandings of history; and how historians present to different audiences.
4. The foundations of a professional identity as a historian, including a familiarity with the historical development of the discipline, ethical standards and practices, and the multiple contexts of professional practice.
5. The ability to think like a historian, meaning a critical and self-conscious approach to the constructed nature of historical knowledge.

The curricular map (appendix 1) indicates how the most commonly taken graduate courses contribute to these learning outcomes.

Graduate and undergraduate learning outcomes are clearly differentiated. The latter are derived from five fundamental skillsets that the History BA seeks to cultivate: use and analysis of primary and secondary sources to form arguments and make judgments; understanding of and

appreciation for historical debate and controversy; familiarization with different and often contradictory historiographies; use of empirical evidence to illustrate arguments; and development of written- and oral-expression skills.

The History Department's graduate committee uses the graduate admissions process to ascertain the degree to which candidates for admission have met undergraduate learning outcomes, regardless of the BA-granting institution and major. In cases where the graduate committee determines that a student is promising, but lacking one or more of the undergraduate learning outcomes, it can offer probationary admission through Open University. These candidates are given the chance to prove themselves in graduate seminars and / or upper-division elective courses before being advanced to classified graduate status. Because the History MA attracts applicants from diverse undergraduate backgrounds—including, in recent years, political economy, finance, and horticulture—this is a common pathway to admission.

Once in the program, History MA students work closely with faculty, often on a one-on-one basis, as teaching assistants, research assistants, and project collaborators. History MA students learn to use both digital and depository archival and manuscript collections. Graduate seminars emphasize deep reading and analysis of historical sources, historical methods, writing, and oral presentation. Students gain practical experience through a required TAship under the supervision and mentoring of a faculty member.

Learning experiences in the MA program also occur outside the classroom: in internships (History 593); in tutorials with faculty members, which are the principal way that progress on thesis research / writing and exam preparation is assessed and encouraged; and in self-directed research at libraries, archives, and museums in the bay area and beyond. The latter reflects the nature of the historical field broadly, which requires professional historians and aspiring graduate students to travel to sources that are not always close at hand.

It is rare—but not entirely uncommon—for History MA students to take courses outside the department, most often in the Modern Languages and Literatures Department. Despite offerings limited to Spanish, French, and German, language courses attract thesis students who want to polish their foreign-language abilities before embarking on research. Recognizing the centrality of foreign-language ability to historical research (as expressed in the History MA's second learning outcome), the History Department has partnered with Modern Languages and Literatures to create a Dual-Language Historical Research Certificate for undergraduate students.

Since its last program review, the History MA has undertaken a number of minor program revisions for the sake of substance and facility. The successful completion of History 500 or 510 now satisfies the WEPT requirement for students who hold non-CSU BAs. Likewise, History 593 (Internship) was revised in the spring of 2020 to allow for 1-unit internships.

## **Assessment**

Given the comparatively small size of the History MA program, in which cohorts entering in the autumn typically number between 4-6 students, assessment is direct: faculty members evaluate—in exhaustive detail, in writing and in conversation with students and among themselves—the extent to which MA students have succeeded relative to the learning outcomes. Although this assessment occurs in every class in which a graduate student is present, there are a small number of critical moments. Faculty members teaching the first- and second-semester graduate seminars (History 500 and 510) write lengthly qualitative reviews for each student at the end of the semester. These are time-consuming endeavors and are

made possible only by the small size of the graduate program. Seminar paper evaluations are shared with the graduate coordinator, who has the unenviable responsibility of advising students who are on probationary status that a History MA may not be their calling, and to warn classified MA students that more is expected and required than what they have henceforth produced.

Direct assessment surrounding thesis and comprehensive exam preparation offers faculty members a final moment to gauge the progress of History MA students relative to the learning outcomes. MA theses are vetted by three-person committees prior to defense. As the number of tenure-line positions in the History Department has shrunk in recent years, the participation of adjunct and non-departmental faculty on thesis committees has become more common. The thesis director plays a central role, typically reviewing each chapter upon completion, and advising on an initial-round of necessary revisions before the thesis is circulated to committee members. Similarly, gauging student progress on comprehensive exam preparation occurs in individual tutorials between faculty members and students. Students are not allowed to sit for exams until the supervising faculty member is reasonably confident of their success.

Between fall 2012 and fall 2019, the average GPA among the 7 students who received History MAs after completing comprehensive exams was 3.78; the average GPA among the 18 students who received History MAs after completing a thesis was 3.82.

