Courses of Instruction

History

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Requirements for the Major in History

The departmental offerings are divided into the following fields: Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, South Asia, and the United States. Students may, with departmental approval, define fields that differ from those specified above.

The major consists of ten courses, distributed as follows:

1. A primary field of concentration, selected from the above list, in which at least four and no more than five courses are taken. No more than five courses in any region will count toward the major. At least one of the courses in the field of concentration must be a 300-level seminar or a 400-level advanced independent study taken at Bowdoin.

2. One intermediate seminar in any field of history, to be taken at Bowdoin, preferably by the end of the sophomore year. It is recommended that students complete at least one 200-level course prior to taking an intermediate seminar.

3. At least three courses taken from two of the following fields: Africa, East Asia, Latin America, or South Asia.

4. One pre-modern course.

5. No more than two courses numbered below 200 can be counted toward the major; these must be taken prior to the junior year. No more than one such course can count toward the field of concentration.

6. Students must obtain a minimum course grade of C- to receive credit toward the major.

7. Students may not count Credit/D/Fail courses toward the major.

8. Students participating in off-campus study may count no more than one history course per semester toward the history major. In exceptional cases, students may petition to receive credit for more than one course per semester toward the history major. In all cases, a maximum of three history courses taken away from Bowdoin can count toward the history major, but no more than two can count toward the field of concentration.

The program chosen to meet the requirements for the major in history must be approved by a departmental advisor. Before electing to major in history, a student should have completed or have in progress at least two college-level courses in history. In consultation with the departmental advisor, a student should plan a program that begins at either the introductory or the intermediate level and progresses to the advanced level.
With departmental approval, a student may receive credit toward the history major for college-level work in history at other institutions. This work may represent fields other than those that are available at Bowdoin. In the sophomore year, a student who anticipates study away from Bowdoin should discuss with the departmental advisor a plan for the history major that includes work at Bowdoin and elsewhere.

All history majors seeking departmental honors are required to enroll in two semesters of the Honors Program (History 451, 452). Its primary requirement is the research and writing of the honors thesis. To be eligible to register for Honors, a student must have the equivalent of a B+ average in courses taken in the department and the approval of a thesis advisor.

History majors are encouraged to develop competence in one or more foreign languages and to use this competence in their historical reading and research. Knowledge of a foreign language is particularly important for students planning graduate work.

Requirements for the Minor in History

The minor consists of five courses. Three courses are to be taken in one field of concentration and two in a subsidiary field; both fields should be chosen from the list specified by the department for a major. Students may not count Credit/D/Fail courses toward the minor. Students participating in off-campus study may count no more than two history courses toward the history minor. This must be approved by a departmental advisor.

Curriculum

Although first-year seminars and 100-level courses are designed as introductory courses for students who have not taken college-level courses in history, first-year students and all non-majors may also enroll in any lecture course numbered 200–289.

Intermediate seminars, listed beginning on page 202, are not open to first-year students. Most of these seminars have a prerequisite of one history course.

Advanced seminars or Problems Courses, listed beginning on page 206, are open to history majors and minors and to other juniors and seniors with sufficient background in the discipline.

First-Year Seminars

The following seminars, designed for first-year students, are introductory in nature. They do not assume that students have a background in the period or the area of the particular seminar topic. The seminars introduce students to the study of historical methods, the examination of particular questions of historical inquiry, and the development of analytical skills in reading and writing. The seminars are based on extensive reading, class discussion, and multiple short, critical essays. Enrollment is limited to sixteen students in each seminar.

For a full description of first-year seminars, see pages 149–60.

10c. Monsters, Marvels, and Messiahs: Europe during the Age of Discovery. Fall 2009. DALLAS DENERY.


13c. Living in the Sixteenth Century. Fall 2010. THOMAS CONLAN.

(Same as Asian Studies 11.)

14c. The Nuclear Age. Spring 2010. DAVID HECHT.

15c. Frontier Crossings: The Western Experience in American History. Fall 2009. MATTHEW KLINKLE.

(Same as Environmental Studies 15.)
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[16c. From Montezuma to Bin Laden: Globalization and Its Critics.]

   (Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 21.)

   (Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 20.)

   (Same as Africana Studies 23 and Gender and Women’s Studies 25.)

   (Same as Africana Studies 25.)

   (Same as Asian Studies 28.)

Introductory, Intermediate, and Advanced Courses


   Focuses on skills necessary for analytic and critical writing, with special attention to drafting and revision of student essays. Provides practice in basic research and analytical skills required for working in history (and to a lesser degree other social sciences and humanities), and addresses basic grammar problems frequently encountered in college-level essays. Does not count toward the major or minor in history.

   Explores Jewish life through the lenses of history, religion, and ethnicity and examines the processes by which governments and sections of the Jewish community attempted to incorporate Jews and Judaism into European society. Surveys social and economic transformations of Jews, cultural challenges of modernity, varieties of modern Jewish religious expression, political ideologies, the Holocaust, establishment of Israel, and American Jewry through primary and secondary sources, lectures, films, and class discussions. (Same as Religion 125.)

