





Dear colleagues, students, and friends,

This booklet introduces the Department of History at the University of Basel. History in Basel means many things. It means having a multifaceted choice of courses and research that range from antiquity to contemporary history, from historical anthropology to global history, and from Johannesburg to Petersburg. It means getting to know the oldest university in Switzerland. It means encountering a broad array of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Above all, it means living in a vibrant city at the confluence of three countries and cultures, and being in a place where the transnational and the global are part of everyday life.

We hope you will find this booklet informative and enjoyable – and hope to see you soon in Basel!

The members of the Department of History

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of Study

The Department of History provides an attractive environment to study for the B.A. and M.A. The historical sciences are taught in their full methodological variety and theoretical breadth, and address all the epochs. The program of study is closely tied to current issues and debates in history, yet also offers numerous ways to gain practical experience in vocations that are historically oriented.

Historical depth is central to Basel's program of study. The broad basic education at the Bachelor's level covers the four major epochs of ancient history, the medieval era, the early modern period, and modern and contemporary history. These epochs are also the focus of the Master's level modules.

Both Bachelor and Master's programs emphasize working in small, manageable groups. Students learn to conduct independent historical research in seminars that range from introductory to advanced. These seminars ask students to produce papers and essays, and support in helping to craft such work is provided by writing workshops.

The program at Basel emphasizes theoretical and methodological reflexivity in historiography. Students address the many approaches and perspectives used in the study of history, and discuss the central debates that shape and have shaped the discipline.



B.A. in History – basics Studying history at the Bachelor's level provides a broad, fundamental introduction to the field. Students learn the methods and techniques of the discipline, and acquire basic knowledge of the four epochs. The curriculum consists of introductory, epoch-oriented, and advanced level work and culminates in producing a comprehensive piece of writing. In studying "archives-media-theories" students address theory and methodology, work up source documents, question the media they work with, and acquire their first practical experience at archival work. A choice of elective courses gives students opportunities to address a freely chosen area of study in greater depth. At the B.A. level, the study of history is combined with studying a second discipline.

M.A. in History – classic Studying history at the Master's level builds on a prior B.A. history degree and is combined with concurrently studying a second discipline. The M.A. prepares students for a broad range of vocations such as in the media, in the areas of culture and communication, or in politics and administration and is the gateway to pursuing a doctorate in history. It also provides an entry point into training to become a teacher at the higher secondary level, as well as to launch a teaching career. Study at the M.A. level gives students the opportunity, both in ordinary and research seminars, to address various epochs and research approaches in a more intensive manner. Individual interests can be pursued in supplementary courses. Following their personal vocational or career plans, students can augment their study by emphasizing research linkages, acquiring competencies in syntheses, through exercises in facilitation, by gaining practical experience in a research-oriented vocation, or through methodological and theoretical reflexivity. At the heart of the M.A. lies the independent production of a research-oriented Master's thesis; students craft these in close cooperation with an experienced member of the Department.





M.A. in European History – broadly conceived

The M.A. in European history offers students a full, research-oriented, program of study. While Basel provides both its geographic and academic context, this program aims at providing comprehensive knowledge of European history from a perspective at once transnational and methodologically reflective. It is organized in a manner that spans the epochs and gives insight into various European regions and geographic spaces. It also examines specific areas and subjects in European history, as well as the methods and reflections relevant to European historiography. Characteristically European issues of identity, conflict, and interrelationships are addressed in their full historical depth and complexity, but also in light of wider contexts and perspectives, such as by including peripheral regions or through the decentralizing view provided by African perspectives. The M.A. gives students a good understanding of contemporary Swiss and European societies, and is grounded in the foundations as well as difficulties of European history and of Europe itself.

In preparing for their Master's thesis, students choose one of seven subjects: Pre-modern, Modern, Renaissance(s), African, East Euro-

pean, Swiss, or Gender history. In these research-oriented subjects of study, the courses offered in European History are closely coordinated with those offered through the Basel Graduate School of History. A core part of the M.A., in addition to a Master's thesis, is the study of a complementary field, intended to help students expand their knowledge across different disciplines.