## **Faculty**

The following tenure-line faculty comprise the History Department.

Stephen Bittner, Professor  
PhD, University of Chicago  
Russian Empire, Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Modern Europe

Samuel Cohen, Assistant Professor  
PhD, University of Toronto  
Ancient World, Greek and Roman Empire, Early-Medieval Europe

Steve Estes, Professor  
PhD, University of North Carolina  
Modern US, African-American history, civil rights, oral history

Mary Halavais, Professor  
PhD, UC San Diego  
Iberian Peninsula, Spanish Empire, early-modern Europe

Michelle Jolly, Professor  
PhD, UC San Diego  
Western US, California, women's history

Amy Kittelstrom, Professor  
PhD, Boston University  
US religious and intellectual history

Kathleen Noonan, Professor  
PhD, UC Santa Barbara  
Britain and Ireland, early-modern Europe, colonial America, Atlantic world

In addition to its tenure-line faculty members, the History Department relies on a number adjunct lecturers to meet its undergraduate teaching obligations. Two of these lecturers, Robert Chase (PhD, UC Irvine) and Margaret Miller (PhD, University of Washington), have contributed in recent years to the graduate program by serving as secondary or tertiary readers on thesis committees. The gratitude of their tenure-line colleagues aside, Miller and Chase's work in the graduate program is uncompensated, since lecturers have no unassigned WTUs to cover work with MA students. This is not an equitable model for a graduate program struggling with the implications of declining numbers of tenure-line faculty.

At the time of the last undergraduate program review in 2012-13, the History Department had 9 tenure-line faculty members (8.5 FTEF). The History Department requested additional lines in the ancient and classical Mediterranean world, modern East Asia, and the modern Islamic world and Africa. Since then, three faculty members have retired and only one line was granted, which resulted in the hiring of Samuel Cohen in 2014. While the History Department remains one of the most diverse in regional expertise and polyglot on campus, with abilities in French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Ukrainian, Latin, and Greek, the breadth of its expertise has shrunk in recent years. The History Department currently lacks historians who work in Latin America and East Asia, areas which previously had coverage. Despite the fact that the US Department of Education recently designated SSU as a "Hispanic-serving institution," the History Department can offer its undergraduate majors and MA candidates expertise only in American and European history. This is a particularly shameful lacuna, which reflects not the History Department's ability to recruit and retain faculty members with the appropriate expertise, but the priorities of the university.

The decline in tenure-line faculty has contributed to a decline in MA enrollments, which is documented in a later section of this self-study. The MA program often loses prospective students to other, larger history departments at CSU East Bay, SF State, or Sacramento State, which are better able to accommodate students' scholarly interests. This happens when students decide after offers of admission have been made that other departments are better resourced, or when the graduate coordinator indicates in one-on-one meetings with prospective applicants that the department lacks coverage in the parts of the world that interest them. WSCUC requires that graduate programs demonstrate that their number of faculty is sufficient to exert collective responsibility for developing and evaluating curricula, academic policies, teaching, and mentoring. At present, the History MA is able to adequately honor the latter WSCUC mandates, about teaching and mentoring, only by turning away students whose interests do not align with faculty expertise.

Given the fact that the History MA draws a significant proportion of its students from the Sonoma State BA, where foreign-language requirements are negligible, there is a persistent, disproportionate distribution of MA theses by topic and faculty workload: MA students who follow the thesis track tend to be working on the history of the Anglophone world, because that is what their language skills allow. They are thus supervised by one of the department's three American historians (Kittelstrom, Estes, Jolly) or its one British / Irish historian (Noonan).

For those students who do find a match on faculty for their scholarly interests, the MA program offers truly extraordinary opportunities for scholarly collaboration. Graduate students have served as research assistants for faculty members preparing books and articles for publication. They have written indexes and checked footnotes for accuracy. They have helped catalog and preserve oral-historical sources. They have helped curate museum exhibits. Moreover, in recent years, Steve Estes, Michelle Jolly, and Katherine Noonan have directed MA theses that are direct outgrowths of their own scholarly works and interests. On recent alumnus had part of his thesis accepted for publication in the *Federal History Journal*.

