

What is History of Science?

History of Science is a field of inquiry that has evolved considerably since its oldest journal, *Isis*, was first published in 1912. It examines scientific ideas and their relationship to society. Some are more interested in how one idea led to another; some are more interested in individual lives and institutions; some are interested in technological applications; some are interested in social and political dimensions of science. All of these are legitimate.

What is the difference between History of Science and just a straight History degree?

OSU is one of a handful of institutions in the United States offering an intensive program in History of Science. Although we do not currently offer a separate degree in History, we encourage students to read widely and take courses in historical subjects unrelated to history of science.

If you are not interested in History of Science, but would like to pursue History as a field, you might be interested in the OSU Graduate School's Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies. History can be used as one of three fields.

What are your particular strengths at OSU?

We have faculty with a range of interests, and you should like at the faculty profiles. However, OSU should be a particular attraction if you are interested in life sciences, environmental sciences, public health and medicine, science and politics, or the philosophy of science. The extensive Ava Helen and Linus Pauling collection, as well as the Nuclear History collection, both at OSU's Valley Library, makes OSU an ideal place to do original research in the history of biology, biochemistry, chemistry, and nuclear issues in the second half of the twentieth century.

Do I need to have a research topic already planned out before I apply?

Not necessarily. You should have a sense of what you might like to pursue, but you should be flexible because your interests will likely evolve after you start the program.

How important is it to identify faculty with similar interests to mine?

Although you don't want to come to our program too focused, you should investigate faculty members, look at their publications, and imagine yourself working with one or two particular people. This is not set in stone and it can change, but identifying potential mentors is an important part of your application.

What faculty members are most involved in the program?

Any of our History faculty can mentor a student. However, at OSU we have History HST courses and History of Science HSTS courses. One way of estimating the receptivity of faculty members to mentoring or working with graduate students is to look at who teaches the HSTS courses. We also have faculty who teach in Philosophy (PHL) who are strong in philosophy of science and have strong links to our program.

What graduate courses are available?

You should plan to take HSTS courses and selected HST and PHL courses. Our courses are either 1) graduate seminars or 2) “slash” courses. The latter are 400/500 courses in which there are a small numbers of graduate students, but most of those enrolled are junior and senior undergraduates.

How large is the History of Science PhD program?

At the time of this writing (2012), there are about a dozen graduate students in History of Science, and we expect the numbers to range between 10-20 at any given time.

If I only have a Bachelor's degree, but I want to get my Ph.D., do I need to apply for the Ph.D. program or the M.A./M.S. program?

Students who have not completed a master's degree in history of science should apply to the master's program even if the intent is to pursue the Ph.D.

Do I need to take the GRE?

Yes.

What kind of writing sample is acceptable?

Include a well-written writing sample from a history course, if possible.

Who should write my letters of recommendation?

Your letters should be written by people who have been in a position to evaluate your ability to think, write, and contribute productively to an academic setting. For most people, this means you should ask your professors to write letters for you.

What percentage of students get jobs after they receive their doctorates?

We don't have percentages about jobs, because that will depend on what kind of job you seek. We do have Ph.D.s who have gone on to faculty positions, though these are quite competitive. Pursuing your professional goals will depend not just on getting the Ph.D. itself but on your own self-motivation, research skills, writing discipline, and willingness to communicate your ideas to students and to other scholars through teaching and publication. We can help you with that.

What is the acceptance rate?

We do not have a strict acceptance rate. We look for students who are capable and who appear to be a good fit for our program.

Will OSU offer me financial support?

We do offer a limited number of financial packages to incoming students, on a competitive basis. These typically involve working as a graduate teaching assistant or graduate research assistant.

Do I have to apply separately for funding?

No.

Should I get in touch with individual faculty members prior to making my application?

This is not required, but it is a wonderful way for us to get to know you, and to talk about the possible fit with our program.

What is the best way to get in touch?

Email.

If I want to talk about application mechanics and don't want to bother faculty with my questions, is there someone I can email or call?

Yes. Contact David Bishop, our Academic Coordinator. His email is david.bishop@oregonstate.edu and his office phone is 541-737-8918.