   Examines the coming of the Civil War and the war itself in all its aspects. Considers the impact of changes in American society, the sectional crisis and breakdown of the party system, the practice of Civil War warfare, and social ramifications of the conflict. Includes readings of novels and viewing of films. Students are expected to enter with a basic knowledge of American history, and a commitment to participating in large class discussions. (Same as Africana Studies 139.)

   Explores the nature of warfare from the fifteenth century to the present. The central premise is that war is a reflection of the societies and cultures that wage it. This notion is tested by examining the development of war-making in Europe and the Americas from the period before the emergence of modern states, through the great period of state formation and nation building, to the present era, when the power of states to wage war in the traditional manner seems seriously undermined. Throughout, emphasis is placed on contact between European and non-European peoples. Students are required to view films every week outside of class.
201c - ESD. History of Ancient Greece: Bronze Age to the Death of Alexander. Fall 2009. ROBERT SOBAK.

Surveys the history of Greek-speaking peoples from the Bronze Age (c. 3000–1100 B.C.E.) to the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C.E. Traces the political, economic, social, religious, and cultural developments of the Greeks in the broader context of the Mediterranean world. Topics include the institution of the polis (city-state); hoplite warfare; Greek colonization; the origins of Greek “science,” philosophy, and rhetoric; and fifth-century Athenian democracy and imperialism. Necessarily focuses on Athens and Sparta, but attention is also given to the variety of social and political structures found in different Greek communities. Special attention is given to examining and attempting to understand the distinctively Greek outlook in regard to gender, the relationship between human and divine, freedom, and the divisions between Greeks and barbarians (non-Greeks). A variety of sources—literary, epigraphical, archaeological—are presented, and students learn how to use them as historical documents. (Same as Classics 211.)


Surveys the history of Rome from its beginnings to the fourth century A.D. Considers the political, economic, religious, social, and cultural developments of the Romans in the context of Rome’s growth from a small settlement in central Italy to the dominant power in the Mediterranean world. Special attention is given to such topics as urbanism, imperialism, the influence of Greek culture and law, and multi-culturalism. Introduces different types of sources—literary, epigraphical, archaeological, etc.—for use as historical documents. (Same as Classics 212.)


Traces the origins of the scientific revolution through the interplay between late-antique and medieval religion, magic, and natural philosophy. Particular attention is paid to the conflict between paganism and Christianity, the meaning and function of religious miracles, the rise and persecution of witchcraft, and Renaissance hermeticism. (Same as Religion 204.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

[205c - ESD. A History of the Body.]

206c - ESD. Early Modern Europe. Fall 2009. DALLAS DENERY.

A survey of European culture and society from the later Middle Ages to the origins of the Enlightenment. Topics include the Renaissance, Reformation, and Scientific Revolution.

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

[207c - ESD. Medieval Europe.]

212c - ESD. IP. “China among Equals”: History from Song to Ming, 850–1644. Spring 2010. LAWRENCE ZHANG.

Covers the period from the fall of the Tang dynasty to the end of the Ming, during which China underwent a critical and fundamental transformation from a society dominated by a national aristocratic elite with hereditary rights to one where elites membership became much more fluid. The emergence of competing neighboring states also meant a complete reorientation of how China conducted diplomacy, both with other land-based states and eventually through maritime contacts with Zheng He’s expeditions to the West. Neo-Confucianism, developed during the Song dynasty, became not only the dominant philosophy in China but also in East Asia for the next thousand years. This comprehensive survey of China during the medieval and early modern eras includes sub-units on the Mongol empire and other “conquest dynasties.” (Same as Asian Studies 272.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.
[214c - ESD, IP. City and Country in Roman Culture. (Same as Classics 224.))]

218c - ESD. The History of Russia, 1825–1936. Fall 2011. PAGE HERRLINGER.

Examines major transformations in Russian society, culture, and politics from 1825 to 1936. Among topics explored through novels, autobiographies, film, and other primary documents are life in “Old Regime” Russia, attempts at reform and modernization in the late nineteenth century, the rise of the revolutionary movement and the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the building of socialism under the Bolsheviks, and the making of the modern “Soviet system” under Stalin.

219c. Russia’s Twentieth Century: Revolution and Beyond. Fall 2010. PAGE HERRLINGER.

Examines major transformations in Russian society, culture, and politics from the Revolutions of 1917 through the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1991. Topics include the building of socialist society under Lenin and Stalin, the political Terror of the 1930s and the expansion of the Gulag system, the experience of World War II, Soviet influence in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, attempts at de-Stalinization under Khrushchev, everyday life under “developed socialism,” the period of “glasnost” and “perestroika” under Gorbachev, and the problems of de-Sovietization in the early 1990s.


