

April 27, 2004

To: St. Olaf College Faculty
 Fr: CEPC
 Re: Proposed Revisions to Requirements for the History Major

At the May Faculty Meeting CEPC will move the approval of changes in the History Major that involve (1) a reorganization of History department offerings, (2) new requirements for the major, and (3) new courses entailed by the new requirements.

SUMMARY:

- The department will replace very broad topical seminar listings at Level III with topical seminars that correspond to the primary geographical areas in which advanced work is offered.
- The department will add four level II topical seminars, intended for majors, that correspond to four basic areas in the major. History majors will be required to take at least one of these seminars.
- The department will add certain new courses, and divide certain courses, to capitalize on the expertise of new faculty in the department.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION OF REQUIREMENTS:

History majors are required to take nine courses, including one Level II major seminar and three courses at Level III. Three level I courses (but no more than two seminars) may count toward the major. Students must take at least one course in each of three general areas, i.e., Europe, United States and the non-Western world (Africa, Asia, Latin America). At least two courses in the major must deal with the pre-modern period; see the departmental website or the History department chair for the approved list of pre-modern courses. Other courses may meet this requirement if approved by the department chair.

RATIONALE FOR NEW MAJOR REQUIREMENTS:

Proposed new major requirements arise from a departmental self-study and a further two years of reflection on the pattern of offerings and requirements in the department. Results of the self-study suggest that the current structure of the major does not serve majors well in level II offerings. The new major requirement for a “major seminar” at level II will enable majors to develop competence in historical methods in preparation for research seminars at level III.

NEW COURSES ENTAILED BY THE PROPOSED REVISION:

Level III History Research Seminars: History 310, 340, 350, 355, 360

310 Medieval Europe

Research seminar on selected topics in Medieval European history.

340 Latin America

Research seminar on selected topics in Latin American history.

350 Africa

Research seminar on selected topics in African history.

355 Middle East

Research seminar on selected topics in the history of the Middle East.

360 Comparative history

Research seminar on selected topics in comparative history.

Rationale for Level III History Research Seminars:

These seminars are not so much new courses as new numbers for courses that we have offered under the generic rubric of “European Seminar” or “American Seminar” or “Non-Western Seminar.” This new numbering clears up inconsistencies in the ways that we publicize and record the research seminars. We expect to teach the same number of level III seminars as we do now (6-7 per year), but most of them will now have their own name and number.

Level II Major Seminars: History 201, 210, 240, 270

201 Major Seminar: Ancient History

Topics in Ancient History, designed to emphasize active skills of critical reading, textual and contextual analysis, historiographical argument, and historical writing.

210 Major Seminar: European History

Topics in European History, designed to emphasize active skills of critical reading, textual and contextual analysis, historiographical argument, and historical writing.

240 Major Seminar: Non-Western History

Topics in Non-Western History, designed to emphasize active skills of critical reading, textual and contextual analysis, historiographical argument, and historical writing.

270 Major Seminar: American History

Topics in American History, designed to emphasize active skills of critical reading, textual and contextual analysis, historiographical argument, and historical writing.

Rationale for Level II Major Seminars:

In our last departmental review, our majors told us that they often felt lost in the large survey courses we teach at level II. And the outside reviewers noted that, especially at level II, the department’s commitment to General Education worked against the disciplinary development of our majors. These courses will offer an intermediate space between our level I seminars (with their emphasis on primary sources and library skills) and our level III research seminars for students to develop their skills in the company of other majors. We will require one such Major Seminar for the History major, but we hope that students will develop both historical skills and an esprit de corps in these classes.