M.A. in East European History – specialized

The M.A. in East European History allows interested students to specialize in a particular region. The emphasis in Basel's program is on Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The program of study encompasses a compact set of courses with three regional emphases: the history of Russia and the Soviet Union, the history of Southeast Europe, and the history of East-Central Europe. The curriculum focuses on cultural, comparative, and international relations questions. Research-oriented courses prepare students for





writing their Master's thesis. Students' current projects are discussed, along with theoretical and methodological questions, in the interdisciplinary research colloquia. Excursions to Eastern Europe give students an opportunity to deepen their knowledge on site and to gain new perspectives. A prerequisite for starting the M.A. in East European History is a finished B.A. that contains historical and East European elements. This M.A. program requires knowledge of the relevant East European language(s) and is combined with the study of a second discipline, typically Slavic Studies.

Studying History in Basel In the context of a modularized curriculum, studying history in Basel also gives scope for students to create their own program from the broad courses on offer. With increasing progress through the program, students can create an individually-tailored program for themselves. Such students might focus on particular epochs (such as the pre-modern or modern era), orient their coursework geographically and spatially (such as by focusing on Swiss, European, East European or African history) or have a theory or concept-driven focus on gender history, the history of knowledge, or on historical visual culture.

Mobility during the program of study Our students have many opportunities – little bureaucracy is involved – for spending a semester abroad at a different university. Basel students thereby enrich both themselves and the Basel program through their international experience and the knowledge gained in other university cultures. The Department of History is part of the ERASMUS/SOCRATES program and has partner arrangements with more than 50 universities in 29 European nations. As part of the EUCOR consortium of upper Rhine universities, Basel students can commute to history events in Mulhouse, Freiburg im Breisgau or to the three universities in Strasbourg. Agreements on domestic mobility also mean students can study at other Swiss universities.





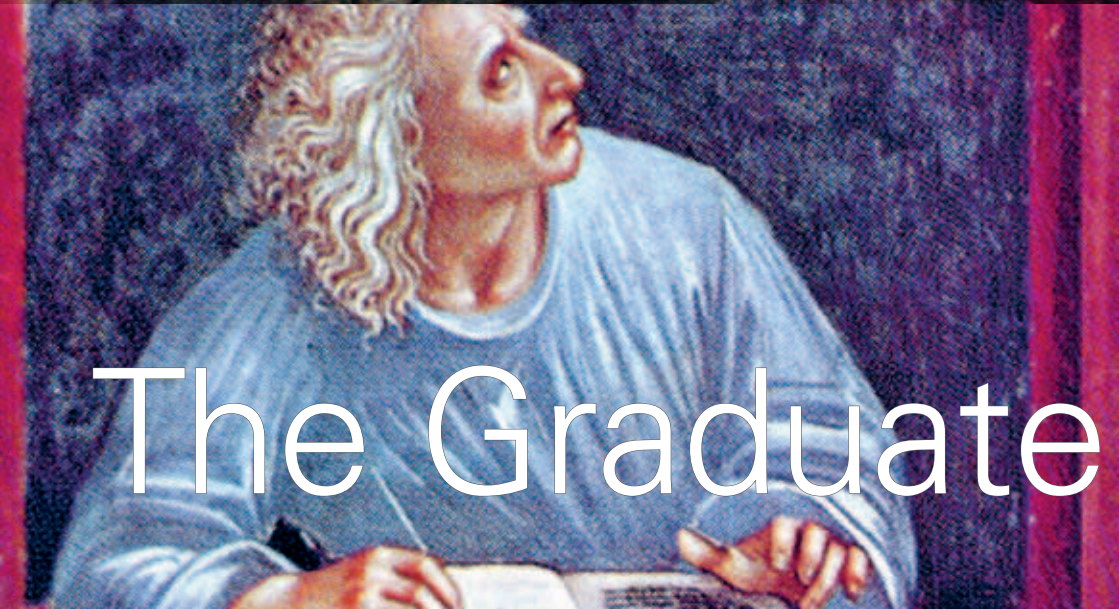
Practice and Vocation Practical or vocationally-oriented activities along with coursework projects are highly valued in the M.A. curriculum. Students transform the results of their research projects into exhibits, displays, or even walking tours of the city. Excursions allow students to deepen their understanding on site, and can be augmented by internships in the region's cultural institutions.