An analysis of the persistence of anti-Jewish attitudes through history, with an emphasis on the Hitler regime’s attempt to destroy European Jews and their culture. Begins with a brief overview of the Greco-Roman world and Medieval Europe, and concludes with an examination of the cultural phenomenon of anti-Semitism and the destruction of European Jewry. Readings focus on primary texts and secondary analysis. Students have the opportunity to develop individual research projects.


A survey of the political, cultural, religious, social, and economic history of early modern England, from the reign of Henry VII, the first Tudor ruler, to the outbreak of the Glorious Revolution. Topics include the Tudor and Stuart Monarchs, the Elizabethan Settlement, the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell, and the Restoration.

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

223c - IP. Modern Britain, 1837 to the 1990s. Fall 2010. SUSAN TANANBAUM.

A social history of modern Britain from the rise of urban industrial society in the early nineteenth century to the present. Topics include the impact of the industrial revolution, acculturation of the working classes, the impact of liberalism, the reform movement, and Victorian society. Concludes with an analysis of the domestic impact of the world wars and of contemporary society.

[224c - ESD, IP. The Modern Middle East: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.]}

227c. City and Landscape in Modern Europe. Spring 2010. JILL PEARLMAN.

Explores the evolution of the built environment in London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Focusing on significant moments in the history of these cities, considers a variety of factors as determinants of urban form, including technological developments, industrialization, politics, economics, culture, and design. Topics include the creation of capital cities, natural and public spaces, streets, housing, suburbanization, environmental problems, and current schemes for a sustainable urbanism.

(同上 Environmental Studies 227.)

Explores the history and politics of evolution in the United States since Darwin. Evolution has been central to American politics and culture in myriad ways. Examines explicit controversies, such as the Scopes Trial of 1925 and more recent debates over intelligent design, as well as the many ways that it has implicitly but profoundly influenced American culture, most notably in connection with lending credence to ideas of “natural” or “normal” in terms of human behavior, racial classification, or gender and sexual norms. Also explores changing ideas of evolution, in both scientific investigation and popular culture. (Same as Africana Studies 229.)


A social history of the founding and growth of the colonies in British North America. Explores the difficulties of creating a new society, economy, polity, and culture in an unfamiliar and already inhabited environment; the effects of diverse and often conflicting goals and expectations on the early settlement and development of the colonies; the gradual adaptations and changes in European, Native American, and African cultures, and their separate, combined, and often contested contributions to a new “provincial,” increasingly stratified (both socially and economically), and regionally disparate culture; and the later problems of maturity and stability as the thirteen colonies began to outgrow the British imperial system and become a new “American” society.

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.


Survey of what came to be called the Western United States from the nineteenth century to the present. Topics include Euro-American relations with Native Americans; the expansion and growth of the federal government into the West; the exploitation of natural resources; the creation of borders and national identities; race, class, and gender relations; the influence of immigration and emigration; violence and criminality; cities and suburbs; and the enduring persistence of the “frontier” myth in American culture. Students write several papers and engage in weekly discussion based upon primary and secondary documents, art, literature, and film. (Same as Environmental Studies 232.)


A social history of the United States from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson. Topics include the various social, economic, cultural, and ideological roots of the movement for American independence; the struggle to determine the scope of the Constitution and the political shape of the new republic; the emergence of and contest over a new social and cultural order and the nature of American “identity”; and the diverging social, economic, and political histories of regions (North, South, and trans-Appalachian West) and peoples in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Topics include urbanization, industrialization, and the development of new forms of social organization in the North; religion and the Second Great Awakening; the westward expansion of the nation into areas already occupied; the southern plantation economy and slave communities; and the growth of the reform impulse in Jacksonian America.


The suburbs, where the majority of the nation’s residents live, have been alternately praised as the most visible sign of the American dream and vilified as the vapid core of homogeneous
Middle America. How did the “burbs” come about, and what is their significance in American life? Begins with the history of the suburbs from the mid-nineteenth century to the post-World War II period, exploring the suburb as part of the process of national urbanization. Then explores more contemporary cultural representations of the suburbs in popular television, film, and fiction. Particular attention paid to gender, race, and consumer culture as influences in the development of suburban life. (Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 235.)

Examines the history of African Americans from the origins of slavery in America through the death of slavery during the Civil War. Explores a wide range of topics, including the establishment of slavery in colonial America, the emergence of plantation society, control and resistance on the plantation, the culture and family structure of enslaved African Americans, free black communities, and the coming of the Civil War and the death of slavery. (Same as Africana Studies 236.)

Explores the history of African Americans from the end of the Civil War to the present. Issues include the promises and failures of Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, black leadership and protest institutions, African American cultural styles, industrialization and urbanization, the world wars, the Civil Rights Movement, and conservative retrenchment. (Same as Africana Studies 237.)

