

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

M.A. IN HISTORY

GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK



Kunyu wanguo quantu, or Map of the Ten Thousand Countries of the Earth 1602

Matteo Ricci, Li Zhizao, and Zhang Wentao
in the collection of the James Ford Bell Library
University of Minnesota

**Sonoma State University
Department of History
Master of Arts Program (rev. 8/23)**

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Program Description

The History MA program provides a broad context for understanding the human experience in the past. The curriculum is designed for students to gain mastery over historical methodology in pursuit of their own areas of inquiry and goals. MA graduates pursue a wide range of professional careers and personal goals.

The course of study requires 30 units, at least half of which must be taken at the 500 level in courses dedicated to graduate students only. The remainder can be at the 300/400 level. Students take core courses in historiography, research methods, and historical writing and presentation. In addition, they choose from a range of chronological, thematic, and methodological courses, including courses in public history, university-level teaching, oral history, and digital humanities. Interested students may take an elective from another department, such as Women and Gender Studies, Art History (museum studies), and Modern Languages and Literatures. Within the History Department, students may choose concentrations in areas such as Colonial and Revolutionary America, Nineteenth Century U.S., Twentieth Century U.S., Recent U.S., U.S. Women's History, Ancient Rome, Medieval Europe, Early Modern Europe, Atlantic World, Modern Europe, British History, Imperial Spain, Modern Russia, Latin America and the Borderlands.

Students have the option of writing a thesis or taking comprehensive exams (in two areas) as their culminating experience. See section 5.4 Culminating Projects (below) for more information about the types of projects students can undertake.

You are strongly encouraged to explore different aspects of historical work during your time in the graduate program. You may undertake internships or research assistantships, work in special collections, serve as an embedded tutor in a classroom, work with a faculty mentor to explore college-level teaching, lead the History Society, publish in or edit the History Journal, and present your work in a variety of venues throughout the course of your graduate career. Because SSU students come from a variety of backgrounds – from recent graduates to mid-career professionals to high school teachers to retirees who finally have an opportunity to explore a passion – you may learn as much from peers as from the faculty who lead your classes.

Who's Who? Administration of Program

Graduate Programs at Sonoma State University are overseen by the Associate Vice President of Academic Programs through the Graduate Studies Office. On the departmental level, the program is administered by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the department's Graduate Committee. Together they make program policies and determine admission to the program.

Graduate Coordinator

The department Graduate Coordinator is the first point of contact for graduate students. The coordinator discusses the program with prospective students, coordinates admission applications, oversees student files, advises students during the first year (eventually in coordination with the student's culminating project advisor), organizes orientation programs for the graduate program, and represents the department on the Graduate Studies Subcommittee of the University's Educational Policy Committee.

Currently the Graduate Coordinator is Dr. Michelle Jolly (ijolly@sonoma.edu).

History Department Graduate Committee

At least three members of the department make up this committee, which works with the Graduate Coordinator to oversee the operation of the program and evaluate applications for admission.

Graduate Advisors

The program employs a system of multiple mentors. At the start of the program, the Graduate Coordinator advises incoming students on the choice of classes, directions for supplementary training, choice of culminating project, etc. As students take classes with various professors and define their interests more clearly, they will select a graduate advisor or advisors to oversee their culminating projects. The advisor(s) keep the Graduate Coordinator informed about student progress through the program. The Graduate Coordinator continues to serve as the contact point for HIST 596, requests for leave of absence or other concerns about progress to degree, and scheduling the thesis defense. The scheduling of comprehensive exams is done through the professor(s) overseeing the exam although the graduate coordinator should be informed.

Graduate Studies Office

The [Graduate Studies Office](#) oversees all graduate programs at Sonoma State. On its website, you will find important forms (GS01 - Advancement to Candidacy; GS02 - Degree Completion; Application to Graduate; Thesis Submission), information about scholarships, and the requirements you must meet in order to submit your master's thesis. In addition, Graduate Studies organizes graduate-student events throughout the year. You are responsible for being familiar with its website and watching your SSU email for updates and invitations from that office.

Admission Requirements, Procedures, and Deadlines

The History Department welcomes applicants from all backgrounds, majors and career/life trajectories. Currently our program includes a robust mix of recent graduates from SSU and other universities, mid-career teachers and other government employees, and late-career or retired adults.

Academic Preparation

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution with a grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 or better in all undergraduate history courses as well as in any previous graduate courses attempted.

All incoming students must have completed five undergraduate courses in history: one term of a U.S. history survey; one term of a World History or Western Civilization survey; and three upper-division courses in any area of history. Interested applicants who have not met this prerequisite should consult with the Graduate Coordinator about which courses to take and whether any prerequisites can be counted toward the M.A. if they are admitted to the program.

Application Requirements

- **Application for admission** to Sonoma State University (<https://www.calstate.edu/apply>)
- **Official transcripts** from all universities attended
- **Two letters of recommendation**, with at least one from someone familiar with the applicant's academic abilities and experiences
- **Statement of purpose**: This statement, of not more than 500 words, should outline the applicant's preparation for the M.A. program in history, reasons for seeking admission to an M.A. program and to Sonoma State in particular, and your fields of interest (e.g. areas, time periods, and or topics you hope to study).
- **Writing sample**: Applicants should submit a paper of at least ten pages, with footnotes and bibliography, that demonstrates your interpretive and analytical skills in history as well as your written communication skills. You may submit a paper from a college course (such as senior seminar), revise a paper, or write a new one.
- Applications are reviewed both by the University Office of Admissions and by the History Department Graduate Committee.