## **Program Resources**

The principal role of advising for the History MA lies with the graduate coordinator, who meets with prospective students to drum up interest in the program and assess their suitability, and with matriculated students to encourage progress toward degree. In recent years, the graduate coordinator has requested an annual face-to-face meeting, typically in the autumn, with each MA student. Even though not all students accept the invitation, and even though some students accept only because they want to explain in person why they will not finish their degree (family formation and professional demands are the most common reasons), the practice has helped a number of longtime students assess their standing in the program and the reasons why they are failing to move expeditiously toward degree. Critical advising also occurs in History 500 and 510. Professors teaching History 500, for instance, often devote the first class in the autumn to reviewing the graduate handbook, which is regularly updated. Finally, advising occurs in a number of informal venues. The History Department typically hosts a happy hour at the campus pub in late April or early May, so incoming MA students can meet current students and alumni. The annual happy hour has become one of the most popular events on the calendar of MA students.

For History MA students, the SSU Library is often a useful first stop in their investigations, but not a serious depository for primary historical sources. In the view of History Department faculty members, the research inadequacies of the SSU Library have become more pronounced in recent years as subscriptions to essential journals and digital databases have been subsumed under base-level, CSU-wide licensing contracts or eliminated altogether. There have been a small number of History MA theses, such as Nicholas Heitkamp's study of a long-held family ranch in northern Sonoma County, based upon unique primary sources available at SSU. But these tend to be the exception. Most thesis students conduct their research in off-site archives and libraries, such as the Gardner Stacks at UC Berkeley, the archives of the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, the California State Archives in Sacramento, the Getty Research Library in Santa Monica, and many places farther afield, from Europe to Japan. Because there is little travel money for MA research (existing student travel funds in the School of Social Sciences target conference participation), most History MA students self-fund their research. The History Department has a small amount of intramural money—in the form of the Anderson Fellowship—which it uses to attract qualified candidates for admission and to offset the costs of research and internships, but the lack of sufficient monetary support for History MA students remains a longstanding problem.

The dearth of foreign-language resources at SSU is sometimes a reason the History MA Program loses candidates for admission to other programs, particularly CSU East Bay and SF State. It is the principal reason that the History MA program is not always ideal for students looking to polish their skill sets in anticipation of PhD-level study. The History Department notes with dismay that the university recently undertook a revision of its mission and strategic priorities that downplayed the international component of its curriculum. Whereas the 2014-19 strategic plan included the goal of “internationalizing the curriculum” as part of the strategic objective of globalization, Strategic Plan 2025 has elided globalization as a strategic priority, and refers instead to “opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills to build a better society both locally and globally.” This apparently does not include foreign-language acquisition.

There are two positive resource developments in recent years. First, the History MA has moved its admissions to CSUApply. After a beta year filled with hiccups, CSUApply has helped streamline a process that was redundant, because it required that identical materials be sent to the History Department and the Office of Admissions and Records, and laborious, because the graduate coordinator often spent many hours contacting students to track down missing materials. The addition of a mechanism in spring 2020 for digitally reporting GRE scores means

that the History Department no longer solicits any materials outside of the CSUApply portal. CSUApply has also made it easier for members of the graduate committee to review applications, which now exist online.

Second, in 2019-2020 the History MA program received its first fee waiver for a graduate student. Long the preserve of three graduate programs—Biology, English, and MPA—access to fee waivers will help the MA program attract and retain highly qualified graduate students from URM groups. The History Department’s first waiver was awarded to Sofia Jamall, a student of Pakistani heritage who is one of the very best to pass through the History MA program in recent years. While the History Department is hopeful that it will receive an additional waiver for 2020-2021, it notes with concern that the university has adopted criteria for distributing fee waivers that privilege a curricular model in which graduate students play a primary role in undergraduate instruction as (unit 11) Teaching Associates. While the History Department—like the School of Social Sciences broadly—does not have that curricular model, it does rely on (unit 11) Graduate Assistants to help professors with course preparation, evaluation, and research. However, according to the eligibility criteria that SSU adopted in spring 2020, departments and schools that use Graduate Assistants must fund the associated salaries at 10 hours / week, whereas departments and schools that use Teaching Associates must fund the associated salaries at 2 WTUs (the equivalent of 6 hours per week). Moreover, while the costs of fee waivers are borne by the entire university, as funds are deducted from the lecturer pool in the Provost’s Office, the benefits of fee waivers accrue principally to two departments: Biology and English. In the view of the History Department, the new eligibility criteria serve mainly to reinforce a longstanding status quo. The History Department requests a more equitable process for distributing fee waivers, which does not set the minimum salary requirements (measured by hour or WTU) at nearly double the arrangement made with departments that use Teaching Associates.

