



Derailing Empire Undergraduate Research Sequence

Call-for-Applications

Deadline: Friday, October 31, 2025

The Kinder Institute is currently accepting applications to fill **four undergraduate** spaces in the new Derailing Empire research sequence, set to launch in Spring 2026 and wrap up in Spring 2027. Led by Kinder Institute Professor of British History Rob Fletcher and MU History PhD Student Sam Spurgin, the sequence will examine the social history of rail in the United States as part of a larger global research initiative exploring transcontinental rail projects around the world. You can read more about the wider Derailing Empire project [here](#).

Students accepted into the sequence will receive a **stipend of \$1,000 per semester** as well as a total of **six hours of course credit**, applicable to either the Constitutional Democracy or History BA, via enrollment in HIST 4950H (the first semester will involve a required zero-credit hour introduction to research methodologies and literature on the subject). In addition, students will share their findings at a February 2027 conference, to be held either in Columbia or the UK, and produce a piece of public facing scholarship on their work for the Mid-Missouri community.

How to Apply

To apply, students should submit the following to Sam Spurgin, sbspqf@missouri.edu, by **Friday, October 31**, using “Derailing Empire Application” in the subject line:

- Academic resume
- Unofficial transcript
- A writing sample of 5-10 pages (double-spaced)
- A two-page statement of purpose, detailing both their interest in the project’s subject matter and desire to develop the research and writing skills of a professional scholar of history

In addition, students should have two letters of reference, from faculty or graduate TAs, submitted separately by their recommenders to Sam Spurgin at the email address above.

Students who pass the first round of screening will be invited to interview for one of the four positions during the week of November 17, with final decisions announced in December

Statement of Eligibility

All students who have a 3.3 GPA or higher and a graduation date of May 2027 or later are eligible to apply. Applicants **must** be able to commit to **the full three semesters of coursework** and are required to maintain a GPA above 3.3 throughout their time in the sequence.

*****Contact Sam Spurgin, sbspqf@missouri.edu, with any questions*****