

HISTORICAL STUDIES AT THE NEW SCHOOL

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Understanding Large Social Processes

Much of contemporary social analysis concerns inescapably historical processes: transformations of capitalism and socialism, growth of national states and systems of states, major population changes, international migration, creation and destruction of social classes, shifts in family structure, revolution, war-making, urbanization, and related changes. These processes belong to history in two fundamental ways. First, they take time to unfold; anyone who looks only at a moment of the process -- including the present moment -- runs a great risk of mistaking its character. Second, they cling to time and place; how they happen varies significantly from one time and place to another, as a direct consequence of events in previous times and places. People who want to understand these large processes have no choice but to examine them in historical context.

Recognizing the strategic place of historical analysis, students of social life have created a series of specialties that bridge the gap between the discipline of history, as usually practiced, and the social sciences. These specialties go collectively by many names: social history, economic history, historical demography, historical and comparative sociology, and so on.

The most cogent of them ignore disciplinary boundaries and organize around the study of a structure or a process. Studies of the changing organization of production, for example, obviously draw on economic analysis, but also typically deal with demographic problems. Historical studies of conflict and collective action, which might seem to fall into the province of sociology, generally pay extensive attention to the structure of government, and frequently take up economic and demographic changes as well. The coherence of such studies does not rest on their attachment to conventional disciplines, but on their pursuit of structures and processes having a continuous historical presence.

To the extent that analysts of present-day social change fix their attention on large structures and processes, they have much to learn from the histories of those structures and processes. The point is not that history repeats itself. On the contrary, it is that the world changes constantly, but changes systematically, with each historical moment setting the opportunities and limiting the potentialities, of the next.

The past works through the present. The American Baby Boom of the 1950s, for instance, shapes the American present and future in the form of a population bulge that is inching up, year by year, through the labor force, across the housing market, athwart the health industries, toward the age of pensions, Social Security, Medicare, and nursing homes. Less visibly but no doubt just as profoundly, the successive experiences of the Depression, World War II, the first atomic bombs, the Korean War, the Civil Rights movement, and the Vietnam War pervade contemporary American politics both as a set of disputed collective memories and as formative moments for one generation after another. Past capital accumulation constrains the present volume and distribution of capital, as past collective action and its outcomes shape the probabilities of present collective action.

Sometimes contemporary observers rule out the relevance of history on the ground that things now change too fast for past regularities to hold, or on the ground that some fundamental change has altered all the rules. We often

hear the claim that the possibility of nuclear destruction renders the lessons of all previous warfare irrelevant. That claim itself deserves historical scrutiny. It deserves scrutiny in the form of a review of previous occasions on which a new means of destruction has produced a break with the past and in the form of a sustained comparison of present-day warring with its counterparts in the past. The least that can result from such an inquiry is a better specification of the ways in which the present is, in fact, distinctive.

Systematic historical analysis, then, is not merely a diverting luxury. Nor is it simply a means of assembling cases for present-oriented models of human behavior. It is a prerequisite to any sound understanding of large-scale social structures and processes.

The New School's Programs in Historical Studies

On that premise, the New School for Social Research is founding an overlapping set of graduate programs in Historical Studies. Established in 1984, the New School's Committee on Historical Studies (CHS) offers graduate training in history and a Graduate Faculty social science field (economics, political science, or sociology). The program complements the established strengths of New School graduate training -- its critical approaches to social theory, social reality, and systematic empirical analysis. To these traditional strengths, the Historical Studies program adds that of training social scientists who place contemporary analyses in the context of long-term changes in economic, social, and political structures, and who use historical materials as evidence in the development and elaboration of social-scientific theory.

The program encompasses multiple approaches to historical problems. Its goals are:

1. to train students to perform analyses based on historically grounded theory, and
2. to promote rigorous, theoretically informed investigation of historical problems with the best systematic evidence available.

In order to accomplish those goals, it relies on close collaboration among historical researchers -- students and faculty alike.

