

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

Revised July 2022

Sonoma State University  
Department of History  
Master of Arts Program

**Program Description**

The History MA program provides a broad context for understanding the human experience in the past, and the curriculum is designed for the student to gain mastery over historical methodology and areas of inquiry. Furthermore, the program stresses the ability to apply the skills learned to allow students to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous. This is especially important since 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 choose from a range of chronological, thematic and methodological courses. Concentrations in one or more areas of focus include 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, Asia and the Pacific Rim, Latin America and the Borderlands. Students have the option of doing a thesis or taking comprehensive exams in two areas as their culminating experience.

**Administration of Program:**

Graduate Programs at Sonoma State University are administered by the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs. On the departmental level, the program is administered by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the Department's Graduate Committee. Together they determine admission to the program and make policy on the departmental level.

**Graduate Coordinator**

The faculty coordinator of the graduate program is the first contact person for graduate students. The coordinator discusses the program with prospective students, coordinates admission applications, oversees student files, advises students (eventually in conjunction with the student's committee chair), and represents the department on the Graduate Studies Subcommittee of the University's Educational Policy Committee.

**History Department Graduate Committee**

At least three members of the department's faculty are on the committee that works with the graduate director to oversee the operation of the program.

**Graduate Advisors**

The program employs a system of multiple mentors. At the start of the program, the Graduate Coordinator acts as advisor to the student on choice of classes, whether to pursue the thesis option or comprehensive exam option. As a student takes classes with various professors and interests are more clearly defined, the student will select a graduate advisor, usually the thesis chair or a specialist in one of the student's comprehensive exam areas. The new advisor keeps the Graduate Coordinator informed as to the progress of the students through the program. Requests for a leave of absence or for a thesis defense are done in consultation with the student's advisor and the Graduate Coordinator. The scheduling of comprehensive exam is done through the professor overseeing the exam, although the graduate coordinator should be informed.

### **Admission Criteria and Requirements**

- BA from an accredited institution with a major history. Those applicants who did not major in history must have five undergraduate courses in history or which one must be part of a US history survey; one term of a World History or Western Civilization survey; and three upper division courses.
- 3.0 GPA in undergraduate history courses
- GRE (general test only)
- Two letters of recommendation
- Statement of purpose: a statement of not more than 500 words outlining the candidate's preparation for the MA program in history, fields of interest, and reasons for seeking admission to the graduate program in history at Sonoma State.
- Writing sample of at least ten pages with footnotes and bibliography that demonstrates the student's interpretive and analytical skills in history as well as written communication skills.

Application Deadline: February 15

### **CURRICULUM:**

Masters Degree Requirements (30 units: at least 15 at 500 level, remainder at 300/400/500)

The coursework required for a M.A. degree in history at SSU totals a minimum of 30 units. It is designed to be completed in four semesters of full time enrollment. Given that a number of our students enroll only part time, the completion time for a significant number can exceed four semesters. CSU regulations require the degree to be completed in seven years.

#### Required Courses:

Elective courses at the 300/400/500 level	15 units
Required seminars (History 500 and History 510)	8 units
Thesis or exam preparation (History 599 or History 598)	6 units
<u>Teaching Assistant (History 596)</u>	<u>1 unit</u>
	30 units

#### Additional Elective Courses:

History 593 Graduate Internship (2-4 units)

History 595 Special Studies (4 units)

History 597 Graduate Seminar: Historical Themes and Issues (4 units)

**Course Descriptions:** (consult the SSU Course Catalog for course descriptions for 300/400 level courses)

#### **History 500. Historical Methods** (4 units)

Workshop course providing practice in archival research, oral history, descriptive statistics, cultural material analysis and other techniques.

#### **History 510. Graduate Proseminar** (4 units)

Readings and projects on topics within a common frame of reference, as arranged by instructor and participating students.