Application and Review Deadlines

Please see the Sonoma State University Admissions website for the latest information on application deadlines and SSU admissions procedures.

<https://admissions.sonoma.edu/how-apply/application-deadlines>

Applications are submitted using the Cal State Apply website:

<https://www.calstate.edu/apply>

Once you have submitted your application, please see this page for next steps:

<https://admissions.sonoma.edu/i-have-applied/graduates>

For Spring 2024 Admission:

Final application deadline	September 30, 2023
FAFSA https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa	The FAFSA is used for scholarships as well as for determining financial aid eligibility. Please fill this out as soon as you know you will be applying to SSU.
Scholarship application deadline	February 1, 2024

For Fall 2024 Admission:

Early admission deadline	December 31, 2023
International Student final application deadline	February 15, 2024
Final application deadline	March 1, 2024
FAFSA https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa	The FAFSA is used for scholarships as well as for determining financial aid eligibility. Please fill this out as soon as you know you will be applying to SSU.
Scholarship application deadline	February 1, 2024

Financial Aid and Scholarships

Graduate school is an investment in your future. As you make plans for your M.A., you should consider the cost of the program and explore opportunities for financial support.

Cost of attendance: <https://financialaid.sonoma.edu/cost-attendance> Choose the academic year you plan to begin to calculate your costs. Please note that graduate students pay a different mandatory registration fee than undergraduates. Graduate

students who are attending full time can expect to complete the History M.A. in about four semesters. Costs may decrease significantly once you finish your coursework and are working on your culminating project (as early as the fourth semester). Students attending part time may have decreased costs per semester but take longer to complete the program.

Funding Opportunities for Graduate Students include financial aid and scholarships: <https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/graduate-studies/funding-opportunities-graduate-students>

Departmental aid: Unfortunately, the History Department does not have supplemental aid for students at this time. Occasionally opportunities may become available for students to work as research assistants, which will be communicated to students by the Graduate Coordinator or individual faculty members.

Campus employment: Many History M.A. students work on campus, particularly in the library (where you will participate in various aspects of library work) and in the LARC tutoring and writing centers (where you can work as a writing instructor or embedded tutor). These jobs can help you improve your history-adjacent skills as well. Job listings may be found on Handshake:

<https://career.sonoma.edu/students/finding-job/work-campus>

Curriculum for the Master's Degree in History

Learning Outcomes

The History Master's Degree prepares students for a wide range of career and personal trajectories. At the completion of your M.A degree, we expect students will understand and be able to do the following:

Broad Area	Learning Outcome
Historical Knowledge	1a. Compare and contrast historiographical traditions, how they change over time, and how they are reflected in non-academic contexts and sources.
	1b. Identify and participate in scholarly (historiographical) conversations, and position your own work in relation to other scholars.
	1c. Recognize significant historical questions in your historical field(s).
	1d. Develop broad and in-depth knowledge about your chosen fields of historical study.
	1e. Demonstrate understanding of differing historical narratives and discuss their unique emphases
Research Skills	2a. Use library and online tools for finding scholarly sources such as books, articles, reviews, documents.
	2b. Evaluate academic and non-academic historical sources for reliability and usefulness.
	2c. Frame historical research questions suited to the scope of a project, availability of materials, and scholarly conversation.
	2d. Recognize uses and pitfalls of different historical methods and types of sources (e.g. oral history, statistical analysis, material culture, etc.),.
	2e. Analyze documents, images, and other primary sources using appropriate historical analysis methods.

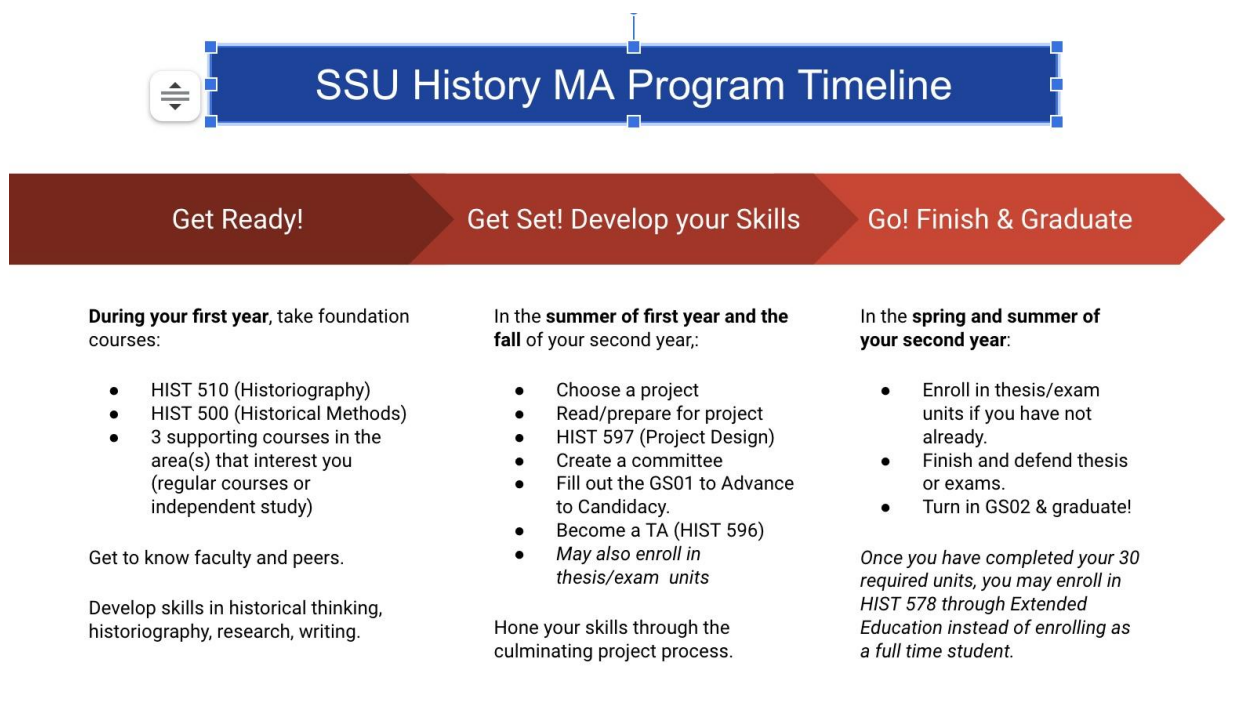
Teamwork & Collaboration	3a. Work effectively with experts (such as librarians, archivists, and faculty members), peers, and colleagues..
Presentation Skills	4a. Write clear prose appropriate to different academic contexts.
	4b. Adapt projects to different scopes and audiences, both academic and non-academic.
	4c. Practice the skill of providing the most accurate, appropriate, and useful historical information and analysis possible to given audiences.
Historical pedagogy	5a. Write and present a lecture for a college course.
	5b. Design and lead a discussion in a college course
	5c. Design a college-level course syllabus in an area of historical interest (students who take the second unit of HIST 596)
	5d. Discuss and apply pedagogical trends and tools in historical college teaching.
Foundations of Professional Identity as a Historian	6a. Discuss the ethics and practices involved in being a history professional.
	6b. Demonstrate awareness of historical and research skills learned in the MA Program and how these can be applied in a variety of career contexts.

