

Report on “2-4 Project” for History of Science and Medicine (HSHM)
7 April 2007

HSHM (History of Science and Medicine) is one of two Ph.D. programs in the Department of History. HSHM has its own policies, programs, and requirements, and very early on the HSHM faculty elected to submit its own, separate report on how the concerns and issues raised in the “2-4 Project” might best be addressed in our own graduate program.

To that end, the DGS for HSHM established both faculty and graduate student committees on the Project. During the fall term, faculty members discussed the Project at two faculty meetings; graduate students held a separate luncheon discussion about the Project; and members of the Program discussed issues together at our annual fall Student-Faculty Retreat. The DGS also met with students—both with individual students, and with two graduate student liaisons for the Project review—to talk together about their recommendations, questions, and concerns.

At the same time, the participation of some HSHM graduate students and the DGS in some History discussions on the Project underscored the extent to which our own deliberations and recommendations could benefit from discussions regarding the History Ph.D. program, coordinated by the History DGS. Rethinking components of our graduate program, we concluded, was best done by taking into account the reflections and recommendations about graduate education produced by the rest of History.

Accordingly, we proposed that the optimal course for our Program would be to postpone our final discussions and recommendations until we had the chance to read and reflect on the recommendations submitted by the History DGS. The Department of History approved its recommendations at the end of January. Both those recommendations and the possible changes that had come to the fore in our discussions were revisited at an evening meeting of HSHM graduate students and faculty members, held at the home of the DGS, and at a subsequent faculty meeting. Our faculty approved the recommendations that follow on 26 March 2007.

It should be stressed that while the recommendations that follow address components of our graduate program that we think can be improved by change, in some ways an equally important part of the process was our collective examination of other aspects of our program that we concluded were best left unaltered (e.g, the current structure and approach to evaluation of required qualifying examinations). Equally, the 2-4 Project occasioned extensive discussion about other aspects of our graduate program—e.g., the context in which students prepare their dissertation prospectus—without leading to recommendations that, at this juncture, we feel would be an improvement on current practice. Discussion among faculty and graduate students on such issues is now on our ongoing collective agenda, and the long-term changes in our program are likely to go beyond the recommendations we are now proposing.

Course Work

Recommendation 1:

Develop a new, required graduate seminar on historiography and methods in the history of science and medicine.

Recommendation 2:

Incorporate elements of the History 700 model into the existing two-semester sequence of introductory graduate seminars, "Introduction to the History of Medicine and Public Health" and "Introduction to the History of Science," with several HSHM faculty members rotating through the seminars for class discussion based on one of their own books.

Graduate Student Teaching

Recommendation 3:

Students, with approval from the DGS, may teach in the second semester of their second year, and those students who elect this tack may defer taking one of their required courses until the third year.

Our reasoning here is that many of our graduate students are well prepared to begin teaching by the second semester of their second year. Equally, because students ordinarily teach for four semesters, starting that teaching in the second year will provide greater flexibility for our students to, for example, (1) devote the entire first term of the 3rd year to orals preparation; (2) devote the entire second year of the 3rd year to prospectus preparation; or (3) devote at least one term in either the 3rd or 4th year entirely to archival research away from New Haven. Ordinarily during the teaching term, students will reduce their course load by one class. The remaining course may be taken in their third year, as a regular class, as an orals preparation tutorial, or as a dissertation prospectus tutorial.

Evaluation

Recommendation 4:

Every HSHM core faculty member who is an instructor for a course in which a HSHM graduate student enrolls must provide a brief but substantive written evaluation of that student's work to the DGS and to the student's HSHM graduate advisor.

Recommendation 5:

At the end of each academic year, each student will select one more examples of their best written work produced during that year to submit for inclusion in their file.

Both of these moves are designed in part to help assure that the end-of-year written evaluation provided to each student conveys a full and helpful sense of faculty assessment of that student's progress in the program.

Graduate Student Handbook:

Recommendation 6:

The DGS will prepare a HSHM graduate student handbook, developed in part from the graduate student handbook that is to be drafted for History but adapted to the special requirements and needs of HSHM students.