Spring 2024

Advanced undergraduates are invited to inquire about enrolling in graduate courses. Such enrollment depends on the permission of individual instructors who should be contacted directly. Questions can also be directed to the Graduate Program Coordinator, Mary Lashway, at gradprogram@history.umass.edu.

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You may take two courses outside the department for degree credit. Check Spire to see graduate course offerings beyond our department. Students often find relevant courses in Anthropology; English; the W.E. B. Du Bois Department of African American Studies; Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning; Public Policy; Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, and other programs around campus.

History 597
Under the University Numbering System, M.A. students wishing to enroll in an upper-level undergraduate course may do so under the special topics number, History 597, with permission from the instructor and also with the understanding that instructors will require additional work of graduate students in those courses. signed by the faculty member teaching the course (turn this in to Mary Lashway in Herter 615). Check SPIRE for the listings of undergraduate courses.

There are forms available in Herter 615 describing the additional work to be performed for graduate credit; these must be signed by the instructor. Students will be responsible for discussing the course requirements with instructors. Please see the Mary Lashway about registration to ensure that a grade will be submitted for you at the end of the semester. Only two 597 courses may count as topics courses towards completion of the M.A. degree.

History 696 or 796 (Independent Study)
Students may enroll in independent studies as either History 696 (reading independent study) or History 796 (research/writing independent study) with a faculty member overseeing the plan of study.
To enroll in History 696 or 796 pick up an independent study form from Mary Lashway in Herter 615. This form must be filled out including name, student number, course number (696 or 796), credits, a detailed description of the plan of work for the independent study (e.g. research paper, book reviews, historiography, essays, etc.), and signed by the professor overseeing the independent study. After it has been filled out and signed it needs to be returned to Mary Lashway to be entered on Spire. Only two independent studies may be counted towards completion of the M.A. degree.

Scheduled Courses:

609  Issues in Modern Germany
Andy Donson
Thursday, 11:30am-2:00pm

This seminar will examine the main historical debates in the German historical profession since 1945. The purpose of the course is to familiarize students with central debates and issues that historians have engaged in, while also exploring a variety of historical research topics and methods. One area we will focus on is the centrality of National Socialism and the Holocaust within postwar historiography as well as the legacy of divided Germany from 1949-1990. We will analyze famous debates such as the Fischer Debate, the German Sonderweg debate, and the controversy surrounding the publication of Goldhagen’s “Hitler’s Willing Executioners.” We will not limit ourselves to the history of the Third Reich, but rather look at how the legacy of the Third Reich created an opportunity to rethink earlier periods and question how Germany developed as a society that allowed for the rise of the Nazis. We will also look at more recent (yet similar) debates surrounding the proper way to engage with Germany’s “second dictatorship” and the legacy of Communist rule in East Germany post-1990. Each week we will focus on one particular debate or author.

626/793J  Comparative Memory
Jon Olsen
Monday, 2:30pm-5:00pm

The phenomenon of cultures of memory has emerged over the past decade as a subject of serious historical scholarship. The aim of this seminar is to discuss the problem of national memory cultures since the Second World War. We will begin the semester by looking at theories of memory and national identity since 1945. Although the primary thrust of our readings will deal with remembering the Second World War, we will also delve into other areas of remembering. The German concept of Vergangenheitsbewältigung, or coming to terms with the past, and its relationship to national identity will serve as our guiding analytical tool for our investigation into this topic. We will look at a variety of nation-states in Europe as well as the United States and Japan in order to compare and contrast national forms of memory culture and ponder questions of universality versus distinct historical experience. We will also concentrate on the political and cultural aspects that different national forms of remembering have had on the historical
development of these nations. Student evaluation will involve book reviews, class presentations, and a research paper.

662  Museum and Historic Site Interpretation
Samuel Redman
Tuesday, 2:30pm-5:00pm

The aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the many intangible issues surrounding museum and historic site interpretation. We will also be addressing some of these challenges through on-the-ground and digital collaborations with museums in Massachusetts and beyond. Seminar discussion will explore readings, including both theoretical and practical works. Writing assignments will be both practical (writing exhibit labels, digital history websites) and theoretical (analyzing meaning-making in museum exhibits and at historic sites). Students will expand their insights and develop their skills by undertaking a set of “field service” projects for community partners.

665  Writing History
Steve Platt
Wednesday, 2:30pm-5:00pm

This seminar gives graduate students in History (and other fields of nonfiction) a chance to focus on their development as writers. The writing of history is a special kind of art—imaginative without being imaginary—and as long as we stay within the strictures of what our sources contain, we have great leeway to be inventive with form, structure, voice, and other ostensibly “literary” aspects of our work. This course is predicated on the belief that there is no need to choose between writing for academic or general audiences—if done well, writing for the one audience does not mean alienating the other, it simply ensures a broader readership for your work.

During the semester, along with reading and discussing various models of creative nonfiction writing, students will hone their own writing and editing skills as they develop individual projects and comment on the work of their classmates. We will have several working writers visit us as guests, including the annual Writer in Residence for the UMass/Five-College Graduate Program in History. The course is designed to meet the requirements of a 600-level seminar, but some students, with consent of the instructor, may be able to enroll in the course at the 700 level, depending on the nature of their proposed semester-long project.

692F  19th Century Historiography
Sarah Cornell
Wednesday, 2:30pm-5:00pm

This course offers an intensive investigation of the historiography of the nineteenth-century United States, aiming to provide a foundation from which to research and teach in the field. Necessarily selective and idiosyncratic given the time constraints of a single semester, the course nevertheless proceeds roughly chronologically and thematically, with our readings drawn from recent literature. Our weekly discussions will focus on situating these readings within historiographical debates and shifts; on argument, evidence, interpretation, method, and style; on the alternative framing of questions; and on imperatives for future research. At semester’s end, we will propose various overarching arguments about the United States in the nineteenth century.

692M Indigenous Peoples in Museums
Alice Nash
Tuesday, 2:30pm-5:00pm

This course examines the history of Indigenous peoples in museums and archives as both subjects of study and display and as curators, archivists, researchers, donors, artists, activists, and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. Our scope moves from local to global, including a consideration of how the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples may affect current practices. Coursework includes short papers based on assigned readings, a field trip reflection paper, class presentations, and a research project.