

Bradley Duncan

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Dr. Evdoxios Doxiadis
Graduate Chair
Department of History
Simon Fraser University

Dear Dr. Doxiadis,

My name is Bradley Duncan, and I am currently in my fourth year as a history major at the University of the Fraser Valley. I am writing to express my considerable interest in applying for the MA graduate studies program in history at Simon Fraser University.

I should begin with an admission: I never enjoyed the subject of history in my youth. My father was a history major, and high school's focus on memorizing names and dates from some incomprehensible past never piqued my interest. However, throughout my academic journey, I have developed a deep passion for history, and have come to see it as a lens through which I can better understand the complexities of our world. I have a diverse range of academic interests, and have come to appreciate the subject's ability to integrate and synthesize many other fields, making it well-suited to a curious mind and interdisciplinary thinking.

I have always had a strong interest in politics, policy, culture, and social issues, and I'm fortunate to be able to explore these subjects through my role as a student journalist — and virtually without fail, I use history as a guide. History serves as an invaluable teacher, offering insights into contemporary issues, and perhaps, guiding us toward meaningful solutions. Through my writing and analysis, I strive to contribute to the broader public conversation and advance our understanding of where we are, and how we got here. In a recent report on the housing crisis, I contrasted several of the federal, provincial, and municipal policies being implemented against past initiatives — both in Canada, and internationally.

In terms of my upper-level research interests, I have focused primarily on modern history (1800s-present), with particular emphasis on regions such as Russia/the USSR, Japan, Western Europe, and the United States. I am deeply intrigued by social dynamics and their relevance to our modern society. For example, increasing wealth inequality, the rise of populism, and the erosion of democratic values and institutions are not concerns unique to our times. I am convinced that history provides a roadmap for navigating

these challenges; whether those lessons are bestowed from the fall of the ancien régime in 18th century France, the Gilded Age of late-19th century America, or elsewhere.

These societal issues often go hand-in-hand with the shifting relationships between humans and work. Recently, I had the privilege of assisting The Abbotsford Historical Society in researching the history of labour and immigration in the Fraser Valley for an upcoming exhibit. For my part, I explored the intersections of globalization, geopolitics, economics, global development, immigration policy, and human rights legislation to convey the complex history and relationship between agriculture and migration in the region.

My connection to Simon Fraser University runs deep. Both my parents received their BA degrees from SFU, and I grew up on Burnaby Mountain, tobogganing in Burnaby Mountain Park in the winter, just down the hill from the campus. I have always regarded SFU as the school I would one day attend, and the university's esteemed history department further reinforces that desire.

I'm excited by the prospect of contributing to SFU's vibrant community and discourse, and I'm confident that the school's graduate studies program will provide me with the tools and resources to excel and make meaningful contributions to the field and our public conversations. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Bradley Duncan