Do You Want to Teach History in California Schools?

California does not offer a teaching credential in History alone. If you plan to teach a combination of History and the Social Science disciplines taught commonly in California middle and high schools (World, U.S., and California History, Geography, Economics, and U.S. Government/Civics in Grades 6-12), you will need a **Single Subject Social Science Credential** *after* you receive the BA. The information here will help you understand what is required and how best to prepare for a career as a middle or high school history teacher while still an undergraduate history major.

If you plan to teach at the elementary level, you will need a **Multiple Subject Credential** since K-5 teachers are responsible for many subjects taught to a single cohort of students. For more information about elementary education and the Multiple Subject Credential Program (MSCP), go to [www.sjsu.edu/elementaryed/](http://www.sjsu.edu/elementaryed/).

**Applying for the Single Subject Credential Program (SSCP)at SJSU:**

Read the materials at [www.sjsu.edu/secondary/apply\_now/application\_requirements/index.html](http://www.sjsu.edu/secondary/apply_now/application_requirements/index.html) to learn more about application details, deadlines, and financial aid. The section called How to Apply will explain how to gain the 45 hours of required Pre-professional Experience. You should get this experience while still an undergraduate if possible so your entry into the credential program is not delayed. Often, this work assisting public school teachers helps history students determine whether or not a teaching career is right for them.

In addition, you’ll need to take the CBEST, a Basic Educational Skills exam for prospective teachers, and the CSET, an exam to demonstrate subject matter competency in History and the Social Sciences. Both the CBEST and the CSET Social Science exam are offered throughout the year at numerous Bay Area sites. Credential program application deadlines are typically mid-semester to begin classes the following semester (for example, March 15 to begin fall classes), so you will need to time test taking carefully to avoid a delay between graduation and credential coursework.

**Preparation for the CSET Social Science exam:**

You can read more about the exam at [www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/test\_info\_CSET.asp?t=114](http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/test_info_CSET.asp?t=114).

Briefly, the Social Science exam is divided into three subtests. The first covers World History and Geography in 39 multiple-choice questions, 1 long essay, and 2 shorter essays. The second covers U.S. History and Geography also in 39 multiple-choice questions, 1 long essay, and 2 shorter essays. The third subtest includes 40 multiple-choice questions and 3 shorter essays covering Civics, Economics, and California History. History constitutes a majority of the secondary curriculum in California with Geography often taught in 9th grade and one semester each of Economics and Civics taught in 12th grade. As a result, the CSET Social Science exam is largely a history exam. 77 of 118 multiple choice questions and 7 of 9 essays focus on historical subjects.

For this reason, our faculty considers a BA in History the best possible preparation for the CSET Social Science exam and a career in secondary education. Most California universities, including SJSU, offer interdisciplinary BAs in the Social Sciences that waive the CSET, but those typically require more units than the BA in History. In addition, most school districts in metropolitan areas require teachers to pass the CSET even if they hold a degree that waived the exam when they entered a credential program. School districts want to publicize the percentage of their teachers who demonstrated subject matter competency by passing the exam. Quite simply, passing the CSET makes it easier to find a job in California’s urban and suburban school districts. And while classes in the behavioral sciences can be important additions to a teacher’s education, they do not prepare students directly to pass an exam focused on World, U.S., and California history. That said, a history major who wants to teach would be wise to choose electives and/or upper-division GE courses in Geography, U.S. Government, and Economics. For sample questions and preparation tips, go to [www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PM\_CSET.asp?t=114](http://www.ctcexams.nesinc.com/PM_CSET.asp?t=114).