Explores relationships between ideas of nature, human transformations of the environment, and the effect of the physical environment upon humans through time in North America. Topics include the “Columbian exchange” and colonialism; links between ecological change and race, class, and gender relations; the role of science and technology; literary and artistic perspectives of “nature”; agriculture, industrialization, and urbanization; and the rise of modern environmentalism. Assignments include a research-based service learning term project. (Same as Environmental Studies 203.)
Prerequisite: Environmental Studies 101 or permission of the instructor.

Explores how gender and sexuality function within African American communities in the United States using historical and contemporary case studies. Examines connections between constructions of Black femininity and masculinity, racial identity formation and social inequality against the backdrop of slavery and emancipation, segregation, the Great Depression and World War II, the black freedom struggle, and what many have called the post-civil rights era. Materials include interdisciplinary scholarly texts and articles, films, novels, and music. (Same as Africana Studies 243, Gay and Lesbian Studies 242, and Gender and Women’s Studies 242.)

Explores the evolution of the American city from the beginning of industrialization to the present age of mass communications. Focuses on the underlying explanations for the American city’s physical form by examining cultural values, technological advancement, aesthetic theories, and social structure. Major figures, places, and schemes in the areas of urban design and architecture, social criticism, and reform are considered. (Same as Environmental Studies 244.)
[245c - ESD. Bearing the Untold Story: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the United States. (Same as Africana Studies 245 and Gender and Women's Studies 245.)]


A social history of American women from the colonial period through the nineteenth century. Examines women's changing roles in both public and private spheres; the circumstances of women's lives as these were shaped by class, ethnic, and racial differences; the recurring conflict between the ideals of womanhood and the realities of women's experience; and focuses on family responsibilities, paid and unpaid work, religion, education, reform, women's rights, and feminism. (Same as Gender and Women's Studies 251.)


Examines the social, economic, and cultural history of American families from 1600 to 1900, and the changing relationship between families and their kinship networks, communities, and the larger society. Topics include gender relationships; racial, ethnic, cultural, and class variations in family and community ideals, structures, and functions; the purpose and expectations of marriage; philosophies of child-rearing; organization of work and leisure time; and the effects of industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and social and geographic mobility on patterns of family life and community organization. (Same as Gender and Women's Studies 248.)


Introduces students to the history of Latin America from pre-Columbian times to about 1825. Traces developments fundamental to the establishment of colonial rule, drawing out regional comparisons of indigenous resistance and accommodation. Topics include the nature of indigenous societies encountered by Europeans; exploitation of African and Indian labor; evangelization and the role of the church; the evolution of race, gender, and class hierarchies in colonial society; and the origins of independence in Spanish America and Brazil. (Same as Latin American Studies 252.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.


Traces the principal economic, social, and political transformations from the wars of independence to the present. Topics include colonial legacies and the aftermath of independence; the consolidation of nation-states and their insertion in the world economy; the evolution of land and labor systems, and the politics of reform and revolution, and the emergence of social movements. (Same as Latin American Studies 255.)

[256c - IP. Environment and Society in Latin America. (Same as Environmental Studies 256 and Latin American Studies 256.)]


Examines revolutionary change in Latin America from a historical perspective, concentrating on four cases of attempted revolutionary change—Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Popular images and orthodox interpretations are challenged and new propositions about these processes are tested. External and internal dimensions of each of these social movements are analyzed and each revolution is discussed in the full context of the country's historical development. (Same as Latin American Studies 258.)

[261c - ESD. IP. Modern South Asia. (Same as Asian Studies 256.)]


A survey of historical developments before conquest by European powers, with a focus on
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west and central Africa. Explores the political, social, and cultural changes that accompanied the intensification of Atlantic Ocean trade and revolves around a controversy in the study of Africa and the Atlantic World: What influence did Africans have on the making of the Atlantic World, and in what ways did Africans participate in the slave trade? How were African identities shaped by the Atlantic World and by the slave plantations of the Americas? Ends by considering the contradictory effects of Abolition on Africa. (Same as Africana Studies 262.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

Examines the new forms of politics and of popular culture that shaped twentieth-century modernity in India. Topics include the emergence of mass politics, ideologies of nationalism and communalism, urbanization and the creation of new publics, violence and popular media, modern visual culture, democracy and social movements, and the politics of development. Focuses on the relationship between new socio-political forms and new technologies of representation and communication. (Same as Asian Studies 258.)

Focuses on conquest, colonialism, and its legacies in sub-Saharan Africa; the violent process of colonial pacification, examined from European and African perspectives; the different ways of consolidating colonial rule and African resistance to colonial rule, from Maji Maji to Mau Mau; and African nationalism and independence, as experienced by Africa’s nationalist leaders, from Kwame Nkrumah to Jomo Kenyatta, and their critics. Concludes with the limits of independence, mass disenchantment, the rise of the predatory post-colonial state, genocide in the Great Lakes, and the wars of Central Africa. (Same as Africana Studies 264.)