## **Student Success**

Between fall semester 2012 and fall semester 2019, which amounts to 7.5 academic years, the History Department awarded 25 History MAs. The breakdown of degree conferral by gender is ten female students and fifteen male students. During this same period, the History Department admitted 32 students into the program, evenly split by gender. To date, 12 of these 32 students have received their degree, 6 males and 6 females. Another 8 of the 32 are within 2 academic years of matriculation, and thus cannot be expected to have finished. Among admitted students since Fall 2012, 4 identified as Hispanic or “multiple-races.” Among the 14 applicants denied admission since Fall 2012, 5 identified as Asian, “multiple-races,” or American Indian. Finally, 6 of the 32 admitted students have, at the present moment, been unenrolled for more than one academic year. Although the latter is not a perfect indicator of failure to complete the degree, there is a high degree of correlation.

Among the 25 History MAs conferred since fall 2012, 18 students wrote theses and 7 students passed comprehensive exams. The median time to degree for thesis students is 6 semesters, not including summer or intersession; the median time to degree for exam students is 8 semesters. Because of a number of outliers, the average time to degree for thesis and exam students is not instructive.

Among the 20 students who have entered the program since fall 2012 but not yet graduated, 6 have opted for to pursue a thesis (i.e., they have enrolled in History 599), and 7 to prepare for comprehensive exams (History 598). 5 students are currently enrolled in the program but have not yet decided which track to pursue. The final two students separated from program before choosing a track.

Data on degrees granted and students who have matriculated but not yet earned their degrees are presented in appendices 2 and 3.

Because nearly all students in the program work full- or part-time in addition to their studies, 4 semesters tends to be the minimum period of time necessary to complete the degree. The History Department encourages entering students to think of the MA as a 4 or 5-semester degree and to move as expeditiously as possible toward completion once in the program. It is notable that a number of students have completed their degrees after lengthy periods of separation from the program, for professional reasons, study abroad, or family formation. Among the 25 History MAs conferred since fall 2012, two went to students who had to have earlier coursework re-certified because they exceeded the CSU-imposed deadline of 7 academic years from matriculation to graduation.

The History Department notes with concern that the number of students entering the program and the number of annual degrees that the program grants have fallen sharply in the last decade. While the History Department awarded 25 MAs in the last 7.5 years, it awarded 27 MAs in the three academic years prior to that, from fall 2009 to summer 2012. In short, the average number of MA degrees conferred has fallen from about 9 per year a decade ago, to a bit more than 3 at present. The History Department believes that there are a number of reasons for this decline, which are peculiar to Sonoma State. Reasons include declining numbers of tenure-line faculty and the end of Professor Michelle Jolly's Teaching American History fellowship, which helped raise the profile of the department among a critical constituency for MA recruitment. However, the decline also reflects well-documented changes in the field of history broadly since the 2008 recession, particularly at non-elite colleges and universities, and thus may prove cyclical.

The History Department recognizes that the declining enrollments and degree conferrals are the most serious challenges facing the MA program.

### **Reflection and Plan of Action**

The History Department proposes the following plan of action to address declining enrollments and degree conferrals and to encourage students in the program to move expeditiously toward their degree.

#### 1. Develop a public-history track.

The History MA, as currently constituted, resembles a mini-PhD: degree candidates must choose between comprehensive exams (PhD qualifying exams) or a thesis (a dissertation). While grounded in longstanding practices in the historical field, these tracks are not always good matches for the career aspirations of students, which are increasingly geared toward public history. In recent years, several MA students have paired their graduate studies with internships in local museums or at the Northwest Information Center. One alumna, after completing a graduate internship that consisted of helping a faculty member curate an exhibit on the centenary of the Russian Revolution, went on to pursue an MA in museum studies at USF. The History Department has some infrastructure for a public-history track already in place, as it recently developed a public-history certificate for undergraduate students. Moreover, while there is no self-identified public historian among tenure-line faculty members, several members of the department have engaged in projects that fall squarely into the realm of public history, such as oral-historical source generation and exhibit curation. Moreover, Margaret Miller, a longtime adjunct lecturer, has worked extensively on public-historical projects with local parks. The History Department is keen to join forces in this endeavor with

CRM, so as not to duplicate public-history programs already in place at Sacramento State and CSU East Bay.

2. Develop a “4+1” path to the History BA and History MA.

The History Department is awaiting direction from the chancellor’s office about “4+1” graduate programs and about the number of units that can be counted toward both degrees. The History Department envisions a scenario where students could apply for the 4+1 program during the summer prior to their junior year or at the beginning of their junior year, take a certain constellation of undergraduate and graduate courses during their final two years as an undergraduate, and then finish an MA in their first post-baccalaureate year. The History Department believes that a 4+1 path to degree would help increase the number of students in the MA program, because it would cut the cost of the graduate degree in half, if not more. At present, accelerated students are finishing their degrees in 4 semesters; many go beyond this.

