

GENERAL SESSION AGENDA

Monday, November 4, 2019

11:55 a.m. – 1:20 p.m., Seminar Room 5257, Mosse Humanities Building

- I. Approval of October 7, 2019 minutes (attached)
- II. Announcements and updates
 - A. JCOTA – Abadie
 - B. GS Town Hall update on HGSA
- III. For discussion or action
 - A. Re-imagining graduate funding
 - B. 701 Survey results (attached)
 - C. History First-Year Review

GRAD PROGRAM EVENTS

11/07	HSMT Colloquium – Memorial Library
11/11	F&S Meeting
11/11	History Colloquium – Curti Lounge
11/18	Department Meeting
11/18	History Dept Roundtable – Curti Lounge Featuring: Mou Banerjee, Ainehi Egoro, Finn Enke, and Brenda Plummer
12/2	Next Grad Council Meeting

Graduate Council
GENERAL SESSION MINUTES

Monday, November 4, 2019

11:55 a.m. – 1:20 p.m., Seminar Room 5257, Mosse Humanities Building

Present: Dennis (Chair), Houck, Rock-Singer; Abadie, Normand; Cerepak, Crifasi, Lehrer, Walsh

Absent: Ciancia, Hennessy, Gramer

- I. Minutes of October 7, 2019 meeting – Approved
- II. Announcements and updates
 - A. JCOTA – Report by Abadie
 - B. GS Town Hall update on HGSA – Report by Crifasi
- III. For discussion or action
 - A. Re-imagining graduate funding – Report by Dennis
 - B. 701 Survey results - Discussed
 - C. History First-Year Review – Tabled

HIST 701 SURVEY RESULTS

In early September an online survey was sent to all current History grads and to alumni who have graduated within the last 7-years. Of the 262 recipients, 56 responded to the survey (21%). The survey provides a general (anecdotal) view, from the student perspective, of Hist 701 as taught over the past decade.

1. What parts of the course were most useful?

When people found this course useful, it was for the consistent sense of community it provided with their cohort, and the built-in time it provided for them to talk and bond weekly. A few people liked the brief intro to professors and their different subdisciplines. A few others noted that the most useful part of the course where when professors spoke about practical elements of graduate school, especially getting started in the first year. A few also used it as a way to figure out which courses or seminars they might want to take in subsequent years. In general, most valued the time spent with their cohort over the actual content of the course.

“This sounds silly, but it was just useful to see and get a taste for certain professors, as well as other students outside your field. My class was too large to establish meaningful connections in that setting, but if it had been smaller, it would provide an opportunity to meet new people--especially because it was timed before lunch time, so you could eat together afterward.”

“Community-building with my cohort (especially since it was gigantic) and faculty; getting a sense of the diversity of approaches and methodologies in the profession.”

“Meeting and becoming familiar with my cohort was very nice. Meeting the professors and being able to speak with them about their careers was great, too.”

2. What parts of the course were least useful?

Some noted that it felt stressful to have to attend on top of everything else that you have to deal with in the first year, and the readings and talks, for the most part, did not help or stick with students, though some were interesting at the time, since they rarely had relevance to what students were studying. A few wrote that the entire seminar felt like “busy work.” Because of the disparate readings and speakers, the course and discussions felt haphazard and too freewheeling to be productive. The purpose of the course was also not made clear, so its importance was not clear, which meant it just felt like extra work. If the purpose of the course was to introduce new students to faculty, some felt that also failed, as the group discussions were too incoherent and instill any continuity or purpose to the course. Several students also remarked this was a waste of time, and did not understand why it could not have been 3 credits, since other courses with similar time commitments were also 3 credits.

“Readings and discussions didn't feel very relevant for our first year. For example, I remember having a discussion about whether History should be a book discipline. I was so far from thinking about that question when I was so new to the field!”

“The readings were not very useful. At this juncture, it felt as if we should have been introduced to the lessons provided by this strategy during our undergraduate studies. In addition, having the addition readings in the first term, when I was adjusting to a new level of workload, left me unable to really dig into anything beyond a superficial level.”

“Each area of focus felt like a "one off event." We discussed a field and then never really returned to it, or discuss how it might connect to our own field of interest. The most obnoxious thing was the free wheeling discussion. There was little organization or control. This was problematic when we were all a bunch of nervous first-years who thought we had to talk as much as possible to impress others. Thus discussions were not particularly thoughtful. I should probably be included here. Furthermore, the online discussion had no bearing on the face-to-face component - it felt like busy work.”

