

The Future of History in the Liberal Arts

Organizational Committee

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Description

The historical discipline is, in many ways, at a crossroads. The past two decades have seen remarkable changes to society at large and to the historical profession in particular that have brought both extraordinary opportunities and significant challenges. The ongoing diversification of history faculty, the development of digital tools enabling a fascinating array of innovative scholarly and pedagogical projects, and the increase in interdisciplinary and cross-regional historical study have all begun to revitalize the discipline. Simultaneously, however, the rapid pace of technological change and shifting social and curricular priorities have at times led to lower enrollments and fewer allocations of tenure-track lines.¹ Moreover, even as the world and historical scholarship have changed, the requirements of major curricula have not always reflected the new opportunities of civically engaged and digital scholarship and other changes in scholarship and pedagogy.

We propose a one-and-a-half day workshop of history faculty, hosted by Macalester College in late May 2019. This workshop seeks both to reflect on the state of historical pedagogy and to begin identifying possibilities for the future of history in the liberal arts. We envision two plenary sessions, with at least one devoted to the relationship between history curriculum and new media, as well as a series of roundtables, panels, and open discussions.

Our workshop's primary goal is to broadly examine both the opportunities and the challenges facing history departments at liberal arts colleges today. We will particularly focus on curricular issues, devoting attention to how departments can best meet the needs of both majors and non-majors, while developing courses that attract students and emphasize the importance of the discipline of history to the liberal arts. We hope these

¹ The American Historical Association has tracked these shifts at the national level, as described extensively in recent issues of *Perspectives*.

conversations can both inform ongoing curricular discussions and potentially impact the broader course of history curricula at our home institutions and beyond.

Central questions we hope to address include:

1. How can history departments take advantage of changing pedagogies, new research agendas, and changes in technology to revitalize their curricula and strengthen the liberal arts?
2. Are there ways that history curricula should respond to changing enrollment patterns, whether by attracting new students (through changes to intro courses or other gateway classes) or by emphasizing new skills and approaches to the past?
3. How can history departments make a stronger case for their discipline to administrators, students, and parents? How can we form new partnerships with career offices, college admissions, and other groups?

We will send an email survey to participants a year after the workshop to identify ways in which the event shaped history curricula and pedagogy at AALAC member schools. We also plan to host a follow-up roundtable (or pair of roundtables) at the 2020 American Historical Association annual meeting, focusing on the history major in the liberal arts curriculum, history enrollments, or both. Finally, the workshop organizers will submit a co-written article to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* on the workshop theme.

Participants

We will seek history faculty participants from among AALAC member schools. A number of faculty have expressed interest in potentially attending the workshop. These potential participants include:

Michael Guasco, Associate Professor of History, Davidson College

Darin Hayton, Associate Professor of History, Haverford College

Jeffrey Jackson, Associate Professor of History, Rhodes College

Jane Mangan, Professor of History, Davidson College

Tomás F. Summers Sandoval, Jr., Associate Professor of History, Pomona College

Linda Sturtz, Professor of History & Chair, Macalester College

Seungjoo Yoon, Associate Professor of History, Carleton College

We look forward to attracting a large applicant pool, with the goal of selecting approximately 20 participants for the workshop, scheduled for late May in St. Paul.