Program Overview and Timeline:

The coursework required for an M.A. degree in History at SSU totals a minimum of 30 units, designed to be completed in four semesters of full-time enrollment (8 units per semester). Students take a combination of core courses, electives, and culminating thesis units.

	Title	Units
Core Courses		
HIST 510*	Historiography	4
HIST 500*	Historical Methods	4
HIST 596	College Teaching (Optional second unit available)	1
Elective Courses		
HIST 597	Graduate Writing Proseminar (This course is strongly encouraged for all graduate students)	4
Electives	Students may choose courses in History at the 300, 400, or 500 level to complete the electives for the program. In consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, students may also count up to one course from another department toward the required units.	11
Culminating Project		
Master's Thesis OR Comprehensive Exams	HIST 599, Master's Degree Thesis Research OR HIST 598 Comprehensive Exam Reading & Research	6 6 (3 units to be taken twice)

*The Graduate Writing Requirement (GWAR), if required by the CSU, is satisfied by successful completion of HIST 500 or HIST 510.



Courses and Course Descriptions

(Consult the SSU Course Catalog <https://catalog.sonoma.edu/> for course descriptions of 300/400 level elective courses. Note: These course descriptions are changing slightly in 2023/24. The new descriptions are given below.)

History 500. Historical Methods (4 units. Offered each spring)

Workshop course in historical analysis and research methodologies. Required for graduate students in History. Open to students in Cultural Resources Management, Public Administration, and advanced undergraduates with permission of the instructor.

History 510. Historiography (4 units. Offered each fall)

This graduate course introduces students to historiography, one of the basic tools of professional historians. Through extensive reading, students will learn to identify historical arguments, frame historical questions, and position their questions in relation to historical literatures. Required for graduate students in History. May be repeated for credit.

History 578. Project Continuation. (1-3 units. May be taken through Extended Education)

Designed for students working on their culminating project who have otherwise completed all graduate coursework toward the degree. This course **cannot** be applied toward the minimum number of units required for completion of the master's degree. Prerequisite: permission of the graduate coordinator. Cr/NC only.

History 593. Graduate Internship. (2-4 units)

Experience in professional history, typically in museums, historical societies, and other public history settings. Students will produce a professional product such as a curated exhibit, research report, course syllabus, finding aid, or oral histories.

History 595. Special Studies. (1-4 units)

Individualized studies in historical topics, themes, periods, and/or areas of study beyond the scope of the established curriculum. Prerequisites: Graduate status and prior arrangement with faculty sponsor and departmental Graduate Coordinator.

History 596. College Teaching (1 - 2 units. Offered each semester as needed.)

Directed participation and experience in teaching history at the college level. Students in this course will work with a mentor to learn and apply appropriate pedagogies to preparing a lecture and leading a discussion. Attention will also be given to strategies for historical presentations to non-academic audiences. Prerequisite: advanced graduate status, and consent of the graduate coordinator. Students normally fulfill this requirement in their second year of the program.

History 597. Graduate Writing Proseminar. (4 units. Usually offered in fall.)

This advanced graduate workshop focuses on writing for academic and professional audiences and guides students through the first stages of their culminating MA projects. Strongly recommended for History MA students. Other MA students may enroll with permission of the instructor.

History 598. Comprehensive Examination Reading and Research. (3 units per exam for a total of 6 units)

Directed reading and research. Open only to graduate students with classified standing in History who have selected the comprehensive examination option for the M.A. degree. Preferably taken for credit during the semester in which the comprehensive examination is scheduled. A student takes two of these classes, one in each comprehensive exam area. May be taken consecutively or concurrently although it is strongly advised that they be taken consecutively. Prerequisite: classified graduate standing in history comprehensive option for the M.A. GS01 Advancement to Candidacy form must have been filed in the Graduate Studies Office.

History 599. Master's Degree Thesis Research. (6 units)

Extensive individual research and writing project under the direction of the students' thesis committee chair. Students should time the taking of this course with their graduate advisor to maximize time devoted to thesis research and writing. Notify the departmental Graduate Coordinator of registration for this course. Prerequisite: classified graduate standing in the history thesis option for the M.A.. GS01 Advancement to Candidacy form must have been filed in the Graduate Studies Office.