The study of economic history and the history of social theory are securely established at the New School. The Committee on Historical Studies graduate program complements these fields of inquiry. The primary mission of CHS is training scholars in the social sciences to use historical methods and materials in studies of structural and cultural change. The program provides its students with practical experience in using primary sources to construct historical accounts, addressing theoretically formulated problems.

The Historical Studies program organizes an important part of its teaching into continuing proseminars. These seminars involve a number of graduate students and faculty members, last several years, acquire their own research materials, and provide informal practical training and advice to their less experienced members. They take up large but well-defined historical themes, such as

rebellions and revolutions

capitalism, states, and collective action

industrialization and proletarianization in regional perspective

gender, family, and household

cities and urbanization

rural social and economic change

bureaucratization and statemaking

interrelations among war, welfare, and taxation

class formation

population change.

The topics of the proseminars reflect the range of theory, method and substantive knowledge in the Graduate Faculty's social science departments. They cluster around themes in the current work of faculty who teach the orientation courses and lead the seminars. The first proseminar, founded in 1984, is studying class formation.

Initially, the seminars are focusing on the period since 1500, and on Western and Mediterranean Europe and the Americas. The research faculty and their students constitute the seminars; the minimum set of people required to propose a new seminar consists of two faculty members and two graduate students. Their interests define its limits. As the faculty involved change and their research evolves, and as members with interests outside the West join, the topics considered, the periods, and the geographic areas covered will change as well.

The Curriculum

A student entering Historical Studies and economics, political science, or sociology with solid undergraduate training in history or that social science will receive a Ph.D. after three intensive years of coursework, plus examinations, research, and dissertation. Students who lack strong backgrounds will spend additional time in coursework. The programs are primarily doctoral programs; nevertheless, students will receive master's degrees on completion of standard requirements. The model program in economics (in the Appendix) illustrates a standard course of study. Students in anthropology who wish to work in Historical Studies may take CHS courses as electives and fulfill all CHS requirements within the Anthropology graduate program.

The first component of the graduate curriculum in Historical Studies and economics, political science, or sociology is a linked pair of one-semester seminars of orientation to historical studies; all students take them in common. One is a historiographic seminar examining key works of central

importance for historical studies today. The other examines sources and how they can be used; here students' main activity is the preparation of a short research paper emphasizing exploration and use of primary sources. Typically, entering students take the orientation seminars in their first year.

~~The second major component is the set of continuing proseminars.~~ In each of them several faculty members and students, from Historical Studies and elsewhere, undertake inquiries into problems suggested by the seminar focus while pursuing narrower aspects of those problems as individual projects. Ordinarily starting in their second year, each student will participate for at least two years in one proseminar (the student's "major"), and at least one year in another; students will continue to participate (while "maintaining status", i.e., without tuition) for a third year in their major proseminar while writing their dissertation. In the second or third year, then, students will work in two proseminars at once. (That arrangement should widen students' choices, make it possible for them to change their minds, and provide information about student interest in different subjects and approaches.)

Students joining a proseminar will use their developing historical bibliographic, linguistic, and quantitative skills to prepare materials for their own projects and for the collective use of seminar members. (Students receiving support tied to the program in Historical Studies may have extra obligations in these regards.) Senior and returning members of the proseminars -- advanced graduate students and faculty -- will serve as mentors to new students individually or through topically-organized working groups.

In the proseminars, student activities include a series of standard training experiences:

1. Students first prepare annotated bibliographies and bibliographic essays which provide them both topical and time/place knowledge; they also write short research papers and a proposal for their major research paper.
2. In what will become their major proseminar, students write a long research paper on the topic of the proseminar, to be evaluated by faculty members within and outside the seminar.
3. Dissertation-writing students undertake individual research programs and writing on the subject of their major proseminar, and receive guidance and criticism from other seminar members.

The proseminar will, we hope, become an environment for learning and teaching by practice in history and the social sciences. Proseminar work will receive course credit in both Historical Studies and social science departments, following agreements between the program and departments.

