

Thematic Concentrations

Gender and Sexuality (Ball, Bokovoy, Davis-Secord, Florvil, Gauderman, Hutchison, Leong, Massoth, Ryan, Withycombe)

In all societies, people articulate and represent relations of power through gender and sexuality. Gender grows out of, and in turn structures institutions and material conditions. At a biological level, most human beings encounter the world through bodies that are similar in most regards, but different according to variations that make us male and female. But what those differences mean to us—culturally and materially—are questions we work out socially. Gender varies from place to place, and time to time, but gender is present in all societies. In order to understand how history is gendered, we need to know women's history. The field of women and gender history, in research, teaching and method, will engage historical topics including: sexuality, work, family, religion, education, law, art, politics, technology, and environment.

Race and Ethnicity (Bieber, Bokovoy, Davis-Secord, Florvil, Gauderman, Jefferson, Leong, Massoth, Richardson, Sanabria, Truett)

Understandings of race and ethnicity shape modern day social relations much as they have shaped the historical past. This field examines how notions of race and ethnicity are defined, sustained and transformed over time and explores how political, social and economic consequences that arise from competing ideas of racial and ethnic identity. We do not see race and ethnicity as discrete phenomena; instead we will examine the ways in which they overlap or merge both ideologically and in terms of identity-based political and social movements. Concepts of culture and cultural change will also be incorporated into this field.

Frontiers and Borderlands (Ball, Bieber, Bokovoy, Davis-Secord, Florvil, Gauderman, Hutton, Leong, Massoth, Monahan, Richardson, Ryan, Sanabria, Smith, Truett)

Envisioning a frontier as a “peripheral geographic area where economic and political incorporation is not assured, and where the outcome of cultural encounters remains in doubt” permits exploration of multiple forms of cross-cultural influence: power, trade, migration, ideas and identity. Conceiving of borderlands as geographical spaces that are both land- and sea-based also allows an exploration of imperial (and non-imperial) relations in the broadest possible context. This is a field that seeks to generate dialogue between diverse geographical regions such as the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

War and Society (Ball, Bokovoy, Davis-Secord, Herrán Ávila, Hutchison, Hutton, Jefferson, Richardson, Smith)

War has been defined as “the violent clash of organized social units” and such clashes have taken place from the beginning of recorded time and in all parts of the world. It has shaped and reconfigured local, regional, national, and international borders, relationships, and systems, and prompted social, cultural, and political changes. Internal wars and revolutions profoundly impact civil society. War is capable of being studied from a wide variety of perspectives including traditional military history and political analysis of the role that war may play in state. More recently, historians of war have adopted methodologies from economic, social and cultural history. They have begun to look at the consumption of wartime propaganda and military culture and the material and emotional experience of the non-combatant, the effects of war on gender

identities, and the dynamics of military regimes, paramilitary organizations, and the blurring of the historical distinctions between “war” and “peace.”

Science, Medicine, and Environment (Gibbs, Monahan, Ryan, Truett, Withycombe)

This thematic field focuses on the ways that science, the body, health, ecological systems, and human environments have shaped (and have been shaped by) cultural values, social interactions, political dynamics, economic exchange, and the biosphere. It seeks to better understand the intended and unintended environmental and health consequences human developments have wrought. It also explores the ways in which knowledge and society are mutually constitutive, especially how knowledge, health, and environments—as the meeting points of human and non-human worlds—both structure and respond to historical change.

Religion (Davis-Secord, Gauderman, Graham, Herrán Ávila, Hutchison, Sanabria, Ryan)

This field deals with the interplay of spiritual beliefs and secular power, an enduring and difficult historical theme. Religious belief and practice have helped to shape political, social, cultural, and intellectual forms over time. In some cases (ancient Europe, early Islamic Middle East) state and religious practice have been all but synonymous. In others such as medieval Europe, religion has simultaneously opposed secular government and provided the theoretical framework on which that government’s legitimacy depended. At various times, religion has provided an ideology for conquest and colonization (the Crusades, the sixteenth-century European expansion) and doctrines of resistance and revolution (European reformation, modern liberation theology). Religious texts have provided the intellectual foundations for erudite and obscure theological speculation, while at the same time popular festivals and ceremonies for the same religions were helping to forge common cultural and state identities. Spiritual impulses continue to motivate mass social action and provide inspiration for intellectual and artistic endeavors. This thematic focus, therefore, highlights a historical theme of broad importance that will enrich most any future program of teaching and research.

Politics and Economy (Ball, Bieber, Bokovoy, Connell-Szasz, Florvil, Herrán Ávila, Hutchison, Hutton, Jefferson, Monahan, Prior, Ryan Sanabria, Smith, Truett)

This field deals with the many ways in which societies allocate resources, distribute power, and administer populations. Political decision making and economic restructuring have long been leading explanations for historical change, and we therefore focus on the particular dynamics of governance, law, state formation, production, trade, and consumption. Students will be trained to recognize politics as encompassing international diplomacy, public culture, the instrumentalities of dynastic and democratic states, and popular movements, as well as the exercise of small-scale, everyday authority through status, comportment, persuasion, violence, and resistance. The economic realm is likewise broadly defined to include everything from local subsistence and barter economies to national and imperial markets to capitalism and globalization.