



SCOTTISH
ASSOCIATION
FOR THE STUDY
OF AMERICA

Sophia Jex-Blake Essay Prize

The Scottish Association for the Study of America

The Sophia Jex-Blake Essay Prize for an outstanding piece of work in American Studies by a secondary school student.

The Scottish Association for the Study of America (SASA) is thrilled to announce this year's Sophia Jex-Blake Essay Prize is now open for submissions. The Sophia Jex-Blake Essay Prize is for the best essay by a Scottish secondary school student, aged 15-18, on a topic relating to women, gender or minority studies within the Americas. SASA recognises a broad definition of the Americas and includes anything situated within North, South or Latin America, at any point in history.

Entrants are invited to write an essay on any topic relating to women, gender or minority studies within the Americas. **The work should be 800-1200 words in length.** The word count does not include a list of books/sources consulted (bibliography), but one must be included with your submission. The work may be part of ongoing/submitted coursework or could be an original piece (last year we received an essay on the history of Black music in America!). Below are some examples of potential topics, a handful of which are from the SQA curriculum, but please do not feel restricted by these – we welcome topics on anything and everything related to women, gender or minority studies within the Americas, especially if it's something you're interested in, or passionate about!

- Immigration to the US in the 1920s / Attitudes towards immigrants
- Civil Rights and Black Power
- Black Liberation
- The Civil War
- Race relations in the United States
- Women's History / Liberation
- The Transatlantic Slave Trade
- LGBTQ+ History / Liberation
- American Culture (music, film, tv, books, artwork, fashion)
- Black Lives Matter
- Latinx Identities and Culture
- Native American History and Culture

A selection of the SASA committee and external reviewers will anonymously judge all submissions. SASA will award the three winning authors a £25 book token as well as an invitation to attend our annual conference and accept their award at our AGM prize ceremony on Saturday, 2 March 2024.

The namesake of this prize, Sophia Jex-Blake, was a champion of education and equality. She travelled extensively within the United States and worked at the New England Woman's Hospital. Whilst at the hospital, she discovered a passion for medicine and women's education. In 1869, after years of rejected applications, she and six other women matriculated at the University of Edinburgh - becoming the first women admitted to study medicine in the UK. The women experienced extreme discrimination and, after completing their coursework and exams, the University refused to grant them degrees. Jex-Blake continued to advocate for women's education and practice medicine for the rest of her life, going on to found two women's medical schools and become the first female practicing physician in Edinburgh. The creators of this award found Sophia Jex-Blake a fitting and inspiring namesake, and emblematic of the type of scholarship this award hopes to promote.

The Sophia Jax-Diack Essay Prize is intended, in a small way, to answer some of the current issues facing American Studies scholarship within the UK both in subject matter and participants. We hope it will help to promote the study of women, gender and minority topics in American Studies at secondary levels and encourage widening participation across Scotland.

ELIGIBILITY AND SUBMISSION

This essay prize competition is open to secondary school students at Scottish schools, aged 15-18. Submissions should be sent to the SASA committee by email to: sasaessayprize@gmail.com. **Please also submit, as a separate document, our informational cover sheet.** Please ensure your essay does not contain your name. Deadline for submission will be **26 January 2024** and entrants will be informed of the outcome in February 2024. Good luck!