Dear Future Carl,

I am delighted to hear of your interest in Carleton and in History. At Carleton, we are very fortunate in having a large departmental faculty, providing students with a rich and diverse curriculum equal to that of a large university. Each year we have a strong cohort of majors, and our courses each term profit from the many students across campus who take history out of interest and also to satisfy their course requirements. An inherently interdisciplinary field, history courses attract diverse students. Our courses not only equip students with knowledge of history of peoples and polities throughout the world from antiquity to the present but also help them develop advanced skills of research, analysis, interpretation, thinking, and effective expression that are essential in any field and career path.

The thirteen faculty members of the History Department have traveled widely and studied and pursued research around the world: Bahrain, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Israel, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Qatar, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Tanzania, Oman, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Colleagues in several other departments and programs (the American, Educational, Environmental, and European Studies programs, Classics, Political Science, and Religion departments) enhance these offerings still more. Our faculty interests range across almost all historical topics and problems, leading us to have a rich array of courses that often approach topics in unique ways. Currently, we offer eight fields of history: the United States, Ancient and Medieval History, Modern Europe, Asia, Africa and Its Diaspora, Latin America, the Atlantic World, and Health and Environment, which takes a global approach to the study of environmental, medical, and public health. Many courses in the department focus on the experience of women and diverse racial and ethnic groups. The varied backgrounds and interests of Carleton’s history professors reflect the department’s insistence on diversity.

While faculty members employ a range of approaches in their teaching and scholarship, we share important assumptions about learning history. We believe that wide and critical reading is essential for a broadening of knowledge and experience. In our courses, therefore, we cultivate deep skills in reading primary documents of all kinds (aural, visual, and written material) and learn to “listen” to the sources. We also believe that the abilities to build evidence-based arguments and to argue and to write effectively are crucial skills in the production of historical knowledge (and indeed any knowledge). We expect and value close faculty-student interactions whether in class discussion, small group meetings and seminars, one-on-one teaching and advising, or student assistance with faculty research. In these various ways and contexts, we seek to inspire and assist our students as they deepen their empathy for and understanding of the lived experiences of peoples of the past.
Our assumptions about learning history are embodied in our program in several ways. For example, in our introductory courses (History 100: Argument and Inquiry Seminars) the professor and fifteen students work intensively on a focused historical problem using both rich primary source materials and the latest scholarship. Our 100- and 200-level courses orient students to historical periods and specific problems, allowing them to build expertise. Many of our intermediate courses and all of our advanced courses are quite small, offering the opportunity for students and faculty members to get to know one another well and to work together as colleagues. We encourage and require majors and minors to pursue 300-level research seminars in which, in addition to intensive discussions of a focused topic, they write an original essay using both primary source materials and secondary scholarship. In their senior year, History majors work with a faculty mentor on a comprehensive exercise - a well-thought out, journal-article length paper that combines their own specific historical interests, their work in the department, and their skills as a historian.

We encourage our majors to travel abroad and to participate in many off-campus programs. History faculty members currently direct programs in Rome, the Grand Canyon, Berlin, and our newest program, Africa and Arabia. Our flexible requirements make it possible for students to combine a history major or minor with other majors, minors, and educational priorities (for example, a pre-med curriculum). The History department has also developed a group of courses that have public history components (e.g., public exhibitions, poster sessions, digital projects) and academic-civic engagement projects partnering with area public schools. Finally, we have several competitive department prizes that provide funding for several junior and senior majors to pursue travel and on-site archival or field research during the summer before or during our long winter break (Thanksgiving to January) their senior year.

Over the years, our graduates have embarked on a great variety of careers. The most frequently chosen include business, law, public policy, and teaching at both K-12 and the college levels. Our majors also go into medicine and public health, small business, journalism, politics, information sciences, and a myriad of other fields. Because of their strong skills in research, thinking, analysis, and writing, as well as their heightened awareness of complexity, difference, and interplay between individuals, groups, and structures, our history majors are well-prepared for the rigors of any graduate and professional school and have been highly successful in being admitted to the best programs nationally.

We hope that you will enroll in some history courses at Carleton. Please feel free to write me or contact me by e-mail at any time (syoon@carleton.edu). I am delighted to answer questions and to learn about your interests. Also, please visit our department website: https://www.carleton.edu/history/.

Sincerely yours,

Seungjoo Yoon
Associate Professor
and Chair of History

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