Institute for Research in the Humanities

July 1, 2026

William Coleman Dissertation Fellowship in the History of Science

Call for Nominations for 2027-2028
DEADLINE: Friday, February 26, 2027

The Institute for Research in the Humanities (IRH) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison is pleased to announce it will be offering one William Coleman Dissertation Fellowship in the History of Science for the 2027-2028 academic year. The William Coleman Fellowship is made possible by a generous bequest from Louise Coleman in memory of her husband, William Coleman, UW–Madison Professor of the History of Science. One fellowship is usually awarded each year to an outstanding graduate student in an advanced stage of writing a dissertation supervised by a faculty member in the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology degree program in the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. **Application is by departmental nomination only.** The deadline for departmental submission of the nomination to the IRH is **Friday, February 26, 2027**. Awards will be announced by the end of March 2027. The History of Science, Medicine, and Technology (HSMT) Program will create its own internal deadline; interested students should inquire with the Department of History for further information.

The Coleman Dissertation Fellowship provides a one-semester stipend ($15,500), plus tuition remission, segregated fees, and graduate student health insurance benefits. Shared office space will be provided, as well as printing, scanning, and photocopying privileges. Dissertation fellows are required to be in residence in Madison during the semester of their fellowship and expected to participate in the intellectual life of IRH by attending the weekly Monday afternoon seminar (3:30 – 5:00 pm) and by working from their office space during the semester that they are funded. Dissertation fellows may continue their association with the IRH throughout the academic year of their fellowship regardless of the semester chosen for the stipend/tuition remission/health insurance. Dissertation fellows are also encouraged to join the weekly afternoon teas, writing groups, and various other IRH events throughout the year. Schedule permitting, dissertation fellows are given the option to present at a Monday Seminar and garner feedback from the IRH community.

Nominees must have had their dissertation proposals accepted and should have written at least one chapter of the dissertation before applying.

The HSMT Program will select a nominee and send the required materials to the IRH for

final approval by February 27, 2027. The Department of History may nominate the same candidate for the Coleman and Dana-Allen Fellowships at the IRH or choose a different candidate for each fellowship competition.

Fellows may combine the Coleman Dissertation Fellowship with another semester of support within an academic year, but the Coleman Dissertation Fellowship may **not** be combined with another major fellowship (e.g., ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship, departmental awards), 33-50% project or teaching assistantship, or significant hourly position (over 15 hours/week) during the semester that the fellow is receiving their Coleman stipend from the IRH. The Coleman Dissertation Fellowship may not be deferred until a later date.

Professor William Coleman (1934-1988) was a distinguished historian of science who taught at UW–Madison from 1978 to 1988. He had previously taught at Johns Hopkins (1961-1978), where he rose to the rank of Professor of History of Science and Humanistic Studies. His association with UW–Madison began in 1970-1971, when he spent the year at the IRH while on fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies. He returned to the IRH from 1977-1978 while on fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In 1978 he was appointed Professor of the History of Science and History of Medicine and in 1984 was named Carol Dickson Bascom Professor in the Humanities.

Professor Coleman's original interests were in the history of zoology and evolutionary theory. He wrote two books in this area: *Georges Cuvier, Zoologist. A Study in the History of Evolutionary Theory* (1964); and *Biology in the Nineteenth Century: Problems of Form, Functionand Transformation* (1971). His interests then shifted toward the connection of science with social and political thought. He also wrote two books on this subject*: Death Is a Social Disease: Public Health and Political Economy in Early Industrial France* (1982); and *Yellow Fever in the North* (1987).

Professor Coleman served as President of the History of Science Society and was elected to the American Philosophical Society. We are grateful to Louise Coleman for establishing the William Coleman Dissertation Fellowship in his honor and to the late Ron Numbers, Emeritus Professor of the History of Science, for a memorial donation to this fund.

Nomination Materials

The nomination materials should be submitted to the IRH via email by the nominating department (*not* the student) and should compile the following items:

- Completed Coleman Nomination Form. The PDF form is available on the IRH website. The form is found in the "UW-Madison Dissertation Fellowships" section of the IRH fellowships webpage: https://irh.wisc.edu/irh-fellowships/ (scroll down to the expandable "internal fellowships" menu). Note that this application form

requires a short 100-word dissertation *abstract* that is different from the required dissertation *proposal*.

- Project/dissertation proposal. Up to 1,500 words (about 5 double-spaced pages of 12-point font). The proposal should include a description of the project and its significance, a chapter outline, a summary of work accomplished to date, and a plan of work to be undertaken during the fellowship term.
- Dissertation bibliography. Scholarship relevant to the project (up to 2 pages).
- *Curriculum Vitae*. Including work forthcoming and in progress.
- Letter of recommendation. From the student's dissertation director or advisor, which should address the significance and feasibility of the proposed research, quality of the proposal, qualifications for the project, past work, and potential contributions to and benefits from being a fellow at the IRH.

Nomination Submission

1) **For the student**:
   - Request a recommendation letter from your dissertation director/advisor well before your department's application deadline. Your advisor should send the recommendation letter directly to the department administrator or faculty member coordinating Coleman applications.
   - Carefully complete the Coleman Nomination Form (make sure you have the proper departmental contacts listed and that your dissertation abstract is capped at *100 words*).
   - Collect and prepare the following documents: 1) 1,500-word dissertation proposal, 2) two-page dissertation bibliography, 3) CV.
   - Combine the nomination form and the four items above into a *single* PDF and submit it to your department by its internal due date. (Note: your department may require additional materials. Check with your chair, DGS, and/or administrator.) The file should be named in the following format:
     Coleman.2027-2028.ApplicantLastName.ApplicantFirstName.pdf
2) **For the department Chair/Administrator/DGS**:
   - Once the department has selected the candidate it would like to forward to the IRH for consideration, it should combine the selected nominee's application packet pdf (see above) with the advisor's letter of recommendation. Save this as a single pdf file named in the following format:
     Coleman.2027-2028.NomineeLastName.Nominee FirstName.pdf
   - Send the pdf file to Susan Ridgely (susan.ridgely@wisc.edu) and Katie Apsey (apsey@wisc.edu) by Friday, February 26, 2027. With the following subject line: "Coleman Dissertation Fellowship Nomination, 2027-2028, [Nominee Name]"
   - *Note: Please communicate across the department regarding the nomination. Inform all parties (chairs, director of graduate studies, graduate coordinators, administrators, and the student's advisor/dissertation director) of the nomination to assure proper award distribution. The IRH will inform nominated candidates and the department of their acceptance before late March 2027.*

Deadline

- Deadline for nomination submission to department (by applicant): Determined by the Department of History; check with the department chair/administrator for the internal deadline, required application materials, and application process.
- Deadline for nomination submission to the IRH (by department chair, administrator, or DGS): **Friday, February 26, 2027.**

Inquiries

- For substantive questions about projects and proposals, contact the IRH Interim Director for 2026-27, Susan Ridgely (susan.ridgely@wisc.edu).
- For all other questions about this fellowship, contact Katie Apsey, IRH Associate Director (apsey@wisc.edu; 608-262-3855).