Elective Courses:

In choosing elective courses, students should carefully consider their goals in undertaking an M.A. program and select courses that will advance their goals and project. In particular,

- Students should plan to take *at least* one course in the chronological and regional area they plan to focus on, if at all possible with the professor(s) who will serve as thesis advisor(s). If no regular courses are available in an area, students may discuss the possibility of taking a Special Studies course with the Graduate Coordinator and relevant professor(s).
- Students may count one relevant elective course from another department toward the required units, after consulting with the Graduate Coordinator and their thesis advisor. (For example, a student doing public history might want to take a museum studies course in Art History, or a student studying women's and gender history might want to take a course from WGS.)
- Students may wish to hone their practical history skills through courses such as
 - History 360 Public History (4 units)
 - History 393 Historical Source Lab: Digitizing the Past (4 units)
 - History 496 History Journal (2 units)
 - History 593 Graduate Internship (2-4 units)
- Students may also wish to develop language skills by taking courses in Modern Languages or on other campuses. However, language courses will not count toward the required 30 unit minimum for the History M.A. degree.

Graduate Credit in Undergraduate Courses (300/400 level)

Graduate students enrolled in 300/400 level courses should meet with the professor in the first week of class to outline the expectations for the course. As a rule, graduate students are expected to:

- Complete all requirements specified on the syllabus for undergraduates taking the course unless certain assignments are deemed inappropriate or unnecessary for graduate students, and
- Complete a substantial project such as a primary-source research paper, thesis chapter, or historiographical essay. The project should focus on developing graduate-level skills in historiography, historical research, analysis, etc. Students may be asked to present this work to the class.

Culminating Projects

All students in the M.A. program complete a culminating project, but what you choose to do will depend on several factors. You should begin by considering your area of focus and whether you will do a thesis or take comprehensive exams at the time you enter the program, but you make the final decision when you file for candidacy, usually during your third semester. Your decision should be based on your goals and interests, consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, and consultation with the faculty advisor(s) who specializes in your area of interest.

Thesis or Exams?

A master's thesis involves a deep dive into a narrow area of specialization. It is an opportunity to learn how to do professional-level research using primary sources, to make an original contribution to the field of history, and to learn how to present your own research to academic and other audiences.

By contrast, comprehensive exams involve reading widely in the scholarly secondary source literature of two fields. Based on your reading, you write about the historiography of those fields, learn how to dig into the literature of a field on your own, and consider how to present historical information not just to your professors but to non-academic audiences (such as students).

Both the master's thesis and the exams require a lot of energy and commitment to complete. (In fact, traditionally, doing exams has taken students longer to finish than the thesis at SSU.) If you are interested in a specific topic (women in gold rush the American West; surfers in the South, etc.) or in doing primary source research, the thesis is probably for you. If you are interested in reading more broadly (19th century US history; Late Antiquity; etc.), or would like to learn more about how to build a bibliography and master a field so you could teach it, you might prefer to undertake exams.

There is no right approach to the culminating project; if you are not sure what you want to do, please consult with the Graduate Coordinator and your professors.

Thesis Option

Students choosing the thesis project will write an extended paper that poses a historical question, engages with the relevant historical literature, and analyzes primary sources (normally in the original language) to make an original historical argument. This work may be presented in different formats, depending on the project, **as determined in consultation with the student, faculty mentor, and graduate coordinator.**

Thesis Committee

The M.A. thesis is supervised by a thesis committee consisting of three faculty members, one of whom is the thesis advisor whose area of specialization corresponds to the area of the thesis. The thesis advisor must be a tenure/tenure-track member of the Sonoma State faculty. Two other members of

the thesis committee should be chosen by the student in consultation with the faculty advisor. Committee members other than the thesis advisor may be members of the History faculty, members of other departments, or adjunct faculty. One member of the committee may be from outside of the university if appropriate.

Thesis Defense

When the student has completed the thesis and members of the committee have endorsed it, a two-hour defense is scheduled through the Graduate Coordinator. M.A. defenses are open to the public. The student presents a 20-30 minute overview of the thesis, highlighting the research questions, significance, sources, and main arguments. The committee and members of the public then have an opportunity to pose questions and discuss the project with the student.

Thesis Requirements

A minimum grade of B on the thesis is required.

Students must format their thesis following the guidelines for Master's Theses and Projects available from the Graduate Studies Office.

https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/sites/academicaffairs/files/ssu_thesis_guidelines_2023-02.pdf

The final thesis must be submitted to the Graduate Studies Office for final review and approval before the thesis is considered complete.

<https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/student-success/graduate-programs/thesis-review>

Thesis Formats

The length and style of the thesis varies depending on the topic and instructor. Appropriate thesis formats may include:

- A multi-chapter (or traditional) thesis of 15,000-25,000 words, which should include an introduction, 2-3 chapters, and a brief conclusion.
- An article-based (or scaffolded) thesis where the student writes a preparatory historiography essay of approximately 5000 words followed by an article length thesis of 8000-10,000 words. The thesis should follow the style format of an appropriate journal and be submission ready when complete.
- A public history thesis project, which should include an extended essay of 6000-8000 words accompanying a public history project such as an exhibit, oral history project, etc. that the student has curated. Students would likely have an outside committee member with whom they would be working on the public history component.

- A curriculum thesis, which should include an extended essay of 6000-8000 words accompanied by curriculum materials that build on the original research. These materials might include a teaching trunk, lesson plans, course designs, etc. Students would likely have an outside committee member with whom they would be working on curriculum.

