

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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GUIDE FOR UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS

The History Department has established five goals for its students.

1. <u>Historical Literacy</u>	Students will gain an understanding of the scope, breadth, and richness of historical studies.
2. <u>Critical Thinking</u>	Students will learn to apply historical methods to evaluate critically the record of the past and how historians and others have interpreted it.
3. <u>Research Skills</u>	Students will acquire basic historical research skills, including (as appropriate) the effective use of libraries, archives, and databases.
4. <u>Communication Skills</u>	Students will learn to organize and express their thoughts clearly and coherently both in writing and orally.
5. <u>Original Research</u>	Students will demonstrate their mastery of the knowledge and skills involved in historical practice by conceptualizing and executing a significant piece of original research.

In order that history majors achieve these goals, the department requires that you take a distribution of courses to give you an appreciation of the geographical, chronological and methodological diversity involved in the investigation and interpretation of the past. You will be challenged to critically evaluate how historians have interpreted the past, as well as the evidentiary foundation on which their interpretations are based. You will be called upon to develop and improve your ability to communicate your knowledge and ideas in all of your courses. And you will be expected to develop strong research skills, culminating in the research and writing of your Senior Thesis.

Departmental Requirements

To obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree in history, you must take at least 39 credit hours of history courses. These must include the specific course requirements listed below. With few exceptions, history courses carry a value of 3 credit hours. You must receive grades of C or better in each history course that you apply towards the history major, and you must take all such courses for letter grade credit.

A. Distribution Requirements

In addition to encouraging all history majors to take the basic survey courses in the history of Modern Europe and the United States, the Department requires the following distribution among fields of history. Through taking such a range of courses, the Department believes you will be exposed to a broad variety of historical subjects in different areas and at diverse levels of complexity.

1. One course in ancient or medieval history;
2. One course in the history of Asia, Russia, Eastern Europe, or the modern Middle East;
3. One course in African, African-American, Latin American, or Native American history;
4. One course in the history of Western Europe (for example, Britain, Ireland, Germany, France) at the 300 level or above;
5. One course in the history of the United States at the 300 level or above;
6. Altogether, at least 15 hours at the 300 level or above in residence at American University, D.C.

B. Major Seminar I and II

The Department further requires that each history major devote 6 credit hours (out of the total 39) to the major research seminar. This two-semester seminar offers you the opportunity to devote a substantial amount of time to original historical research, based largely on primary sources, and to write a senior thesis. You must take the major seminar in sequential order during one academic year, Major Seminar I (HIST-480) in the fall and Major Seminar II (HIST-481) in the spring. History majors normally take Major Seminar in the senior year. Students who are planning on a double major in history and secondary education need to plan carefully for the sequencing of courses for their program of study. You should not take the Major Seminar in the same semester in which you are doing student teaching. Consult with your advisors in History and Education in order to plan the last two years of your courses. Students planning on doing a semester or a year abroad should make sure that they have their senior year free for the Major Seminar or to take the year-long course in their junior year. The Department holds a Major Seminar Orientation each spring, and all students planning on taking Major Seminar in the following year are strongly advised to attend this orientation.

As part of Major Seminar II, the department sponsors “History Day,” a week or so before the end of the semester. History Day is organized in the format of professional conferences, and major seminar students make formal presentations of their senior theses as members of panels of three or four students; faculty and graduate students offer comments on their research and presentation; each session concludes with questions and answers from the panelists and the audience. There are both morning and afternoon sessions. History Day concludes with a celebratory dinner for all the participants. In addition to presenting their work at History Day, Major Seminar students are encouraged to participate in the CAS Robyn Mathias Student Research Conference, usually in early April, at the annual regional meeting of Phi Alpha Theta and at the Honors Capstone Conference.

Preparation for Advanced Courses

Advanced courses in history are rigorous and assume college-level preparation. The Department recommends that before enrolling in a course at the 300 level or above, students should complete a suitable introductory course or otherwise attain equivalent knowledge.

Study Abroad

The Department encourages its majors to take advantage of the University's many study abroad programs, normally during the junior year. In most cases, history courses taken as part of a study abroad program will be accepted towards the major requirements. However, keep in mind that all majors must take at least 15 credits at the 300 and above level in residence. Be sure to consult with your advisor to make sure that any courses you may take abroad will count towards the major.

Transfer of Credit

A. *Advanced Placement Examination Credit*

Students may receive 3 credits toward the major in both European and United States history (for a maximum of 6 credits in all), provided they achieved a grade of 4 or 5 on the appropriate Advanced Placement Examination. However, students may not receive AP credit toward the major if they also take the comparable survey courses in either United States history (HIST-205, 206, and 207) or European history (HIST-110).

B. *Transfer Credit*

Transfer students who wish to receive the Bachelor's degree with a major in history at American University must earn at least 20 credit hours in the History Department here. The Department will decide which, if any, history courses taken elsewhere may be used to satisfy the requirements for the history major at American University.

Once enrolled at American University, students who wish to take courses at another university must secure approval of these courses before taking them with a Permit to Study at Another Institution form.