**HIST 578. Project Continuation (1-3 units)**

Designed for students working on their thesis or master's project but who have otherwise completed all graduate coursework toward their degree. This course **cannot** be applied toward the minimum number of units needed for completion of the master's degree. Prerequisite: permission of the graduate coordinator. Cr/NC only. Can be taken through Extended Education.

**HIST 593. Graduate Internship (2-4)**

Experience in professional history, typically in museums, historical societies, and other public history settings, as well as junior college internship programs. Students will produce a professional product, such as a curated exhibit; a research report; a course syllabus; or finding aid. Cr/NC only.

**HIST 595. Special Studies (1-4 units)**

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

**HIST 596. Research and Teaching Assistant (1-2 units)**

Directed participation and experience in developing teaching methods, course organization, and research techniques. Prerequisite: advanced graduate status, and consent of the graduate coordinator and department chair. Students normally fulfill this requirement in their second year of the program.

**HIST 597. Graduate Seminar: Historical Themes and Issues (3-4 units)**

Advanced studies and/or research projects relating to students' theses or comprehensive exam topics. Emphasis upon professional historical writing. Prerequisite: completion of 15 graduate course units and admission to candidacy. The program strongly urges students to take this course whether they have chosen the thesis option or comprehensive exam option.

**HIST 598. Comprehensive Examination Reading and Research (3units/area of concentration 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 examinations are 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 the history comprehensive option for the M.A. GSO1 Advancement to Candidacy form must have been filed in the Graduate Studies Office.

**HIST 599. Masters Degree Thesis Research (6 units)**

Extensive individual research and writing project under the direction of the student's 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 graduate coordinator of registration for this course.

Prerequisite: classified graduate standing in the history thesis option for the M.A. and an authorized GSO1 Advancement to Candidacy form.

## **Guidelines for Graduate Credit in Undergraduate Courses (300-400 level).**

Graduate Students enrolled in 300/400 level courses must:

- Complete all requirements specified on the syllabus for undergraduates taking the course for 300/400 level credit unless certain assignments are deemed inappropriate or unnecessary for graduate students.
- Complete additional reading and writing assignments, so that the sum of what is required of the graduate student (in pages of reading and writing) exceeds what is required of the undergraduate student in the same course. It is also understood that this relative measure should generate a workload for the graduate students that includes at least 1500 pages of reading and 15 pages of writing (exams not included) for a one semester, four-credit course.

A grade of at least B-minus must be earned in any course for it to be counted towards the MA degree in History. The Graduate Coordinator and Graduate Committee in consultation with the student's advisory reviews student progress.

## **II. General Requirements**

### **A. Admission to the Program**

Students must apply to the University and separately to the History Department. The University application is done through CSU Apply (<https://www2.calstate.edu/apply>). In addition to materials required by the University, students must submit transcripts, the departmental application form (available on the department's website), writing sample, letters of recommendation, and statement of purpose directly to the department. The application fee should be sent to Admissions and Records.

### **B. University Catalog**

Students entering degree programs at SSU must acquaint themselves thoroughly with the university catalog, especially the section about academic procedures involving graduate students. Each student is responsible for understanding program requirements and for initiating appropriate action when required to fulfill those requirements.

### **Grade Point Average**

Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA in course work. No student may begin his or her culminating track (thesis or comprehensive exams) without a 3.0 or better GPA. The Graduate Committee reviews student progress on a regular schedule and may drop from the program a student who receives a grade below B- or whose GPA falls below 3.0. On rare occasions, the Graduate Committee may elect to allow a student to retake a course. Students should consult the Graduate Coordinator.

### **Candidacy**

A student admitted to graduate study should file the GSO 1 form upon advancement to candidacy (see appendix). Students are advanced to candidacy when their coursework is largely complete and they begin preparing for their comprehensive exams and thesis work. Advancement to candidacy for thesis students requires the acceptance of a thesis proposal by the three members of the thesis committee. The GSO1 requires the signatures of the Graduate Coordinator, members of the thesis committee (in the case of thesis students) or the two faculty members with whom the student is taking comprehensive exams in the case of the exam option.