Comprehensive Exam Option

Students choosing the comprehensive exam option must prepare two areas of concentration and take an exam in each. Each exam is based on a set reading list of 25 books or mix of books and articles totalling approximately 5000 - 7500 pages. Ordinarily, the exam reading list will add to, rather than include, preparatory reading the student may have done in classes.

The Comprehensive Exam Option is supervised by two professors, one in each area.

Examining Professors

The examining professors will be specialists in the areas of specialization chosen by the student and will ordinarily be tenure/tenure-track members of the Sonoma State History faculty.

Exam Preparation and Registration

Students register for a 3-unit course (HIST 598) for each field exam (total of 6 units). During the semester the student is enrolled in 598, they will meet with the examining professor to develop the reading list, discuss the assigned reading, and write essays (formal or informal) in preparation for the exam. The tasks of building the bibliography and writing are an integral part of exam preparation.

Standard Examination Format

For each field, students will write a take-home exam over a period of 5 days. Students will typically have a choice of questions, focused on historiography, and be expected to produce two - three well-crafted historiographical essays with footnotes (approximately 2500 words each). Students may be asked to write a teaching-related essay or syllabus based on the reading materials in lieu of one of the questions.

Alternative Teaching Exam Option: For ONE of their exams, students may elect to do a College Teaching Exam Option. During the exam period in lieu of the historiographical essays, students choosing this option will create a teaching portfolio based on the field, including a syllabus, two lectures, and other teaching-related components such as an annotated bibliography demonstrating how to find and incorporate new information into their curriculum.

Areas of Concentration for Comprehensive Exams*

Rome (Republic and Empire)
Late Antiquity
Medieval Europe
Early Modern Europe
Modern Europe
Early Modern Britain
Modern Britain
Atlantic World
Imperial Spain
Colonial America
Revolutionary and Early Republic America
Nineteenth Century US
Twentieth Century US
Recent US (1945-present)
Colonial Latin America
Latin America Since Independence
Modern Russia

*The areas for Comprehensive Exams should be appropriately broad, and they are subject to change based on the availability of faculty. If you are interested in an area that does not appear on this list, please consult the Graduate Coordinator.

Policies and Requirements

Good Academic Standing and Grade Requirements

Minimum Grade Requirements

A grade of at least B-minus must be earned in any course for it to be counted toward the M.A. degree in History. The Graduate Coordinator, in consultation with the Graduate Committee and the student's thesis or exam supervisors, reviews student progress.

On rare occasions, the Graduate Committee may elect to allow a student to retake a course. Students who are struggling to meet the GPA requirement should consult the departmental Graduate Coordinator.

A student whose GPA in the graduate program falls below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. If the student's GPA in the graduate program remains below 3.0 for a second semester, they will be subject to disqualification from the program and the university.

Enrollment

Full-time enrollment for a graduate student at SSU is 8 units; however, some financial aid programs may require enrollment in 12 units. In choosing how many units to take, students should bear in mind that graduate courses require significantly more work than undergraduate courses. Many students in our program choose to enroll part time in order to accommodate work or family responsibilities. In any case, a student should not enroll for more than 12 units per semester.

If a student has completed all of the required units for the program but is still working on the thesis or final comprehensive exam, enrollment requirements are as follows:

- Students have one “grace period” semester in which they do not need to register for any units and will still be able to access email, library services, and other SSU services.
- Students may then enroll for 1 unit of HIST 578, Project Continuation, through Extended Education, each semester for an additional two semesters.
- If the culminating project is not completed within 4 semesters of Advancement to Candidacy, the students must re-enroll in HIST 599 or HIST 598, whichever is appropriate to their project.
- For example:
 - Sally Sonoma enrolled in HIST 599 in Fall 2023, having completed all the other requirements for the program. She is still working on her thesis in Spring 2024, but she has a “grace period,” so she does not enroll in any units.

- Sally Sonoma continues to work on her thesis. She does not need to enroll in Summer units, but in Fall 2024, she enrolls in HIST 578 project continuation.
- Due to complications in her research, Sally Sonoma is still working on her thesis – she enrolls in a second semester of HIST 578 in Spring 2025.
- Hopefully by this time, all of her thesis issues are resolved. But if Sally Sonoma continues to work on her project, she will need to re-enroll in HIST 599 in Fall 2025.

Progress to Degree and Degree Completion

Time to complete the degree may vary depending on whether a student carries a part time, full time (8 units), or more than full time load.

CSU regulations require the degree to be completed in four semesters after Advancement to Candidacy (filing the GS01 form) AND in not more than seven years from the beginning of the graduate program. Courses older than seven years must be retaken or revalidated. Revalidation requires demonstration of the student's continued competence in the course. This revalidation may entail writing an exam or paper, covering the material in the culminating project, or retaking the course. This assessment is made by the instructor of record or, if that faculty member is no longer at the university, the Graduate Coordinator.

Absences from the University/Leaves of Absence

It is important that you be continuously enrolled in the program in order to maintain access to university services including email, library services, and faculty. If you need to interrupt your studies, you must confer with the Graduate Coordinator about filing a formal leave of absence. If you are absent for two semesters without a formal leave of absence, you will be dropped from the program and will need to reapply to the university and the program. Please note that a leave of absence does not stop the clock on time to degree. You still need to complete your culminating project within four semesters of Advancement to Candidacy, and your degree within seven years of your original enrollment date.