A survey of Mexican history from pre-Columbian times to the present. Topics include the evolving character of indigenous societies, the nature of the Encounter, the colonial legacy, the chaotic nineteenth century, the Mexican Revolution, and United States-Mexican relations. Contemporary problems are also addressed. (Same as Latin American Studies 266.)

Surveys the history of Asian Americans from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Explores the changing experiences of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans within the larger context of American history. Major topics include immigration and migration, race relations, anti-Asian movements, labor issues, gender relations, family and community formation, resistance and civil rights, and representations of Asian Americans in American popular culture. Readings and course materials include scholarly essays and books, primary documents, novels, memoirs, and films.

Examines the history of women of African descent during the second period of slavery and slave trading between Africa, the Caribbean, and mainland North America (roughly 1650 to 1888). Focuses on the everyday experiences of women’s labor, reproduction, and kinship-building on the plantations and in the cities, of these slaveholding societies and on women’s roles in the (re)creation of Afro-Atlantic religious and political culture. Investigates the participation of women in abolition and emancipation movements of the late eighteenth
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and early nineteenth centuries. A range of issues addressed: How did women of African
descent experience life under slavery in contrast to men or women of European, Amerindian,
and East Indian descent? How did the lives of enslaved women differ from free women of
color in different slave holding societies of the Atlantic world? How did the experience of
migration, forced and voluntary, impact the lives of black women and the growth of black
societies across the Atlantic African diaspora? Assignments include work by contemporary
historians and literary figures, primary source analysis, and student projects on the representation
and presentation of women and slavery. (Same as Africana Studies 265 and Gender and
Women's Studies 273.)

An introduction to the transformation of China's political and social life from the advent
of its last dynasty in 1644 to the present. Covers the rise and fall of the Qing dynasty,
economic and cultural encounters with the West, Republican government, war with Japan,
the Communist revolution, and the People's Republic under Mao Zedong. Also discusses
social and economic reforms in post-Mao China, and the global Chinese overseas community.
Major themes include political and intellectual trends, the ongoing tension between the center
and local society, problems of ethnicity and gender, challenges of modernization, and the
(re-)emergence of the world's oldest and largest bureaucratic state as a major power in the
twenty-first century. (Same as Asian Studies 275.)

276c - IP. The Origins of Imperial China, Prehistory to 900 C.E. Fall 2009. Lawrence
Zhang.
Traces the origins and evolution of cultural, economic, and social elements of Chinese
imperial statehood. Considers how each successive regime created its own philosophical
and political basis for legitimacy and authority. Topics covered include the flowering of
philosophy in the fifth century B.C.E., the unification and subsequent disintegration of the Qin
and Han empires, the introduction of Buddhism, and the rise and fall of the cosmopolitan
Tang dynasty. Various types of evidence, including archaeological finds and material culture,
will be examined. (Same as Asian Studies 276.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

Uses controversial legal cases to explore changing notions of justice, rights, and equality
in twentieth-century America—and the role of media in providing a forum for cultural debate
on these and other subjects. Focuses on issues of race, class, science, Cold War politics,
activism, and social change. Trials discussed include Sacco & Vanzetti, the Scopes Monkey
Trial, the Rosenberg spy case, Roe v. Wade, Watergate, and O. J. Simpson. Uses a variety
of primary and secondary sources, such as trial transcripts, news coverage, memoirs,
film, and literature.

[280c - ESD. IP. Imperialism, Nationalism, Human Rights. (Same as Asian Studies
230.)]

Explores the vibrant social world created by movements of people, commodities, and
ideas across the contemporary regions of the Middle East, East Africa, South and Southeast
Asia from the early spread of Islam through the eighteenth century. Key topics include
the formation of communities, pre-modern material cultures, the meanings of conversion
and religious change, and the production and transformation of systems of knowledge and
modes of social relations in the era before the rise of European colonialism. (Same as Asian
Studies 236.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.
283c - ESD, IP. The Origins of Japanese Culture and Civilization. Fall 2009 and Fall 2010. THOMAS CONLAN.

How do a culture, a state, and a society develop? Designed to introduce the culture and history of Japan by exploring how “Japan” came into existence, and to chart how patterns of Japanese civilization shifted through time. Attempts to reconstruct the tenor of life through translations of primary sources, and to lead to a greater appreciation of the unique and lasting cultural and political monuments of Japanese civilization. (Same as Asian Studies 283.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

284c - ESD, IP. The Emergence of Modern Japan. Spring 2010 and Spring 2011. THOMAS CONLAN.

What constitutes a modern state? How durable are cultures and civilizations? Examines the patterns of culture in a state that managed to expel European missionaries in the seventeenth century, and came to embrace all things Western as being “civilized” in the mid-nineteenth century. Compares the unique and vibrant culture of Tokugawa Japan with the rapid program of late-nineteenth-century industrialization, which resulted in imperialism, international wars, and ultimately, the postwar recovery. (Same as Asian Studies 284.)