Archives and History The treatment of sources is an important part of the history program at Basel. Practical exercise sessions and research seminars provide introductions to archival work, and motivate students to engage in independent research and source analysis. To this end, Basel's Department of History works closely with national and regional archives, including those of the half-cantons of Basel-City and Basel-Country, the canton of Aargau, the Swiss Business Archive, the Archive for Contemporary History, the prince-bishopric archive in Porrentruy, the University Library of

Basel, the Archive of Mission 21, and the Basel Africa Bibliographies. Student access to all of these archives ensures that the practical use of archives and of media can be learned on site. What is conveyed, among other aspects, is source-oriented research and close reading, as well as archival and paleographic knowledge.

History, addressed interdisciplinarily Basel students use the complementary fields they also study to acquire greater interdisciplinary competence. Courses taught in history reflect the transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary intertwining of the discipline itself. Furthermore, the Department participates in research projects and curricula with African Studies, European Studies, East European Studies, Gender Studies, Jewish Studies, Science Studies, Educational Sciences and Cultural Topographies, and profits from the stimuli emanating from neighboring disciplines.





The Graduate

The Basel Graduate School of History (BGSH) provides doctoral students in history with a structured program for their graduate studies. The core at the BGSH is the research project of the individual doctoral students. These are understood as the independent products of a future generation of scholars and as contributions to innovations in historical research. A solid grounding in the discipline is as important at the BGSH as is the ability to go beyond the boundaries of the discipline.

An attractive doctoral program The BGSH has about 40 doctoral students at present, and they take part in various forums devoted to scholarly exchange (research colloquia, workshops, conferences, summer schools). They also take advantage of the numerous specialized courses offered. Students themselves also organize scholarly events, which are funded by the BGSH. Doctoral students thereby have opportunities to pursue their own dissertation projects in a context that is challenging in terms of theory, methods and curriculum.

International Network The BGSH is very well-connected internationally. It is a founding member of the Graduate Interdisciplinary Network for European Studies (GRAINES), a network of graduate schools and partner arrangements in Germany, France, the UK, the U.S. and various East European countries. This permits BGSH members to be active at the highest international levels and take advantage of guest stays at prestigious institutions abroad.

Starting Stipends Finally, the BGSH awards a number of starting stipends every year for students wishing to begin their doctoral studies. Award winners, working with mentors in the Department of History, use this support as a basis for securing multi-year funding for the remainder of their doctoral studies.

School



Research

Research in the Department of History is conducted in various areas in medieval history, early modern history and modern history. A detailed overview of current research projects can be found on the websites of the department and of the individual professors. The Department is particularly active in research in European history, the Renaissance(s), East European history and African history.

European History The core research areas in European History are the foundations, traditions, developments and problems of contemporary European societies. Geographically, the primary focus is on the history of Western and Southern Europe, Switzerland, as well as Eastern Europe. By drawing comparisons with the history of Africa, the European history focus is decentralized and placed in a global history context. By emphasizing Europe as an object of research “in relation to,” various universalizing claims that have characterized the writing of European history can be shown to themselves be the result of historical phenomena, and hence also an object of self-reflective study.

The construction of “Europe” and the fundamental processes underlying it are examined throughout various epochs, using different dimensions of historical depth and spatial perspectives. These include the development of particular political institutions in the modern era and the origin, function and meaning of economic systems and cultural practices. The perspectives expand geographically beyond Europe’s borders, and extend intellectually to include the development of discursive formations and social orders, as well as the persistence or change in gender relations.