Paperwork

Advancement to Candidacy

Students are advanced to candidacy when their coursework is largely complete, they have met the CSU GVAR requirement (if in effect), and they begin preparing for their culminating project. This is usually in the third semester of graduate work. Advancement to candidacy requires:

- For thesis students: the acceptance of a thesis project design by the three members of the thesis committee. The project design is usually 12-15

pages outlining the research questions, historiographical context, sources and methods, and significance.

- For comprehensive exam students: an approved set of exam topics
- Completion of the [History GS01 form](#) signed by the Graduate Coordinator and committee members (or examining professors).

Application to Graduate

Students must complete the [Master's Degree Graduation Application form](#) by the appropriate deadline (see the Graduate Studies page – usually no later than the beginning of the semester the student expects to graduate).

If you need to postpone your graduate date, no problem. Fill out the [Graduation Postponement form](#), available on the Graduate Studies page.

Completion of Requirements Paperwork

When all requirements are complete – exams taken and passed, or thesis completed, defended, and revised – the student must file the [GS02 form](#). For thesis students, the form is typically signed after the defense, but if substantial revisions are required, the thesis advisor may wait to sign the form until the revisions are completed satisfactorily. For comprehensive exam students, the GS02 form is signed and filed when both exams have been completed.

Thesis students must also file the completed thesis, [thesis signature form, and master's thesis submission agreement with the Graduate Studies Office. The office will review](#) the formatting of the thesis to be sure it complies with the requirements. Any required revisions to the format must be completed before you can graduate.

Making the Most of your M.A. Degree Program

The hallmark of a graduate program, as compared to an undergraduate program, is the emphasis on the students' growth as a professional. Instead of soaking up information presented to you by others, you should expect to take the lead – analyzing texts, leading discussions, engaging in scholarly conversation with other historians, writing lectures and discussions, conducting original research, and developing your skills and knowledge as a life-long historian. Of course, no one enters the program knowing how to do all this, so your courses and assignments will help you build these skills. However, you should also be proactive in looking for opportunities to build and stretch your abilities and thinking about how you would like to use them when you have earned your degree.

Career and Personal Goals

Earning an M.A. in history can take you in a variety of personal and career directions. In addition to knowing how to learn about and think about the past, historians have outstanding skills in written and oral communication, research (including using databases and other technology), teamwork and collaboration, and more. Depending on your interests, you can develop these skills during your time in the M.A. program.

Whether you are in the program because you are exploring possible futures, because you want to make a career change or build your skills for the career you already have, or because you are finally able to make time to pursue a passion, we encourage you to go beyond the classes you take and take the initiative in your own history education.

Building Your Skills

Take a look at the [Learning Outcomes](#) for the History M.A. degree. This gives you a list of the core skills we expect History M.A. students to master. We recommend you use these learning outcomes in three ways:

First, use this list to be cognizant of what you are learning. In each graduate course, you may be learning content (such as the ins and outs of the French Revolution), but you will also be learning research, communication, teaching, and collaboration skills. Be conscious of how and when your assignments focus on these skills, and use those opportunities to practice them.

Second, look for areas where you'd like more practice. Do you feel technologically challenged? Look for classmates or professors or online tutorials to help you become confident at using the tools of your trade – databases, research tools, library catalogs, presentation applications, etc. Do you feel like your writing could use a boost? Rather than suffer in silence, reach out to the Writing Center or to your professors for help.

Finally, look for areas you especially enjoy and find opportunities to do more. For example:

- Are you interested in teaching, either at the K-12 or the college level? Look for ways to build your skills and experience in teaching history (or other information) to different kinds of audiences. Learn more about historical thinking – what it is, and how to help others learn to do it. Check out the LARC tutoring and writing centers for training and jobs as a tutor. Take the second unit of HIST 596 to learn more about college teaching. Look for internship or TA opportunities at SSU or SRJC. Shadow a teacher or professor. Consider ways that teaching-related skills might be useful outside the traditional classroom – such as museum education. Keep talking to professionals about how they think about and do teaching.
- Do you love research? Is nothing more fun than delving into archives, oral history projects, or other primary sources and analyzing the evidence in search of answers to questions? Consider how you can build these skills! Can you work with a professor as a research assistant? Work, or intern, in SSU's special collections or another archive? Practice your skills using online databases and other research tools? Take an oral history training online? Or look for SSU courses in different types of historical research methods (e.g. public history). Look for graduate student conferences where you can present your work and get feedback. Consider how you might be able to use research skills in a range of jobs – public history, academic research, as a data analyst, etc.
- Are you a writer at heart? Is crafting a good narrative what gets you out of bed in the morning? How can you improve your writing craft? Consider working at the Writing Center. Join the History Journal editorial team. Find a writing group of other history students. Look for opportunities to share your writing such as the History Journal or conferences. Consider alternative formats for presenting your work, such as podcasts, posters, public presentations, and more.
- Do you just love reading and learning about the past? Maybe this is a passion and an avocation for you more than a career direction. You might want to focus on learning how to pursue your interests more effectively. How do you find new books or articles? How do you distinguish “good” history from “bad”? What are the “secret questions” trained historians ask? How can you keep connected to the field through history societies, journals, and more?

Language Study

Knowledge of a language other than English is not required for entrance to or completion of the M.A. program in History at SSU.

However, if you plan to do thesis research on the history of non-English-speaking people, we strongly recommend that you have a reading knowledge of the appropriate language(s).

Also, if you plan to pursue a Ph.D. you will likely need to be able to pass an exam in one or more languages other than English. Check with the schools you are interested in applying to for more information.