3. Reconsider the requirements for comprehensive exams and theses.

The graduate coordinator has often told students that the comprehensive-exam track is a quicker path to degree. It thus came as a surprise to discover that the opposite is true. On average, comprehensive exam students are taking about a year longer to finish their degrees than their counterparts writing theses. It is possible that there is a certain degree of self-selection at play, with weaker students choosing the comprehensive-exam track out of the belief that it is easier. The comprehensive exam track is also popular among teachers, who are unable to attend full-time because of professional commitments. Yet it is clear that for some students the comprehensive exams—which evaluate knowledge of two field-specific reading lists of roughly 40 books each—are too amorphous and gargantuan an undertaking in their present form to be successfully completed. In light of changing expectations for the comprehensive exams, the History Department will also reconsider the minimum length requirements for theses (at present 80-100 pages), to keep the two tracks roughly equal in difficulty.

4. Think about the circumstances under which graduate students might play a greater role in undergraduate instruction.

The History MA has found it difficult to compete for fee waivers with graduate programs in Biology and English because it lacks a curricular model that allows graduate students to work as Teaching Associates. This reflects an overarching emphasis on quality pedagogy within the department, and a resulting reluctance to put graduate students in charge of undergraduate classroom settings. However, the History Department can envision a number of scenarios where graduate students might play more central instructional roles, such as leading discussion sections attached to large GE surveys. This is perhaps the most momentous plan of action, because it marks the sharpest departure from current departmental practice.

5. Develop a way to compensate non-tenure-line faculty members who contribute to the graduate program by serving on thesis committees.

Non-tenure-line faculty members have contributed in substantive ways to the graduate program in recent years by serving on thesis committees. Yet the present situation, where their time and expertise is volunteered, is not equitable and likely in violation of the collective bargaining agreement.

**Appendix 1: History MA Learning Outcomes of Common Courses**

	<b>Upper-division elective courses</b>	<b>HIST 500</b>	<b>HIST 510</b>	<b>HIST 596</b>	<b>HIST 597</b>	<b>History 598/599</b>
Base historical knowledge, combining both breadth and depth; familiarity with more than one historiographic tradition; and the ability to synthesize different types of historical knowledge, including comparative and global						
Research and presentation skills, evidenced by the completion of a substantial research project; familiarity with the tools of bibliography, the differences between academic and non-academic writing, new technologies for research and presentation, and where appropriate,						
A solid introduction to historical pedagogy, in the broadest sense of the term: the cognitive processes involved in teaching and learning; how learners attain understandings of history; and how historians present to different audiences.						
The foundations of a professional identity as a historian, including a familiarity with the historical development of the discipline, ethical standards and practices, and the multiple contexts of professional practice.						
The ability to think like a historian, meaning a critical and self-conscious approach to the constructed nature of historical knowledge.						
<b>Student Learning Level</b>	<b>Developing</b>		<b>Developed</b>		<b>Mastering</b>	
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 and pedagogy					
	HIST 500 (Historical Methodology)			HIST 597 (Writing Seminar)		
	HIST 510 (Graduate Proseminar)			HIST 598 (Comprehensive Exams)		
	HIST 596 (Teaching Assistantship)			HIST 599 (Thesis)		