3. What changes, if any, would you recommend for the future?

Several respondents wished that the course had a clearer focus and its goals were stated more explicitly. Others recommended that the course serve more as a “how-to”: practical readings and advice on broader subject matter (including, but not limited to, how to use the library, how to use archives, and how to put together a CV) instead of readings related specifically to all of the different fields represented in the department. There was also a desire for continuity – that the same person with institutional knowledge teach, or be in charge of at least some aspects of the course every year.

“Teach more skills that would be useful for being a graduate student, teacher, and researcher. This could be an opportunity to learn about maximizing our productivity as learners, learning about effective ways to teach history to undergraduates, and actually learning skills we could use researching.”

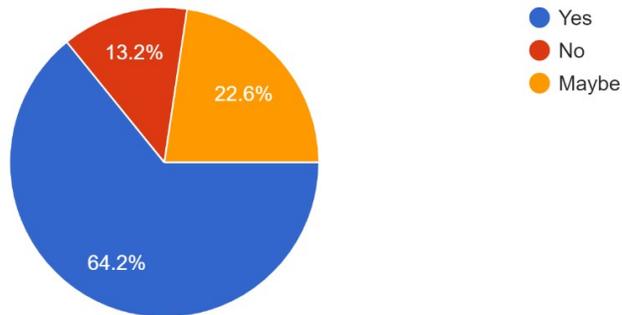
“Make this class about helping grad students understand the requirements for MA/PhD - most students remain clueless about the procedure and schedule of completing an MA/PhD. Next, teach grad students how to approach and work through the types of assignments required by grad seminars and the grad program. For example, explain how we do the following things: write an M.A, a dissertation prospectus, a funding/grant application, a historiography essay, a journal article, etc. The Department assumes that incoming grads know how to do these things, but we do not. We need better instruction on how to outline, structure, and write.”

“The class should be more about developing a broad range of professional skills that mark out a recipient of a PhD as what they ought to be: a professional.”

Question 4

We are considering developing a 2-semester 701/702 sequence to cover orientation to the faculty of the grad ... you have preferred this course design?

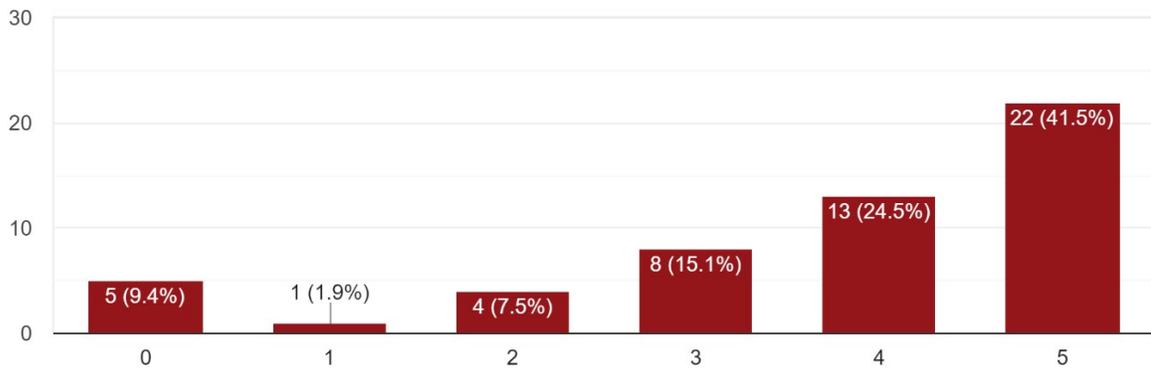
53 responses



Question 5

Please rate your level of support for a 701/702 two course sequence.