Sonoma State currently offers coursework in Spanish, French, and German on campus. However, you can also study a wide variety of languages through [CSU Fully Online](#). This program allows you to take online courses from any CSU campus. In addition, SSU has a relationship with Coursera. So whether your preferred language is French, Arabic, Mandarin, or Latin, you have access to courses.

Please check with your professors as early as possible for recommendations about what languages you might need and how best to prepare. Remember that studying a modern language might not be enough if you are working with documents from several hundred years ago. You might need additional training.

Public History

Students interested in public history can build their skills through a variety of courses and experiences in or related to the SSU M.A. program.

History courses

The History department offers several courses that focus on public history. These include, but are not limited to:

- HIST 360 Public History (4 units)
- HIST 393 Historical Source Lab: Digitizing the Past (4 units)
- HIST 472 California History I (4 units)
- HIST 496 History Journal (2 units)

The Art History department at SSU offers a series of courses in museum studies:

- ARTH 467 Museum Collections Management (3 units)
- ARTH 468 Curatorial Practice (3 units)
- ARTH 493 Museum and Gallery Management (3 units)
- ARTH 494 Museum Theory and Practice (3 units)

Students may find courses in the Anthropology department's Cultural Resources Management program useful, notably:

- ANTH 500 Proseminar (4 units)

Because public history skills must be built on top of basic history skills, students studying public history may wish to take more electives than those usually required for the program. You should expect to take HIST 500 and 510, HIST 597, and at least two of your electives in the history department.

Students should look for opportunities to do public-history related internships or research assistantships. Please consult with the Graduate Coordinator, the History department internship advisor, and Professor Estes for ideas and opportunities.

The Public History thesis option is tailored for students interested in public history. Please consult the Graduate Coordinator and Professor Estes as early as possible regarding the logistics of doing a thesis of this nature.

College Teaching

Many students entering the M.A. program are interested in the possibility of teaching at the community college level. The History department offers some opportunities to learn more about the pedagogy of teaching history at the college level. However, a few caveats are in order.

Don't quit your day job

Four-year colleges and universities (like Sonoma State or UC Berkeley) almost exclusively require that full time and part time professors or instructors hold a Ph.D. or be advanced Ph.D. candidates. Community colleges have historically hired primarily faculty with a completed M.A. degree. However, for the past two decades, many Ph.D. holders, unable to land jobs at cash-strapped or down-sizing four-year colleges, have been competing for jobs at community colleges. As a result, these programs – also cash-strapped and down-sizing – have hired fewer M.A. degree holders. Nevertheless, some graduates from our program have been able to land jobs as part-time lecturers at community colleges in our area.

The more you teach, the more qualified you are to get more work. So it is worth looking for opportunities to hone your skills, shadow a class, and design and teach a course of your own. You should also work on developing your networking with community college faculty in your area.

Courses and Training

All History M.A. students are required to take HIST 596 in their second year (unless you are a full-time history teacher). In this course, you will shadow a faculty member as they teach a survey course in either U.S. or World history. You will have a chance to learn how and why they structure and teach the course as they do, to write and present a lecture, and to lead at least one discussion. You will also be asked to participate in the course instruction in other ways.

You can choose to take HIST 596 for a second unit that will focus on reading in Historical thinking and pedagogy and college pedagogy. You will develop a syllabus for a college-level class in an area of interest.

In addition, the LARC tutoring center hires and trains M.A. students to work as embedded tutors in History survey courses. You can do this any time, but it is an especially good opportunity in your first year.

SSU departments occasionally hire M.A. students from other departments as teaching assistants. Watch your email and Handshake for opportunities.

Internships and Research Assistantships

Through HIST 593, you may be able to earn credit for an internship in public history that allows you to develop and curate a project at a museum, in a history society, or as part of an oral history project. On occasion, students have also been able to do an internship focused on archival practices in the Special Collections department at the SSU library. See the Graduate Coordinator for more information.

To learn more about internships, please visit our webpage <https://history.sonoma.edu/internships> and contact the Internship coordinator and departmental Graduate Coordinator.

Faculty occasionally hire M.A. students to work as research assistants for the faculty member's research project. This work provides an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member, learn academic research skills, and contribute to an ongoing project. Please check your SSU email for opportunities and contact the Graduate Coordinator with any questions.

Presenting Your Work

One of the most important skills you should take away from the M.A. program is the ability to articulate and present your research in different ways to a variety of audiences. Your coursework will require you to write and speak in a variety of formats including historiographical essays, precis, research essays, lectures, presentations, and discussion leading.

We strongly encourage every student to present your work at least once to a professional audience outside the History department. You can do this in a variety of ways, not limited to:

Conferences

Academic conferences often welcome graduate students to present their work. At history conferences, the format is usually a panel of presenters. Each person on the panel has about 15 minutes to read a paper (usually accompanied by a slide presentation). Then a moderator provides feedback and questions before opening the floor to the audience for questions. Some conferences also host poster sessions where presenters create a large poster that showcases their research and key arguments which is then part of a large forum where viewers can walk around, read the posters, and ask questions of presenters. These conferences are great places to experience part of the academic scene, network, and get feedback on your work.

Graduate student-specific conferences are organized for (and often by) graduate students. Papers by M.A. students are welcome, and you get a chance to meet other graduate students in a collegial setting. Several CSU and UC campuses hold these events.

Professional conferences are annual conferences organized by professional history organizations for scholars at all levels. Some are enormous (AHA brings together 10,000 people); others are much smaller (the Big Berks brings together 500 people every three years). Papers by graduate students are often welcome – the Call for Papers (CFP) usually indicates this. One annual conference that is generally nearby, friendly, and open to graduate students in all fields is the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association which meets annually in early August. The Call for Papers comes out in the fall and is due in January.