Appendix 2: MA Degrees Granted, Fall 2012-Fall 2019

	<b>Graduation Semester</b>	<b>Semester of Matriculation</b>	<b>Number of semesters (excluding summer) between matriculation and graduation, inclusive</b>	<b>Thesis / Exam</b>	<b>Culminating Project Grades</b>	<b>Graduate GPA</b>
<b>Ballard, Alyssa</b>	Summer 2017	Fall 2015	4	Exams	B+/A	3.49
<b>Burns, Hannah</b>	Spring 2017	Fall 2014	6	Thesis	B+	3.56
<b>Byrne, Karl</b>	Fall 2012	Fall 2010	5	Thesis	A	4.0
<b>Close, Colin</b>	Spring 2014	Fall 2010	8	Thesis	A	4.0
<b>Desperrier, Kirsten</b>	Spring 2018	Fall 2016	4	Thesis	B+	3.53
<b>Dunn, Daniel</b>	Summer 2015	Spring 2013	4	Thesis	A-	3.62
<b>Farnham, April</b>	Fall 2019	Fall 2017	5	Thesis	A	3.97
<b>Fox-Jones, Jocoya</b>	Spring 2015	Fall 2011	8	Thesis	A	3.54
<b>Gertz, Michelle</b>	Summer 2013	Fall 2011	4	Thesis	A	4.0
<b>Jaffe, Jennifer</b>	Spring 2015	Fall 2008	14	Thesis	A	3.95
<b>Jaroslavsky, Alan</b>	Fall 2019	Fall 2017	5	Thesis	B+	3.77
<b>Levine, Larry</b>	Fall 2017	Fall 2015	5	Exams	A/A-	3.84
<b>McCown, Erika</b>	Spring 2015	Fall 2013	4	Exams	A/A	4.0
<b>Morrow, Garrett</b>	Fall 2014	Fall 2010	9	Thesis	A	3.91
<b>Mullins, Kristian</b>	Fall 2018	Fall 2012	13	Thesis	A	3.87
<b>O'Sullivan, Christopher</b>	Summer 2013	Fall 2010	6	Thesis	A	4.0
<b>Phillips, Gordon</b>	Fall 2014	Spring 2004	22	Thesis	A	3.95
<b>Ramadan, Amine</b>	Fall 2016	Fall 2011	11	Exams	A/A	3.83
<b>Rowe, Eric</b>	Summer 2014	Fall 2011	6	Thesis	A	3.86
<b>Tierney, Craig</b>	Fall 2019	Fall 2008	23	Exams	A/A	4.0
<b>Todd, Kate</b>	Spring 2018	Fall 2016	4	Thesis	A-	3.93
<b>Tom, Walter</b>	Summer 2013	Fall 2009	8	Thesis	A	3.57
<b>Van Beek, Casey</b>	Fall 2013	Spring 2007	14	Exams	B+/B+	3.44
<b>Wendt, Christopher</b>	Fall 2016	Fall 2013	7	Thesis	A	3.75
<b>White, Weston</b>	Spring 2018	Fall 2014	8	Exams	A/A-	3.87
<b>Average Semesters Exams</b>	9.9			<b>Average GPA Exam Students</b>	3.78	
<b>Median Semesters Exams</b>	8					
<b>Average Semesters Thesis</b>	7.7			<b>Average GPA Thesis Students</b>	3.82	
<b>Median Semesters Thesis</b>	6					

Appendix 3: Students who matriculated in program since Fall 2012 but have not graduated

Name	Semester of Matriculation	Last Semester Enrolled	Thesis / Exams		
<b>Anderson, Rachel</b>	Fall 2016	Spring 2018	Thesis		
<b>Blasingame, Evan</b>	Fall 2017	Spring 2020	Exams		
<b>Braafladt, Kevin</b>	Fall 2013	Fall 2016	Thesis		
<b>Coffey, Gina</b>	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Exams		
<b>Grassl, Edward</b>	Fall 2017	Spring 2020	Exams		
<b>Grimmer, John</b>	Fall 2018	Spring 2020			
<b>Heitkamp, Nicholas</b>	Fall 2014	Spring 2019	Thesis		
<b>Higgins, Rachel</b>	Fall 2012	Spring 2014	Exams		
<b>Hobbs, Andrew</b>	Fall 2015	Spring 2016			
<b>Jamall, Sofia</b>	Fall 2018	Spring 2020	Thesis		
<b>Kelley, Thomas</b>	Fall 2014	Spring 2020	Exams		
<b>Lee, Joelynn</b>	Fall 2019	Spring 2020			
<b>Murphy, Jack</b>	Spring 2019	Spring 2020	Exams		
<b>Ockrassa, Josephine</b>	Fall 2019	Spring 2020			
<b>Roche, Karina</b>	Fall 2016	Spring 2020	Thesis		
<b>Schoonover, Jamison</b>	Fall 2019	Spring 2020			
<b>Scramaglia, Richard</b>	Fall 2019	Spring 2020			
<b>Stankas, Todd</b>	Fall 2018	Spring 2020	Thesis		
<b>Toebe, Scott</b>	Fall 2016	Spring 2020	Exams		
<b>Wisor, Catherine</b>	Fall 2015	Spring 2016			

## **Review of the Graduate Program (M.A.) in History Sonoma State University**

By Henry Reichman, Professor Emeritus of History, CSU, East Bay

On September 15, I "visited" Sonoma State via Zoom to review the History Department's M.A. program. In preparation I studied the department's nine-page self-study, its learning outcomes, and its record of degrees granted and matriculations without degrees since 2012. During my "visit" I met with members of the department with responsibility for the program, department chair Steve Estes, graduate coordinator Michelle Jolly, assessment coordinator Stephen Bittner, and former graduate coordinator Kathleen Noonan; with Dean of Social Sciences Troi Carleton; with AVP for Academic Affairs Stacey Bosick; and with students in Prof. Estes' History 500 seminar, joined by some other recent graduates.