The various types of inner-European relations are considered (in the multi-perspective approach to writing of transnational history called *histoire croisée*) as is the intertwining of Europe and non-European societies and cultures. The Department also takes full account of the Europeanization of large parts of the world, as part of globalization and integration processes which have come about due to interstate transfers, international organization and international relations. In terms of methods, the approaches used are micro-historical, comparative, transnational, and global-historical.



The History of Africa In the Department of History, African history forms part of the university’s larger core research focus on Africa. This emphasis in the Department both gives Basel’s African Studies an historical dimension and sharpens the global history emphasis in the Department of History. The Department of History’s core research focus on African history is of international standing, abetted by its long-established cooperation with the unique archives and collections available through the Basel Africa Bibliographies at the Schlettwein Foundation and the Archive of the Basel Mission. Research in the Department addresses all of sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular emphasis on southern Africa. The research emphasis on Africa is very well networked both nationally and internationally, including with the UK, the U.S. and South Africa. Empirical projects are pursued in colonial history, post-colonialism, and in the history of science.

Renaissance(s) The “Renaissance” can be taken both as a reference to a particular epoch and as a less time-bound figure of speech. Basel’s research focus on “Renaissance(s)” emphasizes both meanings and relates them to one another. In the first meaning, it aims to understand “the Renaissance” (14th to 17th centuries), as a particular historical epoch, in all its cultural, socio-economic, aesthetic and political arrangements or ramifications. An historical realm and space is thereby opened up in a particularly interdisciplinary manner, providing opportunities to build bridges to other fields, disciplines and epochs. The research focus on “Renaissances,” on the other hand, is on a figure of speech which utilizes history to present the past as forward-looking. Seen as a discursive category, “Renaissances” allows us to analyze how societies make use of pieces of the past to change – or renew – themselves. This sense of “engaging in a renaissance” earlier was regarded as a specifically European projection or argument. More recently, the emphasis on globally oriented (if not entangled) sites of mediation makes it possible to productively move beyond such a Eurocentric narrowing of perspectives.



By linking “Renaissances” with “the Renaissance,” it becomes possible to fruitfully relate the discursive and historiographic potential of these categories.



East European History Basel is a vibrant center for research in Eastern Europe in Switzerland. Since 1991, a chair for Eastern European History has been part of the Department of History, and contributes to the Basel’s research profile in European history. East European History at Basel addresses the full historical and geographic sweep of this region, both in research and teaching. The specific emphases are on modern and contemporary history, the history of Russia and the Soviet Union, and the history of East Central Europe. Thematically, the focus is on cultural, social, and spatial history questions. Core research areas include the history of mobility and the perception of space in the Tsarist Empire, autobiographical practice in imperial contexts, tourist and environmental history in East Central Europe, the cultural history of diplomacy, as well as remembrance and historical culture in East Central and Eastern Europe. East European history at Basel, through its participation in numerous international research projects, contributes substantially to the international standing and networking of Basel’s Department of History.

A 125-year



history

A Practice-Oriented Education: from the first chair in history to founding the Historisches Seminar (1659 – 1887)

The Department has a long history, and until 2012 it was called the Historisches Seminar. The University of Basel, the oldest higher education institution in Switzerland, was founded in 1460 and at inception, humanities disciplines were part of the Faculty of Arts. This faculty provided the fundamentals needed for studying in the higher Faculties of Theology, Jurisprudence and Medicine. It was only in the 17th century, when the Faculty of Arts became the Philosophy Faculty, that the study of history was upgraded. In this era the first chair of history was created, in 1659. It was part of the study of administration (Kameralwissenschaft), a practice-oriented education intended primarily for students from noble or patrician families preparing themselves for careers as military officials or civil servants. For many years, this remained the only professorial chair in history. Jacob Burckhardt, who taught at Basel from 1858 to 1893 and who advocated a universal history based in the study of culture and the humanities brought international renown to this professorship. His “The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy” (1860) remains one of the standard works on the Renaissance.

The Historisches Seminar was founded in 1887 during Burckhardt’s tenure. As is common in German-speaking Europe, the term Seminar initially referred to a form of education which embraced both research and learning. Together, professors and students created a common working environment, and one could readily learn how to independently study historical sources in this context. Soon, there were also permanent rooms provided for doing so, and thereafter, the Historisches Seminar no longer referred to the type of learning but to a specific place and institution.

