



Graduate School Statement of Purpose Example for History (993 words)

As a child of Bangladeshi refugees who fled from war, famine, death, and other horrors I myself have never had to face, I was always attracted to the hidden facts behind the grand narratives of history; the little stories of small people who didn't leave an impact on major world events but lived, breathed, and worshipped just the same. My parents left everything behind in Bangladesh – their papers, property, lands, family, and friends. It was an erasure of not only their personal history but the history of generations who came before them. As I grew up, I became passionately interested in the history of my ancestors, perhaps as a way of making sense of my own experiences as a second-generation immigrant. I remember how once in grade school, we had to prepare a “family tree” project with the names and photos of our parents, grandparents, and so on. My mother started crying when I asked her for these details and photos; it was a traumatic reminder of all she had lost. I consider this genealogical tree my first history project, as I combed through the internet using the meagre information my mother gave me to supplement my bare project board with a few details. The internet wasn't very helpful and, needless to say, I proved unsuccessful in finding any information. But it fueled a passion in me for finding out all about where I had come from, and from there, I developed my interest in the social, cultural, military, and economic history of south-east Asia.

I pursued this interest all the way to college, majoring in history with a minor in anthropology, and it was in my undergrad years that my general interest in the history of south-east Asia crystallized into an interest in the politics of historical interpretation, especially in regard to women in pre-modern south-east Asia. The history of women's spaces, especially under patriarchal regimes, fascinates me; how oral traditions develop to combat lack of literacy, how their social roles shift and change in response to military and economic developments, and finally, how these historical changes constitute the present. Specifically, I am deeply interested in how women's spaces evolved as a result of colonial influences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I credit a wide range of authors, thinkers, and historians with molding my interests and refining my analysis. The latest papers by BW Anandya, Wazir Jahan Karim, and N Choi about the pathways to religious and political power for women in southeast Asia, profoundly opened up my mind to the possibilities for what we can learn from primary resources about these “lost” populations of history. On the other hand, the philosophical and sociological theories of Edward Said, Gayatri Chakrovorti Spivak, and Homi Bhabha provide the philosophical framework for how I approach my writing.

I have always followed my intellectual curiosity to take on challenging coursework and build a solid academic foundation for my intended pursuit of historical research. Apart from completing the most intensive coursework pertaining to Asian history studies in my department, I also took courses in British History, Postcolonialism, Anthropology, Philosophy, and Women's Studies, so as to round out my understanding of the key topics related to my area of interest. My professor also allowed me to complete independent studies



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and research projects in selected areas of my interest such as African American history in Canada and History of Hebrew Scriptures. The study of such diverse historical topics helped to provide greater context to my primary area of interest; I found many interesting parallels between the experiences of oppressed populations in different parts of the world. Three of my papers were published in our university's academic magazine, and I presented my paper on "Development of Oral Traditions in Women's Spaces" at the Annual National History Symposium in X year.

In my junior year, I got the chance to write an independent research paper about the historical figure of Savitri Bai Phule, analyzing her community ties from 1920 to 1935, within the framework of Spivak's concept of "strategic essentialism" and cross-cultural solidarity. This was a major milestone for me as I got the chance to work on my main area of interest while using primary resources on loan from University of Mumbai, including Savitri Bai Phule's journals, historical Times of India newspapers, and more.

I would love to continue my research into these and other unexplored histories of women in south-east Asia as part of the master's program at your university. With my personal background, academic proficiency, and focused historical interests, I think I represent an ideal candidate for ABC University. I look forward to working in an environment that encourages diversity, forward-thinking research, and cutting-edge investigative techniques. Your rigorous curriculum will help me refine my understanding of historical investigation methods and expand my consciousness of the cross-cultural socio-economic influences in pre-modern women's spaces. As an aspiring PhD candidate, I would love to get the chance to tap into ABC University's extensive network of primary resources, subject matter experts, and trailbreakers. I am very excited to work with Dr. Nina Gupta from the History of Southeast Asia department. I am in communication with her about her findings on historical distortion and its intersection with political agendas in colonial Southeast Asia, as it directly impacts the research I'd like to do. In fact, her encouragement and support motivated me to apply to your master's program!

My next big goal is to pursue a PhD, also from your university, under Nina Gupta's supervision. Through my master's education, I plan to work towards developing my expertise in Southeast Asian women's studies and making myself an asset for your PhD program. One day, I hope I can become a professor at a top university such as yours, so that I can continue my research into the rich and untapped veins of history just waiting to be investigated and pass on my love for the subject to interested young minds.