Declaration of Major

The following procedure will establish you as a history major:

- A. Schedule an appointment with a member of the Undergraduate Committee. Bring this guide and the CAS Declaration of Major/Minor Form. He or she will help you assess your current progress towards completion of the minor requirements and develop a plan for completing these requirements. You will also be assigned an advisor.
- B. Take the Declaration of Major/Minor Form to the History Department office, where an administrative assistant will set up and maintain your undergraduate file.

Department Communication with History Majors

The department uses email, your AU email address, to communicate with all majors. Be sure to forward your AU email to any other address you use regularly.

Advising and Student Responsibility for Progress Towards Your Degree

You will need to meet with your faculty advisor *at least once each semester* to plan your upcoming semester's work and to keep track of your progress towards fulfilling the requirements of the history major and other degree requirements, such as those of the General Education Program. Your DARS report will be very

helpful here, and it is a good idea to bring a copy with you when you see your advisor. Also see the Major Requirements Check Sheet at the end of this guide. Students should keep a copy of this Check Sheet for themselves and put an up-dated copy of this Check Sheet in their files in the History Department Office at least once each year, preferably each semester. Your advisor will assist you, but *it is ultimately your responsibility to make sure that you register for the courses you need to fulfill all degree requirements.*

Departmental Honors

The Chair of the Department's Undergraduate Committee also serves as the Department's Honors Coordinator. She or he will assign an honors advisor, or provide advice, if needed. To be eligible for University Honors in History, students must complete the requirements of the University Honors Program, including 12 hours of honors work in history. The honors requirement for a senior capstone experience must be fulfilled in history through the Major Seminar. Other honors history course requirements may be fulfilled through advanced-level honors options.

Honor Society in History

Epsilon Psi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, an international fraternity for those excelling in history, was established on campus in 1956. Students with twelve semester hours in history at American University with at least a 3.2 GPA in these courses, and an overall GPA over 3.0 are eligible to join. Speak to your faculty advisors or inquire in the History Department office. Initiation into Phi Alpha Theta usually takes place in the fall semester.

Awards in History

The History Department has three important undergraduate awards. The Janet Oppenheim History Prize is an annual award for the best senior thesis and is presented at the departmental reception following commencement. The Dorothy Gondos Beers Scholarship is awarded annually to an outstanding undergraduate history student and is usually awarded at the annual Phi Alpha Theta dinner. The James W. Mooney Award is distributed at the end of the fall semester to support travel and other research expenses by students preparing their senior theses.

BA/MA Program in History

This program allows students to complete both the BA and MA degrees in five years of fulltime study. Students admitted to the BA/MA program may apply 6 credit hours of graduate level course work in history to both sets of degree requirements.

Students should apply to the BA/MA program in their junior year; students admitted to the BA/MA program are exempted from the Graduate Record Examinations, normally required for admission to the MA program. Students will be formally admitted to MA status only after completing all requirements for the BA major in history with an overall GPA of 3.0 and a GPA of 3.2 in history courses. For further information, consult the chair of the Graduate Committee (GRACOM) or the chair of the department.

Undergraduate Student Participation in Departmental Governance

The Department of History has a long tradition of including students as voting members of important departmental committees. Early the fall semester, history majors vote for two of their number to sit as full voting members of the Council of the Department of History, the main deliberative and decision-making body

of the department. The Council meets monthly, usually on the first Wednesday of each month. One of the two elected undergraduates also serves on the department's Undergraduate Committee; the other also serves on the department's Personnel Committee, and if needed, on the Grievance Committee.

Consortium

The consortium includes Catholic University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Howard University, and seven other universities and colleges. Majors are encouraged to take courses in the consortium on subjects not offered by the Department of History at American University. For written permission, see the department chair.

CHECKSHEET FOR UNDERGRADUATE HISTORY MAJORS

*Note: While history majors should routinely consult with their advisors about course selection and progress in fulfilling their minor requirements, **it is the students' ultimate responsibility** to make sure that they meet these requirements before graduation*

Name: _____ AU-ID #: _____

Local Address: _____ Local Tel: _____

_____ Advisor: _____

Email address: _____ Expected Graduation: _____

Please Note the following:

1. Is the student interested in double majoring in education?

- a. If hoping to double major, they **MUST** take Major Seminar in their junior year to avoid conflict with full-time student teaching requirement for Education majors.
- b. OR they can take Major Seminar in their senior year, stay at AU for a fifth year to student teaches, and end up with a Master of Art's in Education with a teaching certificate (speak to SOE advisor).

2. Is the student planning to study abroad?

- a. All study abroad courses must be pre-approved.
- b. REMINDER: 15 credits of 300 level or above courses must be taken in residence at AU.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS CHECK SHEET

Requirement	Course # and Title	Grade	Semester Completed
Ancient or medieval history (3 hrs./any level)			
Asian, Russian, Eastern European, or modern Middle Eastern history (3 hrs./any level)			
African, Latin American, African American, or Native American history (3 hrs./any level)			
U.S. history at 300 level or above (3 hrs.)			
European history at 300 level or above (3 hrs.)			
Major Seminar I (3 hrs.)			
Major Seminar II (3 hrs.)			
Additional 300 level course, if courses fulfilling requirements above do not total at least 15 credit hours.			
Electives to make a total of 39 credit hours (any level)			

