

THE FIELD

History is the study of the past based on finding, evaluating, and interpreting recorded evidence. It is a discipline that seeks both to understand the past in its own terms and to explain the present in light of the past. Historical fields are usually defined by period, place, and theme—for example, modern American cultural history. The history curriculum is intended to encourage the exploration of the past in a variety of fields and to foster the skills necessary to discover and express an understanding of the past effectively. Generally, courses of greater breadth are offered at the 100-level and courses of greater depth are offered at the upper levels. Often, but not always, higher-level courses are smaller than 100-level courses.

A minor in history is available.

History majors may pursue secondary education certification in conjunction with the major. See the education major sheet, website, or the Guide to Undergraduate Programs (umass.edu/education, umass.edu/ug_programguide) for more information.

THE MAJOR

History majors must complete 12 courses totaling at least 36 credits with a minimum GPA of 2.0. These include two to five 100-level courses, including a paired survey course such as HIST 100–101: Western Thought and Culture; six to nine courses numbered 200–499; a pro-seminar involving research and writing, to be completed before the second semester of the senior year (normally in the junior year); a pre-1500 course; a 200-level course on methodologies and philosophies of history; and at least two non-Western courses (100-level or upper-level, in any combination) to be selected from the following areas: Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, and world. Students taking history as their primary major must also take an Integrative Experience course from among those offered by the Department of History. In addition, students in the major have the option of pursuing a concentration, either in a pre-defined thematic area or one that is worked out on an individual basis with a faculty advisor.

The department offers a variety of prizes, internships, scholarships, and extracurricular activities to reward academic achievement in history and to enrich classroom learning. A history club, organized and run by students, is open to both majors and nonmajors. Club activities include trips to historic sites, lectures, and social events. The national history honor society, Phi Alpha Theta, has a chapter at UMass Amherst. Any undergraduate or graduate student with a GPA in history of 3.1 or above, with at least 12 completed history credits, and a general GPA of at least 3.0 may apply.

HONORS

The department offers honors courses at all levels and encourages qualified majors to enroll in Commonwealth Honors College. History honors courses are generally taught as seminars.

STUDY ABROAD

The department encourages majors to take part in study abroad programs. Students should contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo) and work closely with their academic advisor to choose the appropriate courses in preparation.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The study of history provides majors with the research, analytical, and communication skills necessary for every type of career. These skills include the ability to read with a purpose, to assimilate and synthesize information from a variety of sources, to conduct critical analysis, and to effectively present information and ideas in oral and written form. Students of history learn how to ask pertinent questions and to craft arguments on the basis of careful research and critical thought. The study of history provides preparation for a wide array of careers, including law, journalism, the nonprofit sector, government service, diplomacy, business, resource management, and teaching. The department's Career and Internship Office guides students in identifying and preparing for career opportunities. This office provides dedicated career advising, practical workshops, alumni networking, internship resources, and career exploration events.

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND FINE ARTS

The humanities focus on human creativity, endeavor, and culture. The imaginative and creative arts—literary and performing—derive from life and teach about human behavior and constructs of social reality. The history of social, political, and economic systems illuminates and shapes the present and future. Students in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts are expected to broaden their perspectives on individual and cultural expression within their own and other societies, to understand the development and evolution of the discipline of study in relation to the culture from which it emanates, and to learn the methods by which knowledge in the discipline is gained.

Office: 612 Herter Hall
Phone: 413-545-1330
Website: umass.edu/history