### **Culminating Project**

Students should begin considering whether they will do a thesis or take comprehensive exams from the time they enter the program, but they must make the final decision when they file for candidacy. The decision to pursue a thesis track or exam track depends on the student's interests and career plans. The individual faculty member assesses the student's preparation in the field and ability to complete the project in consultation with the student, and signs the GSO1 form advancing the student to candidacy. Once the decision has been made, the student is responsible for informing the Graduate Coordinator and filing the GSO1 form. Those students doing the thesis option must include the approved thesis prospectus with the GSO1.

### **Thesis Option:**

All MA theses are required to be an extended paper based on primary sources but also demonstrating command of the historiography. In some cases a curriculum project may take the place of a thesis. At this time, length of the thesis varies depending on the topic and instructor. The range is approximately 75-200 pages, with most falling in the range of 100-150 pages. 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. The MA History defense is a public defense of the thesis. The student presents an overview of the thesis in approximately 20-30 minutes followed by 90 minutes of questions begun by the thesis committee and including any who attend. A minimal grade of B on the thesis is required.

For University guidelines regarding the format and filing of the thesis, students should consult "Guideline for Master's Theses and Projects," available in the Office of Graduate Studies, Stevenson Hall, Room 1041.

### **Comprehensive Exam Option:**

Students must prepare two areas of concentration and take an exam in each. Each exam is based on a set reading list of 40 books. Students are strongly urged to prepare for and take their exams sequentially and not to try to prepare for both exams in the same semester. It is expected that the student will take the exam at the end of the semester in which he/she took History 598.

Comprehensive exam reading lists are available by request of individual faculty members depending on area of expertise. The comprehensive exam is a three-hour written exam, done within a four-hour window of time. No access to books, notes, or the Internet is permitted. In that time, students must write on three questions set by the examiner. Students receive a letter grade for each of the exams. A minimum grade of B on each question is required to pass the exam. If a student does not pass a comprehensive exam, the individual may retake an exam in that area only once. Failure to pass the exam on a second attempt will result in dismissal from the program.

### **Areas of Concentration for Comprehensive Exams:**

Rome (Republic and Empire)	Modern Europe	Twentieth Century US
Anglo-Saxon England	Early Modern Britain	Recent US (1945-present)
Medieval Europe	Modern Britain	Colonial Latin America
Early China	Atlantic World	Latin America since Independence
Modern China	Imperial Spain	Modern Russia
Modern Japan	Colonial America	
Early Japan	Revolutionary and Early Republic America	
Early Modern Europe	Nineteenth Century US	

### **Final Paperwork**

Students must apply for graduation (see Admissions & Records website for dates). The GSO2 form must be filed by the student upon completion of all requirements. For thesis students, the form is signed at the defense. In the case of students taking comprehensive exams, the GSO2 is signed when both exams have been completed and then is filed with the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **Time to Degree:**

The California State University system requires that all requirements for the MA degree be completed within seven years of the beginning of the program. Courses older than seven years must be retaken or revalidated. Revalidation requires evidence that the student can demonstrate continued competence in the course. This assessment is made by the instructor of record, or in the case of that faculty member's departure from the university, by the graduate coordinator.

### **Absences from the university/leaves of absence:**

It is important that the student be continuously enrolled in the program. If a student needs to interrupt her/his studies, he/she must confer with the Graduate Coordinator about a leave of absence. Two semesters of non-enrollment, without a formal leave of absence having been granted, will result in the student being dropped from the program. Reinstatement requires reapplication to the university and the program.

If a student takes a one semester Leave of Absence from the program she/he is entitled to continue library borrowing privileges for that semester. See Appendix C for the necessary form.

### **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

Randall Dodgen

Ph.D., Yale University, Asia and the Pacific Rim

Steve Estes

Ph.D., University of North Carolina, 20<sup>th</sup> -21<sup>st</sup> 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, Western U.S., California, Women

Amy Kittelstrom

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

Kathleen Noonan

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