

# Department of History

All of you have taken history classes in high school. What is the study of history like at Oberlin College? What can you expect from the history faculty? Why is it one of the most popular majors at the College? What can you do with a major in history?

We always joke that history is a growth field: more of it is always being produced. This is absolutely true. Not only do historians continue to encounter more and more materials for study, but we are continually subjecting old fields to new inquiries. In the past 20 years alone this has produced the dynamic fields of women's history, the history of gender and sexuality, environmental history, museum studies, and cultural history, among others. At Oberlin, students of history will be introduced to many of these new areas of inquiry as well as to a broad geographic coverage of history.

Oberlin's history faculty are specialists in the history of the United States, Europe, Russia, China, Japan, South Asia, Jewish people, and Latin America. We also provide some coverage of Southeast Asia, Africa, and various ethnicities within the United States. High school history may have taught you about the Battle of Waterloo or the Oklahoma Land Rush, but the study of history at Oberlin will help you learn how history itself is compiled, how historians work, why there are disputes in history, and why the field is always alive, changing, and *exciting*. You will have the opportunity to study medieval Chinese or European history; gender-focused history in Latin America, the United States, or Russia; Latino/a, environmental, or the history of popular culture in the United States. But *all* these courses are intended to help you develop your skills at critical thinking, writing, and argumentation. For that reason, most of our courses stress critical reading and writing skills and, in most classes, discussion skills as well.

Regardless of what area of history we teach, one thing remains true for all our faculty: we are committed to teaching and to close teacher-student interaction. We were attracted to Oberlin because of the opportunities it gave us to work closely with a group of intelligent, highly motivated and questioning students. What will that mean for you? In the first place, you will find that most of our courses encourage

student-faculty interaction both within and outside the classroom. Even in our larger classes, opportunities abound for small group discussion led by the faculty (not by student assistants). Many of the history faculty are continually searching for new means to engage students actively in the process of their own education: through student-run sections, new multimedia pedagogical devices, or intensive writing and critique.

In addition to classroom interactions, there are a variety of ways in which history students and majors can take advantage of their time here: the department sponsors Mellon Minority and McGregor-Oresman Fellowships, which give select students the opportunity to work closely with faculty members on research projects; individual faculty members will sponsor private readings or oversee research projects; the honors program allows advanced students to pursue primary research opportunities in close cooperation with the faculty. For those interested in a particular foreign field of historical study, we can advise you on dozens of abroad programs as well as guaranteeing that credits from those programs transfer into your history major.

History is a field that can prepare you for a wide variety of endeavors after college. Most obviously, we train a significant number of professional historians. Oberlin continues to send its history graduates on to the best graduate schools in the country. In fact, between 1994-2003, Oberlin ranked #1 in the country in sending more of its history graduates on to Ph.D.'s than did any other comparable liberal arts college. This means that Oberlin graduates are on the faculty of many of the major history departments in the country. When we recommend our students for graduate work in history, we are listened to attentively. We are proud to send some of our best students on to Master of Arts in Teaching programs, where they prepare for teaching careers at the secondary level. Admissions officers at some of the best MAT programs have assured us that they are actively seeking students with strong liberal arts backgrounds and training in history.

The history major stresses analytical thinking and good reasoning and writing skills, which are qualities that law

schools, public policy programs, and foreign service schools prize highly. We have had an increasing number of students who have double majored in history and biology, going on to fields in public health or epidemiology. And a number of our graduates are moving on to the tremendously exciting field of public history: museum work, or the production of film, television, and radio documentaries.

Ultimately, our graduates are actively and productively engaged in any number of fields more or less closely related to history: they are working as union organizers and community health activists, writers, editors, publishers and producers, making documentary films, serving as arts educators and media consultants, and teaching history at Oberlin College.