Students will acquire historical knowledge of at least two fields defined by period and geographic area; they will gain that knowledge from individual work, proseminars, other New School courses (for example, the two-term sequence in economic history, GE 267-268), and/or courses at other New York universities. They will demonstrate this knowledge by written and oral examination. Students may petition to substitute for one of the time-place fields a comparative field covering a major block of time and at least two

national settings. A student might, for example, propose an examination in the comparative study of revolutions and rebellions, in European industrialization, or in American vs. European class formation.

In the spring of each year, members of all current and planned proseminars will organize a day-long conference to which all Graduate Faculty staff and students will be invited. Graduate students will play the major role in organizing the conference. (Depending on local interest and the availability of funds, the organizers may invite an outside keynote speaker, or several outside commentators.) At that conference, the members of proseminars will report on their work during the year, discuss the CHS graduate program in general, and propose plans for the future. The proposals may include establishing a new proseminar, disbanding an established proseminar, reorganizing, changing a topic, merging with other seminars, or continuing the same project. Most proseminars will continue for four or five years without major reorganization.

As the number of students in the Historical Studies program increases to a maximum of 20 students entering per year, new proseminars will form. Proseminars will be open to students and faculty within discipline-based programs and from outside the New School, to the extent that participants do not exceed an optimal 12 to 15, and with the express provision that all participants will share the work of organizing and conducting the seminar. Spectators and occasional participants generally will be unwelcome.

New proseminars will form on the proposal of at least two faculty members and two graduate students in Historical Studies. The faculty members will take organizational responsibility for their operation, but graduate students will participate fully in planning. Although the main concerns of all proseminars will be historical, faculty with contemporary interests in the same area will -- subject to the limits already stated -- have an opportunity to join as regular members or as invited speakers.

Students will complete requirements in their major social science field according to departmental rules. The Committee on Historical Studies and each department collaborating in joint sponsorship of graduate students will work out mutually acceptable means for meeting departmental requirements. The aim is to make each student competent to teach and do research in at least one of the New School social science disciplines, as well as to become an effective historical researcher. Preliminary and qualifying examinations will occur on departmental schedule.

Other CHS requirements include demonstrated competence in one foreign language, and literacy in quantitative and qualitative analysis. The language chosen must be relevant to the student's research and to the bibliography of his or her field. Students may demonstrate that competence by means of a) a bibliographic survey of a literature in the language and germane to the work of a regular proseminar, b) a research report analyzing substantial materials in the language, or c) examination.

Competence in quantitative analysis will normally be achieved through a two-course sequence teaching standard descriptive and analytic statistics, use of computers for these purposes, and preparation of machine-readable data sets for quantitative analysis via these techniques. Quantitative competence may be demonstrated by a) successful completion of designated courses, b)

submission of a report on research including collection, preparation, computer-assisted quantitative analysis, and interpretation of evidence concerning a historical problem, or c) examination.

Within the major proseminar, each student will prepare a dissertation prospectus, to be approved by hearings in both proseminar and department. Faculty drawn from their department and the Committee on Historical Studies will supervise the dissertation; the oral defense committee will include representatives from both units. The Ph.D. will be granted by the department in its discipline, with the added notation "and Historical Studies," in a manner conforming to state regulations.

Admission to the Program in Historical Studies

Persons wishing to enter the program must apply to both the relevant department and the Committee on Historical Studies. Ordinarily, students will be admitted to the MA program of a department and to Historical Studies. Additional screening by Historical Studies will occur at the same time as the student qualifies for admission to the departmental Ph.D. program. Exceptional students identified on initial application and supported by Graduate Faculty prize fellowships will be admitted to doctoral studies in Historical Studies contingent on their satisfactory fulfillment of field requirements and record in the first two years. In general, the CHS Admissions Committee will give strong preference to students who have already received the equivalent of a good undergraduate education in history, or the social science discipline in which they plan to major, or both. The Graduate Faculty awards three year prize fellowships on a competitive basis to some of its best-qualified incoming students; others may receive research assistantships, or New School tuition and work study grants.