Intermediate Seminars

The following seminars offer the opportunity for more intensive work in critical reading and discussion, analytical writing, library or archival research, and thematic study than is available in the intermediate (200-level) lecture courses. They are intended for majors and non-majors alike, but, because they are advanced intermediate courses, they assume some background in the discipline and may require previous course work in history or the permission of the instructor (see individual course descriptions for prerequisites). Enrollment is limited to sixteen students. The intermediate seminars are not open to first-year students. They do not fulfill the history major requirement for a 300-level seminar.

200c. Creating the World: Genesis and Its Interpreters. (Same as Religion 200.)

203c. Christianity and Islam in West Africa. Spring 2010. OLUFEMI VAUGHAN.

Seminar. Explores how Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religious beliefs shaped the formation of modern West African states and societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Discusses the role of these world and indigenous religious institutions and movements in the transformation of major West African societies in the following important historical themes: (1) religion and state formation in the turbulent nineteenth century; (2) religion and colonialism; (3) religion and decolonization; (4) religion and the post-colonial state; (5) religion and politics in the era of globalization. (Same as Africana Studies 203.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

208c. The History of History.

209c. Cultures of Deception: The Court in European History.


Seminar. Examines Europe’s transition from a pre-modern to an early modern society during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Beginning with an analysis of “secularization” as a historical process, examines the extent to which the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the development of mercantile capitalism contributed to the undoing of traditional social, cultural, and religious structures. Readings will include an array of primary sources, as well
as works by Ernst Troeltsh, Hans Blumenberg, and Charles Taylor.

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

213c. Transnational Africa and Globalization. Spring 2010. OLUFEMI VAUGHAN.

Seminar. Drawing on key readings on the historical sociology of transnationalism since World War II, examines how postcolonial African migrations transformed African states and their new transnational populations in Western countries. Discusses what concepts such as the nation state, communal identity, global relations, and security mean in the African context to critically explore complex African transnational experiences and globalization. These dynamic African transnational encounters encourage discussions on homeland and diaspora, tradition and modernity, gender and generation. (Same as Africana Studies 213.)

216c. History of African and African Diasporic Political Thought. Fall 2009. OLUFEMI VAUGHAN.

Seminar. Will critically discuss some seminal works in African diaspora and African political thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Organized around global and national currents that will allow students to explore intersections in pan-African, African American, and African political thought in the context of Atlantic and global histories. Seminar topics are divided into three major historic moments. The first will explore major themes on Atlantic slavery and Western thought, notably slavery and racial representation; slavery and capitalism; slavery and democracy. The second will focus on the struggle of African Americans, Africans, and West Indians for freedom in post-Abolition and colonial contexts. Topics discussed within twentieth-century national, regional, and global currents include reconstruction and industrialization; pan-Africanism; new negro; negritude; colonialism; nationalism. Finally, explores pan-African and African encounters in the context of dominant postcolonial themes, namely decolonization; Cold War; state formation; imperialism; African diaspora feminist thought; globalism. Discusses these foundational texts and the political thoughts of major African, African American, and Caribbean intellectuals and activists in their appropriate historical context. (Same as Africana Studies 216.)


Seminar. An in-depth inquiry into the troubled course of German history during the Weimar and Nazi periods. Among the topics explored are the impact of the Great War on culture and society in the 1920s; the rise of National Socialism; the role of race, class, and gender in the transformation of everyday life under Hitler; forms of persecution, collaboration, and resistance during the third Reich; Nazi war aims and the experience of war on the front and at “home,” including the Holocaust.

222c - ESD. Family Affairs: Changing Patterns in Europe. Fall 2009. SUSAN TANANBAUM.

Seminar. Explores topics and debates in European family history from the early modern period to the present. Considers the impact of social, political, religious, and economic forces on family structures and functions. Students have an opportunity to complete individual research projects. (Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 225.)

[226c - ESD. The City as American History. (Same as Gay and Lesbian Studies 266.)]

229c - ESD. Science, Sex, and Politics. Fall 2009. DAVID HECHT.

Seminar. Examines the intersection of science, sex, and politics in twentieth-century United States history. Issues of sex and sexuality have been contested terrain over the past hundred years, as varying conceptions of gender, morality, and “proper” sexual behavior have become politically and socially controversial. Explores the way that science has impacted these debates—often as a tool by which activists of varying political and intellectual
persuasions have attempted to use notions of scientific objectivity and authority to advance their agendas. Explores debates over issues such as birth control, sex education, same-sex marriage, and abortion. (Same as Gay and Lesbian Studies 229 and Gender and Women’s Studies 230.)

Seminar. Close examination of the decade following the Civil War. Explores the events and scholarship of the Union attempt to create a biracial democracy in the South following the war, and the sources of its failure. Topics include wartime Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan, Republican politics, and Democratic Redemption. Special attention paid to the deeply conflicted ways historians have approached this period over the years. (Same as Africana Studies 238.)
Prerequisite: One course in history.