How do you find out about conferences in time to apply to present? Sign up for H-Grad and watch the announcements. Ask your professors which historical societies are specific to your area of interest and look at their webpage for information about the annual conference. Watch your SSU email for announcements as well.

Sonoma State Events

Each spring semester, SSU hosts a series of events that allow graduate students to present their work to peers and the public. These include:

3-minute Grad Slam: Students present their research (ongoing or completed) in a 3-minute talk using one slide. This is a competition. Successful students move on to the CSU competition, and winners receive monetary prizes!

Graduate Research Symposium: Graduate student and faculty research sits side-by-side in a poster session presentation of ongoing or completed research in the Student Center Ballroom.

Social Action Student Symposium (SASSy): Graduate and undergraduate students present papers in a panel format at a half-day conference showcasing work related to social action or social justice issues. We regularly have had a panel of history graduate students presenting at this event, giving great papers and getting thoughtful feedback from faculty commentators.

Guest lecture: If you have a connection to your local history society, museum, state park, or school, you may be able to arrange to give a talk or a guest lecture on your research. This can be a great way to connect to non-academic audiences.

Where will you present YOUR work?

History Society

The Sonoma State History Society is a student-run organization, which promotes and celebrates the study of history and its related fields. Members organize and participate in various on- and off-campus activities, including presentations and lectures, field trips, historical movie nights, study groups, and other social events intended to bring together anyone interested in the study of the past. Graduate students often play a key role in the leadership of the History Society.

Resources

SSU library and librarians

The primary tools and best assistants for historical research are in the library. Not only will you find books, journals, and databases to access the world of historical scholarship, but you will find experts in navigating them. Take the initiative and study all of the resources available on the [library website](https://library.sonoma.edu/) <https://library.sonoma.edu/>. Schedule a meeting with [Hilary Smith, the History subject librarian and director of Special Collections](mailto:hilary.smith@sonoma.edu), at hilary.smith@sonoma.edu to get to know her and how she can help you learn about library resources, technologies, and ways of accessing the past. Learn how the library and librarians can be a springboard to learning about – and evaluating – other historical resources available to you online.

History Department Office

If you have questions about logistics of the history department – the website, the class schedule, how to reach faculty members, where to find offices, how to manage a job you've gotten through history – your first stop is the History Department Office. Located on the 3rd floor of Stevenson Hall in room 3715, 707-664-2313. You can also reach the Department Academic Coordinator, Kimberly Kaido-Alvarez at kaidoalv@sonoma.edu

The department mailing address is Department of History, 1801 E. Cotati Ave., Rohnert Park, CA 94903.

Graduate Studies Office

This office supports all SSU graduate students. They can answer questions about forms, financial support, thesis revision, and more. The administrative analyst in that office is Megan Kane, whom you can reach at 707-664-4286 or at kanem@sonoma.edu. You can reach the office at <https://academicaffairs.sonoma.edu/graduate-studies>.

LARC and Writing Center

The Learning and Academic Resource Center (LARC) <https://larc.sonoma.edu/> is located on the first floor of the library. They offer tutoring and writing support for all students (including graduate students), and they also hire graduate students to work as tutors and writing tutors. You can learn more about working at the LARC on their website. Also feel free to contact Lorian Negri, the LARC Director, at 707-664-2629 or at loriann.negri@sonoma.edu with any questions.

Jobs on campus

Many History M.A. students work on campus, particularly in the library (where you will participate in various aspects of library work) and in the LARC tutoring and writing centers (where you can work as a writing instructor or embedded tutor). These jobs can help you improve your history-adjacent skills as well. Job listings may be found on Handshake: <https://career.sonoma.edu/students/finding-job/work-campus>

ORSP/Student Research Office

The Office of Student Research offers support for students at all levels of their research from finding funding to presenting their work. Check out their website at <https://orsp.sonoma.edu/student-research>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

A service available to all SSU students, the Counseling and Psychological Services Center offers crisis counseling 24/7 as well as individual counseling and a variety of support groups. If you are in crisis or struggling with stress, ADHD, grief, family issues, anxiety, or just want to learn to be more mindful, check out their webpage here: <https://caps.sonoma.edu/>

Disability Services

Disability Services for Students (DSS) ensures equal access to students with disabilities by providing appropriate accommodations and specialized support services, and by providing guidance to faculty, staff, and the campus community. You can visit them on the first floor of Schulz (next to the IT desk) or online at <https://dss.sonoma.edu/>

Basic Needs

SSU also offers a variety of programs to support students who need assistance with housing, food, or even short term cash problems. You can see what programs are available at <https://studentaffairs.sonoma.edu/basicneeds>

If you need assistance or have concerns or questions that are not addressed here, please reach out to the Graduate Coordinator at jolly@sonoma.edu.

Faculty

Stephen Bittner

Ph.D., University of Chicago, Modern Russian and Modern European History

Samuel Cohen

Ph.D. University of Toronto, Late Antiquity, Roman History, Medieval Europe

Steve Estes

Ph.D., University of North Carolina, 20th-21st century U.S. History

Mary Halavais

Ph.D., UC San Diego, Early Modern Europe, Spain/Latin America, minority history

Michelle Jolly

Ph.D., UC San Diego, U.S. Colonial and Antebellum, U.S. Civil War, Western U.S., California, U.S. Women

Amy Kittelstrom

Ph.D., Boston University, Modern U.S., transnational intellectual culture

James Mestaz

Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago, Latin American History, Latinx Studies, World History

Kathleen Noonan

Ph.D., UC Santa Barbara, Early Modern Europe, Britain and Ireland, Colonial America, Atlantic World