The Center for Studies of Social Change (CSSC)

CSSC serves as the research complement to the Committee on Historical Studies. It supports research on large-scale structural change, and provides means for faculty and students in the Historical Studies programs to pursue their own investigations. Major themes of research at the Center include:

- * the development and change of capitalism
- * the formation and change of national states
- * household, work, and family
- * inequality
- * class formation and class conflict
- * collective action
- * proletarianization
- * urbanization and urban structure
- * migration and population change

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CSSC promotes collective empirical inquiries involving both graduate students and faculty. For that purpose, it provides:

- * workspace

- * access to equipment, data, technical information, scholarly publications, and supplies

- * contact with other researchers

- * facilities for the organization of seminars, colloquia, and other discussions of research problems and results

- * informal training in technical research skills

- * contact with research centers elsewhere, especially in Western Europe

- * help in planning the organization, financing, administration, and reporting of research

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On the other hand, it provides almost no clerical services, on the assumption that members will be able to do their own typing and clerical work by means of its extensive computing facilities.

The computing facilities include shared use of a Hewlett-Packard 3000/39 computer via a dedicated line connected directly to the Center's computers; high-speed communications equipment to mediate access to the HP 3000; a number of Hewlett-Packard microcomputers (in principle, one machine per work station), one of them with 15 megabyte supplementary disk drive; printers for each computer, including one high-speed letter-quality printer; modems giving access by telephone to the CUNY computing system and, via networks, to computers outside of New York; software including local communications systems linking the six internal computers, database manager, SPSS, spreadsheet, graphics, word-processing, and many utility programs. CSSC's machine-readable files include very extensive data on social change, conflict, and collective action in France, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, and other European countries.

Other equipment available at CSSC includes a microfilm reader-printer, photocopier, copy stand, and a number of other facilities for producing and viewing films of documents. CSSC's current microfilm collection includes a large volume of publications and archival documents from France, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, and other European countries. Paper files include extensive notes and photocopies of material in European archives, voluminous statistical material concerning social change in European countries, and about 100 shelf-feet of reprints, preprints, photocopies, and unpublished theses. CSSC has a small library of technical manuals, statistical sourcebooks, and directories.

CSSC maintains regular exchanges of ideas, materials, and personnel with a number of research centers in Europe, such as the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Present (Paris), the Institut fur Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte (Munster), and the Istituto Ernesto Regionieri (Florence). CSSC members have extensive opportunities to work in those centers, and to collaborate with

their researchers. Several researchers from European centers will work at CSSC each year.

CSSC will eventually provide regularly-assigned work space to about 21 people: approximately 12 graduate students, 5 faculty members, a faculty director, an administrator, and 2 research associates. Some of the students and faculty will typically be visitors from other research centers. In addition to these regular members, a number of part-time research assistants, students and faculty pursuing individual inquiries, and participants in colloquia, seminars, and informal discussions use CSSC facilities.

The New School contributes space, utilities, equipment, maintenance, a full-time research assistant or associate, a half-time administrator, a portion of the director's time, and a small quantity of supplies. Center members must pay for other services, special equipment, and supplies through grants or individual contributions. In return, they have priority in using the equipment and services.

CSSC is a collective enterprise. Its members help raise the funds necessary for its operation, contribute to its services, assist in its administration, and participate in its policy decisions. For this reason, it only admits to full membership researchers who spend the major part of their work time in the Center. However, it offers affiliation and participation to a number of people whose major bases are elsewhere, including other universities and research centers in the New York region.

The Center has several categories of members. They vary with respect to the length of their terms, the extent of their privileges, and the means of payment for the costs entailed by their affiliation with the Center. For the moment, the Center's director initiates and approves all appointments involving formal affiliation. As the Center grows, we will create a committee to screen applicants, assure equity in appointments, and review the rules governing eligibility, privileges, and sharing of costs.

Costs at CSSC

The costs are often invisible, but they are significant. Telephones, photocopy, supplies, equipment maintenance, and staff time cost money. Use of the library and of other university facilities likewise incurs significant expense. Since the Center has no endowment and a slim operating budget, the only way it can accommodate more researchers is by recovering those costs via grants or direct payments.