My overall assessment of the program is a positive one. The program is intelligently structured and cleverly uses the department's limited resources to provide a well-rounded history education along with opportunities for students to specialize in a surprisingly broad range of sub-fields at remarkably little financial cost to the university. Although the department's self-study recognized that "declining enrollments and degree conferrals are the most serious challenges facing the MA program," I was happy to learn that this Fall saw the largest new "class" of enrollees, with eight of nine of those admitted enrolling. This undoubtedly reflects the counter-cyclical nature of enrollment in graduate programs like History seen at almost all similar institutions. When economic activity declines, people tend to go back to school to improve their credentials -- or, perhaps, simply the quality of their lives. While the department will need to consider ways to stabilize this growth and expand its offerings -- suggestions on how best to do so will follow in this report -- the program is in little to no danger of failing. Indeed, properly staffed it should continue as a significant asset to Sonoma State and the north bay communities it serves.

In what follows I will outline, first, the program's strengths and the benefits it brings to the university and the community; second, its challenges and weaknesses; and third, recommendations for improvement. Rather than regurgitating information found in the self-study -- which I found thorough, accurate, and helpful -- these comments should be seen as supplementing that report.

### Strengths and Benefits

Perhaps the most revealing part of my visit was my exchanges with graduate students, which came at the end of the day and lasted for about an hour. Pretty much unanimously the students praised the program and, in particular, the faculty they work with, pointing to a series of strengths. The program is appropriately "rigorous," several declared. Its small size and intimate connection with faculty is appealing. One student declared that entering the program was "one of the best decisions I have made." The department, she noted, provided her not only with a rigorous education but with "a place in a community." One high school teacher in the program praised the faculty for being "very accommodating" and going out of their way to make the program fit his needs.

It was clear from all my conversations that the History M.A. program provides benefits to both the university and the broader community. Several graduate students received their B.A.s from SSU and were pleased to be able to continue their education there. Some were interested in a PhD but did not feel as yet adequately prepared. Others were teachers looking to upgrade their qualifications and yet others were simply motivated by enrichment concerns. This struck me as similar to the motivations of students in other northern California CSU History M.A. programs. However, although many of these students could have entered programs at SF State or at CSU East Bay, they noted, first, the geographic accessibility of Sonoma State, but also their sense -- and in the case of those who were undergrads at SSU their experience -- that the faculty were especially welcoming, attentive, and even inspiring.

The department's self-study hits the nail on the head when it declares that the program "fulfills important and regional state needs."

### Challenges and Weaknesses

In addition to sustaining enrollment during periods in which demand for all such programs may weaken, the biggest challenge facing the department will be its ability to offer the necessary range of courses both to attract students and ensure the quality of the education they receive. This is undoubtedly a problem facing the undergraduate program as well. To put it bluntly, the SSU History department is significantly understaffed. As one who taught in the CSU for 25 years, served as a department chair, and in governance, I am painfully aware of the funding challenges faced by SSU and the entire CSU system. I recognize that new faculty lines often must follow enrollment growth and that even when there is such growth funding may still be limited, a problem and challenge that cannot, of course, be addressed at the department level. That said, however, without an adequate number of full-time instructors, reflecting a sufficiently broad range of sub-fields, no History program, graduate or undergraduate, will be able to attract and properly serve students. And that should be a major concern for the

university, both because it is difficult to imagine a liberal arts university like SSU without a fully healthy History program, but also because such programs -- including, perhaps especially, the History M.A. program -- are not expensive and, in a healthy university, can balance the higher costs associated with programs in STEM and the professions.

Currently, despite heroic efforts by the department's faculty, including by its adjuncts, the SSU History department is perilously close to the point at which the survival of its programs, both the M.A. and B.A. programs, will be threatened not for lack of interest or enrollment but for an inability to provide the broad education that students deserve. The self-study acknowledges that the department "can offer its undergraduate majors and MA candidates expertise only in American and European history," a weakness it calls "shameful." It is. Specifically, it is little short of criminal that a History department in California, with its large and rapidly growing Latinx and Asian minorities, does not have a single full-time specialist in the history of Latin America or East or South Asia. In my discussions with students several mentioned this as a major weakness and one that no doubt discouraged others from applying to the program. While the intimacy associated with the program's modest size was a major attraction, the students also recognized it as a disadvantage because of the limited choice and diversity of course offerings. One student complained that the department was forced to rely too much on adjuncts, who, he quickly acknowledged, did a fine job but could not be as accessible for informal advising.