### History Department Faculty

#### LISA ABEND

Assistant Professor (B.A., Oberlin College 1986; M.A., University of Wisconsin 1992; Ph.D., Harvard 1998), teaches courses in early modern and modern European history. Current research interests include modern Spain, popular religion, history and memory.

#### MICHAEL FISHER

Danforth Professor (B.A., Trinity, 1973; Ph.D., University of Chicago, 1978), teaches survey courses in South Asian History, topical courses in Islamic South Asia, and colloquia on comparative colonialism in Asia and Africa, M. Gandhi, and the British Empire in Asia and Africa. Current research interests: early (17th to 19th century) Indian immigrants to Britain and political information control under pre-colonial and colonial states in India.

#### HEATHER HOGAN

Professor (B.A., Northwestern University, 1971; Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1981), specializes in Russian and labor history. She teaches the survey course on Russian and Soviet history, courses on pre-Petrine Russian history, the Soviet Union since 1945, Stalinism, and Russia in Central Asia. Current research interests: documentary history of Russian Central Asia.

#### DAVID KELLEY

Associate Professor (B.A., Dartmouth, 1970; M.A. Stanford, 1972; Ph.D., Harvard, 1986), holds a joint appointment in History and East Asian Studies. He is responsible for our offerings in Chinese history and has developed new courses on Vietnam, approaches to world history, and ethnicity and nation in China. Current research interests: social and economic history of the late Qing period.

#### CLAYTON KOPPES

Professor (B.A., Bethel College, 1967; Ph.D., University of Kansas, 1974), specializes in recent American history, U.S. diplomatic history, political history, and the history of film and popular culture in the United States. Current research interests: films, censorship, and propaganda.

#### GARY KORNBILTH

Professor (B.A., Amherst, 1973; Ph.D., Princeton, 1983), teaches courses on inter-cultural dynamics in colonial North America, the American Revolution and Early Republic, slavery and democracy in Jacksonian society, the American Civil War and Reconstruction, American industrialization, and Native American history to 1900. Current research interests: race and opportunity in Oberlin from the 1830s to the present.

#### CAROL LASSER

Professor and Chair (B.A., University of Pennsylvania, 1973; Ph.D., Harvard, 1982), teaches courses on U.S. history, including women's history, slavery and antislavery, and Oberlin history. Current research interests: intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender, including a case study of the town of Oberlin, 1833-2000.

#### SHULAMIT MAGNUS

Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and History (B.A. Barnard College, 1972; Ph.D. Columbia University, 1988), teaches about Jewish history, women's history, German history, and issues of autobiography.

#### PABLO MITCHELL

Associate Professor (B.A., Swarthmore, 1992; M.A. University of New Mexico, 1995; Ph.D., University of Michigan 2000), teaches courses on Latino/Latina history, gender and

sexuality history, and U.S. West. Current research is on constructions of identity on the U.S.-Mexican border.

#### ANNEMARIE SAMMARTINO

Assistant Professor (B.A., Rice University 1996; M.A., University of Michigan 1999; Ph.D., University of Michigan 2004), teaches courses in Central European history, gender history, intellectual history, and the history of migration. Current research interest is on migration and the crisis of national identity in Germany after World War I.

#### LEONARD V. SMITH

Frederick B. Artz Professor (B.A., Oberlin, 1980; Ph.D., Columbia, 1990), teaches modern European history with courses on World War II, twentieth-century Europe, Gender in European History, the Body as Historical Subject, and the French Empire. Author of *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division During World War I* (Princeton, 1993) and *France and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2003). Current research interests: French soldiers' testimonies of World War I.

#### STEVEN S. VOLK

Professor (B.A., Brandeis, 1968; Ph.D., Columbia, 1983), teaches courses on Latin American history (both the colonial and national periods) as well as U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America, peasant political movements in Latin America, gender in Latin American history, and nations and nationalism. Also teaches Museum Studies. Current research interests: Frida Kahlo, national identity, U.S. policy in Chile, and the historical memory of the 1973 Chilean coup.

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