We make a crude distinction between general and special costs. General costs include the basic expenses of having people work in the Center:

use of space, including heat, utilities, and maintenance

use of common computing equipment: equipment located in the person's own workspace, access to common printer and main computer

a small quantity of ordinary office supplies: paper, pencils, envelopes, etc.

local telephone calls

common facilities on terms similar to those of the staff. Appointments as faculty associates ordinarily run for one academic year, with renewal dependent on the faculty member's active participation in Center life, as well as on a proposal for research activity that fits the Center's general program.

Student Associates are students who are working with at least one of the Center's Faculty members and are undertaking research that is relevant to the Center's general program. (Student Associates are ordinarily active candidates for degrees from the New School's Graduate Faculty.) Student associates have assigned workspaces, and have access to the Center's common facilities on essentially the same terms as the staff. Appointments as student associate generally run for one academic year, with renewal contingent on active participation in the Center's life and on involvement in research that fits the Center's general program.

Visiting Researchers are professionals from outside the New School who spend a defined term (generally no more than an academic year) working in the Center. They have assigned workspaces, and access to the Center's common facilities.

Affiliated Researchers are professionals from outside the New School who do not have assigned workspace, but do have access to its common facilities and do participate regularly in its activities. Appointments as affiliated researcher ordinarily run for one year, with renewal contingent on active involvement in the Center's life and on a proposal for research that is relevant to the Center's general program.

Hopes for the Future

Some of the conditions this paper describes as fact are actually hopes for the future. At this writing, for example, neither the Committee on Historical Studies nor the Center for Studies of Social Change has concluded any formal exchange agreements with European centers; for the moment, those agreements remain informal expressions of intention by the two parties. Again, in 1984-85 only one proseminar -- a large, lively group on class formation -- is in operation. But we are fairly confident that the elements we have enumerated will materialize by the end of 1985.

In the longer run, we have larger hopes: to provide every incoming student with adequate means for his or her research and immediate involvement in a substantial faculty-led research project; to establish several international communications networks for the conduct of discussions, the transmission of data, and the reporting of results in our areas of activity; to have a regular flow of overseas fellows to work at CSSC and in the Historical Studies program. In the meantime, the effort we have begun shows promise of creating a new kind of setting for historically-grounded social inquiry.

APPENDIX

Model Program in Economics and Historical Studies

		<u>Credits</u>
<u>Economics Requirements</u>		
MA requirements:	GE106, GE107, GE103 or GE105, GE120* one socio-economic formations course (may be economic history)	
	each course three credits	15
Ph.D. requirements:	four advanced theory courses and two quantitative methods courses	
	each course four credits	24
Ph.D. concentrations:	two courses in each of two areas (one may be economic history)	
	each course three credits	12
Ph.D. seminars:	four seminars, each three credits 9-12 expected to be CHS proseminars	12
<u>CHS requirements</u>		
	orientation seminar	6
	quantitative methods	0
	proseminars, 18 credits required, 12 double-counted as economics seminars	9
TOTAL		78**

* Titles of required courses:

- GE 106 Intro to Political Economy I
- GE 107 Intro to Political Economy II
- GE 103 Intro to Macroeconomics
- GE 105 Intro to Neoclassical and Keynesian Economics
- GE 120 Development of Economic Thought I

** Student may substitute an economic history course for a lower-level socioeconomic formation course, take theory as a second area, and take a seminar in theory; that would reduce total credits to 72. The Economics Department is reviewing Ph.D. theory requirements and may reduce them by one course, which would reduce total once again to 66.

N.B. An MA in Economics and Historical Studies is possible with 36 credits if student takes quantitative methods, CHS orientation seminar, and 6 credits proseminar in addition to Economics MA requirements.

Examinations

Written departmental qualifying examination after satisfactory completion of 45 credits, and oral examination after 54 credits.

Written and oral CHS examination after satisfactory completion of 24 credits.

Oral defense of dissertation.