

Majoring in

History

Description of History

What is history?

History is the study and interpretation of past events.

What do history majors study?

History students use written, visual, and oral evidence, as well as artifacts collected and stored in museums, libraries, and other historical institutions, to gather and interpret historical data in order to understand current events and conditions. History majors study many nations, geographic areas, and time periods.

What skills are important for a history major?

History majors should:

- Have a strong curiosity about historical events;
- Possess the ability to read carefully and think creatively and critically; and
- Be skilled in presenting information both verbally and in writing.

What else do history majors study?

History is considered a liberal arts major. This means that students take a variety of courses in addition to those required in the major. These courses help develop knowledge and skills that are applied throughout one's lifetime.

Liberal arts courses provide a background to strengthen critical thinking; problem solving; written, oral, and interpersonal communication; quantitative, analytical, and reasoning skills. These skills are considered very important for future success in the workplace. A strong liberal arts background also provides the foundation of an educated person.

Course Requirements

General education: About 60 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses give a broad range of knowledge in foreign languages, science, math, writing, arts, ethics, civilization, literature, and urban environment.

Major courses: A minimum of 36 credit hours of history courses are required. Courses are distributed among three areas, including Europe, U.S., and Africa/Asia/Latin America/Middle East. History majors take courses such as:

- American Constitutional and Legal Development
- Americans from Africa
- Civil War and Reconstruction
- European Social History
- Europe in the Renaissance
- Greek Civilization
- History of Brazil
- History of Central America
- History of Germany
- History of Modern China
- History of West Africa
- History of Women in Europe
- Survey of European History
- Survey of American History
- The Ancient Near East
- The Early Middle Ages
- The Holocaust
- The Reformation

Electives: About 24 credit hours are required.

Many history majors choose to use their electives toward a minor (18-21 credit hours) to give them an additional area of specialization.

Careers in History

The history major provides a good background for entry to any number of occupations. Some of these careers include:

- Archivist
- Banking executive
- Business manager
- Documentary editor
- Foreign service officer
- Genealogical consultant
- Historic preservationist
- Insurance underwriter
- Journalist
- Legislative aide
- Museum curator
- Policy evaluator
- Public relations specialist
- Publishing house editor
- Retail manager
- Sales representative
- State and federal government administrator
- Tour guide

Further training, including graduate school, is required in order to work in these areas.

- Attorney
- Career counselor
- Elementary or social studies teacher
- FBI/CIA agent
- History professor
- Librarian
- Records manager

- School or university administrator

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a history major at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU history webpage.
- Take an introductory history course.
- Read about the history major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the history major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level history students about their major experience.
- Discuss the major with one or more history professors.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in history.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse through the history textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the History department.

- Check out the American Historical Association's (AHA) website at www.historians.org for information on topics related to the study of history.

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