Awakening through Differentiation: the Historisches Seminar in the early

20th century. Soon after the Seminar’s founding, specialist subdivisions emerged, and in 1905, the Seminar was organized into four independent areas: Universal History, Swiss History, Contemporary History, and Ancillary Historical Studies. Universal History dominated, as it had the only professorial chair in the Seminar. The other areas of specialization aspired to play a greater role, though for the time being they had to make do with lecturers and non-tenured professorships.



As it was not based on permanent professorships, the internal diversity in the Seminar was only weakly institutionalized. So a long-expressed desire for a second professorial chair was revived, and it finally came to fruition in 1915 with the appointment of a second full professor in the discipline, Hermann Bächtold, who taught universal History. In 1925, Emil Dürr, who had held an untenured position, was given a professorship in history, but in a form (*ad personam*) that did not create a permanent chair or position in the Seminar. Finally, in 1937, a third professorial chair was established in the discipline, in Ancient History, but it was administratively placed in its own Seminar.

Universal history experienced a renaissance in the 1930s at Basel, with members of the Historisches Seminar using the perspective of universal history to provide a counterweight to an increasingly nationalistic environment. Universal history as an approach followed the French *Annales* school, and combined social, economic and cultural history. Emil Dürr accommodated such notions in order to renew the study of political history and to open paths for new interpretations of Swiss history. But this new departure did not bear fruit, as both Bächtold and Dürr died unexpectedly in 1934. At least the cultural history approach did not die out entirely, as Werner Kaegi, the first occupant of the renamed specialist professorship for Medieval and Modern History in 1935, was a specialist on humanism.

Rejuvenation also came to Swiss History that year when Edgar Bonjour was appointed to the renamed second chair, which was now assigned to Modern General and Swiss History. Bonjour began working on his comprehensive history of Swiss neutrality in the 1940s, and in this context, as well as through Dürr's inspiration, the Historisches Seminar became an important locus of new evaluations of Swiss political history. In the 1960s and 1970s, such initiatives culminated in reconsiderations of Swiss historical culture.

Growth and Reorientation: Developments since the mid-twentieth century

In the following decades, the Historisches Seminar saw impressive growth, paralleling the international growth of interest in the discipline. On average, only 3 to 5 students had participated in history courses in 1887, but by 1934 that number had risen to 15, and by 1969 to 300. Those who studied history as their major subject swelled from 48 (1935) to 450 (1969). The Historisches Seminar responded to the growing demand by expanding its teaching staff and by doubling the number of professorial chairs, in a wave of new appointments from 1968 to 1972. It was also a time of conceptual reorientation. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Early Modern historian Markus Mattmüller was instrumental in introducing Annales methods to Swiss historiography, and also in giving considerable impetus for work on historical demography, agrarian history and the history of the working class in Switzerland. At the same time, Hans Rudolf Guggisberg introduced Anglo-American perspectives, drawing attention to both the U.S. and Spain, and fostered interest in the Reformation and humanism. With the arrival of Herbert Lüthy in 1971, Basel welcomed an internationally recognized economic historian to its faculty. Lüthy did not shirk from making pointed observations, particularly with respect to Switzerland, about contemporary issues. Finally, the appointment of the medievalist František Graus ushered in a methodological renewal by broadening the view of the medieval era by incorporating perspectives from social history and the history of mentalities.

As social history began to establish itself as a new paradigm, it triggered a series of critical reflections and innovations. The Historisches Seminar in Basel played an active part in enriching and developing the social history perspective through the attention it devoted to historical anthropology, memory culture, research based on testimonials, and historical culture studies.

Since the 1990s, there have been debates about the blind spots involved in writing a history called “universal” or “general.” Initially, this debate focused on gender-specific lacunae. Women’s and gender history had been fostered early in Basel, and starting in the 1980s, the Historisches Seminar became one of its centers in German-speaking Europe. It proved difficult to institutionally anchor this interest, but the efforts finally bore fruit with the establishment, in 1997, of a professorship in Women’s and Gender History.