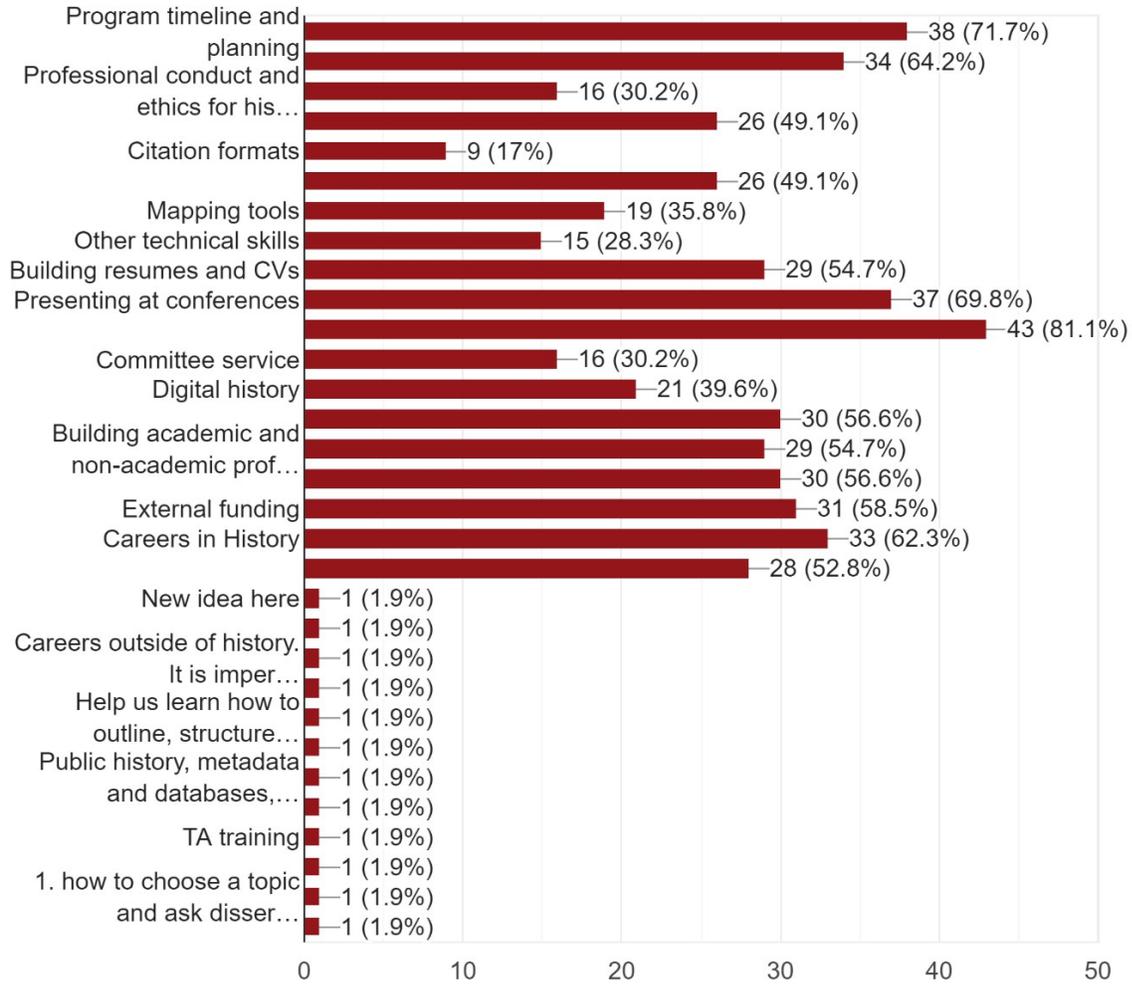
53 responses



Question 6

Please check the professional development topics listed below, that would have been relevant or useful to you your first year in the program.

53 responses



6. Do you have other comments or suggestions that were not addressed by the questions above?

Respondents reiterated that the course needs a clearer focus and explicit goals. Some stressed keeping the course “low-stakes”—one semester, one credit, and pass/fail—while one or two advised expanding it to a three-credit course to give it more importance. Some respondents questioned the timing for introducing professional development--the first year is good for some topics but years two and three may be a better for other topics. One respondent recommends directing students to other professional development resources on campus.

“To learn about the topics listed in the question above could be helpful, especially if each one is conducted by a faculty member. However, the time I put towards the course could have been better spent on other things and taking it for a full year would have been a burden.”

“Focus on practical, professional aspects and supports to help students find employment in their field.”

“I think that topics like digital history, public humanities, metadata, and technical skills for curating information/teaching online/data analysis are good to expose students to, but could easily overwhelm a new student. New grad students don't need to think that they have to do everything, but should know there are many paths available to them. My priority would be exposure to tools students could use in the future. Also, what should be driven home more than anything is that UW has a lot of resources for graduate students to learn/practice/get job experience with these tools and that these experiences can lead to jobs in ways they might not expect. Faculty may not always want them to pursue part time work or projects that distract from the dissertation but often these provide mental health boons/opportunities for the future. “

“I cannot stress enough that I believe this should either be a three-credit course or abandoned completely. The short semester, ungraded, less-credit format sends the signal that this is not an important part of your early life as a graduate student in the department. “

“I think it would be best to focus this on being a graduate student at UW-Madison. Really focus on what are expectations for students HERE, how should students expect to interact with faculty HERE, what type of work, teaching experience is helpful for students graduating HERE. What resources are available HERE. Some of the other stuff (external funding, building resumes, CVs) are covered better by workshops at the Writing Center (though let students know about the writing center and what it does - testimonials are the best), or at the library (bibliographic management), or simply by looking up historian blogs online (digital history, careers in history, external funding). Provide access to content that students cannot get from other campus organizations or simply look up online. We know how to use Google, help us understand the stuff we can't just find via a search engine.”