Seminar. Uses the lens of sport and leisure to analyze cultural and historical trends in modern Europe and the United States. Students read a range of primary and secondary texts exploring race, class, and gender and complete a significant research paper.
Prerequisite: Two courses in history.

Seminar. Examines the histories of violence and non-violence that have shaped contemporary India. Considers Gandhi’s efforts to develop a theory and practice of non-violence in the context of anti-colonial nationalism, as well as the epic religious violence that ultimately accompanied independence from British colonial rule. Explores the historical relationship between violent and non-violent forms of social protest and social control in the post-colonial era through examination of vivid examples of social and political movements. Considers the recent proliferation of religious violence, and caste- and gender-based atrocities. Draws on history, literature, documentary film, and film drama to consider how such violence and non-violence have been remembered and memorialized, and their legacies for Indian society. (Same as Asian Studies 239.)
Prerequisite: One course in history or permission of the instructor.

Seminar. Examines the evolution of various Maine social and ecological communities—inland, hill country, and coastal. Begins with the contact of European and Native American cultures, examines the transfer of English and European agricultural traditions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and explores the development of diverse geographic, economic, ethnic, and cultural communities during the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. (Same as Environmental Studies 247.)
Prerequisite: One course in history or permission of the instructor.

Seminar. Examines women’s voices in America from 1650 to the twentieth century, as these emerged in private letters, journals, and autobiographies; poetry, short stories, and novels; essays, addresses, and prescriptive literature. Readings from the secondary literature provide a historical framework for examining women’s writings. Research projects focus on the form and content of women’s literature and the ways that it illuminates women’s understandings, reactions, and responses to their historical situation. (Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 249.)
Prerequisite: One course in history.
205c. California Dreamin’: A History of the Golden State. (Same as Environmental Studies 250.)

251c. United States in the Nineteenth Century.


Seminar. Examines scholarship on the evolution of United States-Latin American relations since Independence. Topics include the Monroe Doctrine, commercial relations, interventionism, Pan Americanism, immigration, and revolutionary movements during the Cold War. (Same as Latin American Studies 253.)


Seminar. Texts, novels, and films help unravel Argentine history and culture. Topics examined include the image of the gaucho and national identity; the impact of immigration; Peronism; the tango; the Dirty War; and the elusive struggle for democracy, development, and social justice. (Same as Latin American Studies 254.)

267c. IP. African Environmental History. (Same as Africana Studies 267 and Environmental Studies 268.)


Seminar. Investigates the diverse representations and uses of the past in South Africa. Begins with the difficulties in developing a critical and conciliatory version of the past in post-apartheid South Africa during and after the much-discussed Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Then turns to diverse historical episodes and sites of memory from the Great Trek to the inauguration of Nelson Mandela to explore issues of identity and memory from the perspectives of South Africa’s various peoples. (Same as Africana Studies 269.)


Seminar. The slavery that emerged with the expansion of European powers in the New World was historically unique—a form more exploitative and capitalistic than any seen before. Paradoxically, it was this same Atlantic world that bred the ideas of universal human liberty that led to slavery’s demise. Explores this conundrum and examines the movements in the Atlantic world dedicated to abolishing slavery in the Atlantic basin in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Considers the foundations of antislavery thought, the abolition of the slave trade, the relationship between capitalism and abolitionism, the role of African American protest, the emergence of immediatism in America, the progress of Atlantic emancipations, and the historical memory of antislavery. Intensive engagement with historical arguments on this topic. (Same as Africana Studies 274.)


Seminar. Explores the history of Chinese migration in its global context from the sixteenth century onwards. Examines the internal roots of emigration in China, the interactions of migrants with their host societies and local populations, processes of cultural adaptation and assimilation, and the significance of migration and the overseas Chinese for concepts of Chinese identity. Focuses on Southeast Asia and North America, but also looks at Western Europe, South America, and elsewhere. While studying the implications of Chinese migration in specific locations, attends to transnational or cross-border networks, and interrogates concepts of ethnicity, nationality, and diaspora. (Same as Asian Studies 270.)

Prerequisite: One course in history or permission of the instructor.

Seminar. Mass uprisings have been political and social crucibles throughout the history of China, causing not only “regime changes,” as slated in contemporary terms, but also radical shifts in the cultural dynamics of Chinese society, as evident in class hierarchy, distribution of material resources, and expressions of personal and collective rights. Explores several of these pivotal moments, including millenarian movements such as the Taiping Rebellion in the Chinese heartland and the Muslim holy wars in the western borderlands during the nineteenth century; political transitions such as the 1911 Republican Revolution and the 1949 Communist Revolution; and movements introducing new social and cultural norms such as the May Fourth Movement and the Cultural Revolution. Students revisit the question of how the concepts of “rebellion” and “revolution” are simultaneously similar and different. One course in Asian history is recommended. (Same as Asian Studies 279.)

Prerequisite: One course in history.

[281c - IP. The Courtly Society of Heian Japan. (Same as Asian Studies 281.)]