The spatial focus of the historical sciences was also criticized. Calls to go beyond history written from the West European perspective were answered first by establishing a professorship in East European history in 1991, and ten years later, by also establishing a professorship in African history. With these additions, Basel firmly anchored its institutional ability to take broader perspectives into account. Basel has the basis for understanding current developments, up to and including the transnational and global perspectives historiography now is moving towards.



Not only is Basel the location of Switzerland's oldest university but it is also a city where the quality of life is high and social and cultural life rich. The city has 170 000 inhabitants, and lies on both French and German borders; Basel is thus at the heart of a tri-border area holding more than 800 000 people, and internationalism is an integral part of both city and university life. Basel has a tram system which reaches into neighboring French and German communities, and the university works closely with the other universities in the region, including those at Freiburg and Strasbourg. Basel, as a city with modern architecture and well-known trade fairs, such as Art Basel, has an international flair augmented by the city's vibrant art and cultural scene. At the same time, the city is compact and accessible, with varied town quarters, bars and restaurants, and attractive leisure opportunities – including the annual summer mass swim down the Rhein River. The Department of History is centrally located, and close to Basel's main train station. The most important university buildings – the library, the main (Kollegien) university building, the cafeteria, various institutes – are not far and lie clustered in and around the Petersplatz or in the alleys of the old town. Foreign and Swiss historians cherish Basel for its rich research resources and its many excellent libraries, archives and museums. The border location of the city is reflected in university life as well: the university is very internationally oriented and has an extraordinarily high percentage of foreign students.

in Basel



The Department



Officially founded in 2012, Basel's Department of History succeeds the 125-year-old Historisches Seminar, and is now one of six departments in the Faculty of the Humanities at the University of Basel.

The Department has eight professors who are, together with about 100 staff members, responsible for research and teaching in the historical sciences. Approximately 900 students currently study history at Basel.

The History Department Library. This specialized library contains 56 000 volumes, and they address all the research areas found in the Department. It is a non-lending reference resource for teaching and research purposes, and it co-operates closely with the University Library. The History Department Library has modern technical equipment, a comfortable reading room, and generous opening hours. It offers excellent conditions in which students, staff and faculty can work.

Go to: geschichte.unibas.ch
> Bibliothek/Library

Research Projects. A broad range of research activities are carried out in the Department of History. Currently, about 30 separate research projects are being conducted.

Go to: geschichte.unibas.ch
> Forschung/Projekte

Publications. A list of the publications produced by faculty and teaching staff can be examined at:
geschichte.unibas.ch
> Forschung/Publikationen or
> Forschung/Neuerscheinungen
as well as on the webpages of the respective individuals.

Research Colloquia. Speakers from abroad and from Switzerland present the results of their current work in research colloquia in the Department that are devoted to the pre-modern era, the Renaissance, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, East European history, gender history, and African history. The list of current colloquia programs and other information can be found at:
geschichte.unibas.ch
> Forschung/Kolloquien

Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte. The Swiss Journal of History is edited at the Department of History. Published by the Swiss History Association, this is the oldest professional history journal in Switzerland; it publishes current research about Swiss history and on more general historical topics.
Go to: www.retro.seals.ch or
www.rzg-rsh.ch/de/zeitschrift

History of the University of Basel (online). As part of the 550th anniversary of the University in 2010, the Historisches Seminar created an interactive internet publication about the history of the university. It can be consulted at:
www.unigeschichte.unibas.ch

Basel Testimonial Databank. This resource, part of a long-term research project, indexes testimonials (that are accessible in Swiss archives) which come from German-speaking Swiss who lived in the Early Modern era.
Go to: www.selbstzeugnisse.histsem.unibas.ch

Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft. This has been the publication series of the Historisches Seminar for generations, and is now the publication series of the Department of History. Published by Schwabe Verlag, its primary purpose is to publish dissertations written in the Department.
Go to: www.schwabe.ch
> bücher/reihen