Another concern voiced by students was that while the program made room for intern experiences, which several highly valued, the internship program was somewhat haphazard. In many respects this too is a consequence of under-staffing, as a well-run internship program demands faculty time in seeking out potential internship partners and supervising and monitoring internships.

### Recommendations

1. My single most important recommendation to the SSU administration is to initiate searches for full-time tenure-track faculty appointments in Latin American and either East or South Asian history *as soon as possible* (which, sadly, owing to the pandemic may be a bit longer than it should be). The M.A. program can survive without such appointments -- indeed, it is likely that M.A. students who *concentrate* in these fields will be few even after they are hired, if only owing to language limitations -- but the overall attractiveness and richness of the program -- indeed of the department as a whole -- will continue to be less than fully adequate without them.

2. The self-study's "plan of action" envisions the development of a public-history track. I wholeheartedly endorse this suggestion and urge the administration to provide the department with resources necessary to implement it. Public history has been important to the sustenance and growth of M.A. programs in similarly situated departments, including my own department at East Bay. The department already has the faculty with skills to initiate and develop such a program, although it might be beneficial to bring in an outside consultant to assist in its creation. (I would recommend my colleague Linda Ivey at CSUEB for such a role.) The department has also suggested that such a program could be developed in cooperation with other departments, notably CRM. I am not in a position to assess either the advisability or feasibility of such intra-campus cooperation, but it could certainly be a useful avenue. In any event, such a program should focus on local needs. Here the role of internships could be key. For example, the county's important wine industry could be a rich source not only of internships but of research projects and theses in public history. I suspect that many small, medium, and even large wineries would be anxious to turn a Sonoma State graduate student loose in their archives in order to craft a company history.

In my discussion with students several expressed interest in such a program, but all emphasized that any public history program should supplement and support, not supplant, the current program's topical and thematic flexibility as well as its emphasis on historical methodologies, appreciation of historical debate and controversy, and focus on the development of critical thinking, writing, and oral communication skills. I agree. In that light, while the development of such a program may well -- and probably in the medium term should -- lead to the hiring of an additional full-time specialist in public history to direct the option, in the near future that should not take precedence over the burning necessity of broadening the department's subject area competence to include full-time faculty in Latin American and Asian histories.

3. The self-study suggests development of a "4+1" path to a History BA/MA, pending direction from the Chancellor's office on how units may be credited in such programs. This seems a reasonable suggestion worth exploring, especially given the significant number of current MA students who did their undergraduate work in History at SSU. It could be a cost-saving measure (as the self-study argues), but also something that could attract new undergraduate majors and help retain for the program undergraduate majors who might otherwise go elsewhere -- SF State, CSUEB, Sac State -- to continue their studies.

4. The self-study also suggests reformulating requirements for students who take a comprehensive exam instead of writing a thesis, noting that such students often take a longer time to earn a degree. Because the option is, according to the self-study,

especially popular among teachers, perhaps consideration should be given to replacing the option -- or creating an additional option -- some sort of teaching project, perhaps a detailed series of lesson plans, to be submitted in lieu of a traditional thesis. CSUEB has had some success with such an option for those MA students who are currently teaching.

In conclusion, let me stress my admiration for the excellent work being done by the SSU History Department. With limited and shrinking resources they have managed to sustain an M.A. program that is clearly serving the needs of the community -- filling a small but important niche, one might say -- and that with modest investment in faculty and some creative thinking has the potential to do quite a bit more. In particular, the development of a public history option as a critical vocationally oriented supplement to the department's already rich traditional History offerings could help extend the program's reach and provide a genuine service to the north bay community. However, despite their near-heroic work the department's faculty cannot be expected to do this alone. Without an expansion of the full-time tenure-track faculty -- and, in particular, without essential faculty in the critical fields (for a public university in California) of Latin America and Asia -- it is difficult to imagine that the department will be able to fully succeed. And such a failure would really be a tragedy. The beauty of history departments in institutions like the CSU is that they provide so much for so little cost. But there are limits and I fear that SSU may be approaching such a limit.