Seminar. Examines the experience of war in China, Japan, and Europe in order to ascertain the degree to which war is a culturally specific act. Explores narratives of battle and investigates “heroic” qualities of European, Chinese, and Japanese figures. A secondary theme constitutes an examination of the impact the thirteenth-century Mongol Invasions had on each of these military cultures. (Same as Asian Studies 285.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.


Seminar. Explores Japan’s relations with China, Korea, and Europe in premodern and modern contexts. Also explores larger issues of state identity and cultures in East Asia. (Same as Asian Studies 286.)

Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

[289c - ESD. Home: A History of Housing in North America, 1850–2000. (Same as Environmental Studies 340.)]

Advanced Seminars

The 300-level problems courses in history engage students in the close investigation of certain historical “problems.” Following a critical reading and discussion of representative primary and secondary sources, with attention to issues of methodology and interpretation, students develop an independent, primary research topic related to the central problem of the course, which culminates in an analytical essay of substantial length. Sufficient background in the discipline and field is assumed, the extent of it depending on whether these courses build upon courses found elsewhere in the history curriculum. Enrollment is limited to sixteen students. Majors in fields other than history are encouraged to consider these seminars.

Problems in European History

[307c. Topics in Medieval and Early Modern European History.]
century’s most “totalitarian” regimes—fascism under the Nazis in Germany, and socialism under the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union. Prior course work in either modern Germany or Russia is strongly recommended, and students may focus their research project on either country, or a comparison of both.

Problems in British History

322c. Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in British and European Society. Spring 2010. Susan Tananbaum.

An analysis of cultural traditions in Britain and Europe. Explores the impact of immigration on Britain and the Continent, notions of cultural pluralism, and the changing definitions and implications of gender in Britain and Europe from the late eighteenth century to the present. Students undertake a major research project utilizing primary sources. (Same as Gender and Women’s Studies 322.)

Problems in American History


Explores the ideals and the social, economic, and cultural realities of community in American history, focusing on change, continuity, and racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity in community experience from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Examines the formation of new communities on a “frontier” that began on the Atlantic seaboard and gradually moved westward across the continent; the attempts to create alternative communities either separate from or contained within established communities; and the changing face of community that accompanied cultural diversity, expansion, modernization, urbanization, and suburbanization.


336c. Research in Nineteenth-Century United States History. (Same as Africana Studies 336.)

Problems in Latin American History


An examination of the transnational history of North and South America over the past five hundred years. Students explore this through directed readings on specific themes including exploration and imperial conquest, trade, migration, labor, warfare, and biological exchange, culminating in an original research paper, based on primary and secondary source research, to meet the requirements of their major. (Same as Environmental Studies 349 and Latin American Studies 349.)

351c. The Mexican Revolution. (Same as Latin American Studies 352.)


The Cuban Revolution recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Offers a retrospective of a Revolution entering “middle age” and its prospects for the future. Topics include United States-Cuban relations, economic and social justice versus political liberty, gender and race relations, and literature and film in a socialist society. (Same as Latin American Studies 356.)
Problems in African History

Explores African conceptions of politics from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Themes covered include African ancestral traditions, political movements during European colonialism, ethnic politics, alternative forms of sovereignty, religion and power, and debates over democratization. Students are required to write an original research paper. (Same as Africana Studies 361.)

Problems in Asian History

An examination of how South Asians have conceptualized innate social differences (e.g., race, caste, religion, ethnicity, gender) as well as labor and poverty, and how they have put these ideas into practice during the past two centuries. Topics include histories of race, labor, sexuality, and citizenship under British imperialism and global capitalism; the emergence and vicissitudes of the concept of minority; and modern anti-caste struggles. Following a survey of major recent scholarship in the field, students pursue projects of their own design, culminating in a substantial original research paper. A prior course in South Asian history is recommended. (Same as Asian Studies 364.)

Explores the “rise” of the warrior culture of Japan. In addition to providing a better understanding of the judicial and military underpinnings of Japan’s military “rule” and the nature of medieval Japanese warfare, shows how warriors have been perceived as a dominant force in Japanese history. Culminates in an extended research paper. (Same as Asian Studies 380.)
Prerequisite: Asian Studies 283 (same as History 283) or 284 (same as History 284), or permission of the instructor.
Note: This course fulfills the pre-modern requirement for history majors.

Independent Study and Honors in History

401c–404c. Advanced Independent Study. The Department.
451c–452c. Honors Seminar. Every year. The Department.

Interdisciplinary Majors

A student may, with the approval of the departments concerned and the Recording Committee, design an interdisciplinary major to meet an individual, cultural, or professional objective.
Bowdoin has nine interdisciplinary major programs that do not require the approval of the Recording Committee because the departments concerned have formalized their requirements. These programs are in art history and archaeology, art history and visual arts, chemical physics, computer science and mathematics, English and theater, Eurasian and East European studies, geology and chemistry, geology and physics, and mathematics.