

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

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**GUIDE FOR UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS**

*[Effective for declarations made in the Fall 1999 semester and afterwards.]*

The History Department has established five goals for the major.

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 range of courses to give you an appreciation of the geographical and chronological diversity of material that historians investigate and interpret, experience in confronting historical problems at an advanced level of study, and an opportunity to frame and execute a substantial research project. In all history courses, you will be called upon to develop and improve your ability to communicate your knowledge and ideas.

**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.

## **Specific Course Requirements**

### *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, or Latin 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.

### *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 major research paper. 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.

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 research projects as members of panels of three or four students; faculty and graduate students offer comments on the research and findings; 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 Student Research Conference, usually in early April; students will also present their work to other members of the Major Seminar.

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.

For information on specific requirements, the Department holds each a spring Major Seminar Orientation. All students planning on taking Major Seminar in the following year are strongly advised to attend this orientation.

The History Department has established "The Janet Oppenheim History Prize," an annual award for the best undergraduate paper to come out of the major seminar. The Oppenheim prize is presented at the departmental reception for commencement.

### **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 variety of 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. Consult with the Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee or the Chair of the Department to make sure that such courses will count towards the major and to put a note to that effect in your file.

### **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 the chair of the Undergraduate Committee about your intent to declare a major. You should bring two documents with you to this meeting: 1. this Guide for Undergraduate Majors with its checklists, and 2. your Transfer Evaluation (if you are a transfer student).

B. The Chair of the Undergraduate Committee will help you with an assessment of your current progress

towards completion of the major requirements and an initial plan for completing these requirements.

C. The chair will assign you an advisor. You should introduce yourself to your history advisor at your earliest convenience.

### **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 Progress Towards Your Degree – STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

You will need to meet with your faculty advisor *at least once each semester* to plan your upcoming semester's work and 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 Checksheet at the end of this guide. Students should keep a copy of this checksheet for themselves and put an up-dated copy of this checksheet 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**

Professor Ira Klein is the History Honors Coordinator. 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. For details, see Professor Klein.

### **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 3.1 GPA in these courses, and an overall GPA over 3.0, are eligible to join. Speak to the faculty advisors or inquire in the History Department office. Initiation into Phi Alpha Theta usually takes place in the fall semester.

### **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 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. 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. For further information, consult 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.

***It is ultimately your responsibility to register for the courses you need to fulfill all degree requirements.***  
Please maintain an updated copy of this checksheet and use the DARS report to monitor your progress.

## **MAJOR REQUIREMENTS**

- ! 39 credit hours of history courses taught by history faculty with grades of C (2.0) or better.
- ! At least 15 credit hours of history courses (including Major Seminar) must be at the 300 level or above.
- ! General Education courses taught by the history department count towards the major.
- ! No more than 3 credit hours of AP credit in either US or European history (total of 6 hours in all) may be counted towards the major.
- ! Transfer students must take at least 20 hours of history courses at AU.

## **SPECIFIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

G Ancient or medieval history (3 hrs./any level)	Course # and Title	Grade	Semester Completed
G Asian, Russian, Eastern European, or modern Middle Eastern history (3 hrs./any level)	Course # and Title	Grade	Semester Completed
G African, Latin American, or African-American history (3 hrs./any level)	Course # and Title	Grade	Semester Completed
G U.S. history at 300 level or above (3 hrs.)	Course # and Title	Grade	Semester Completed

G European history at 300 level or above (3 hrs.)

Course # and Title      Grade      Semester Completed

G Major Seminar I (3 hrs.)

Grade      Semester Completed

G Major Seminar II (3 hrs.)

Grade      Semester Completed

G Additional 300 level course, if courses fulfilling requirements above do not total at least 15 credit hours.

Course # and Title      Grade      Semester Completed

Electives to make a total of 39 credit hours (any level).

G \_\_\_\_\_  
Course # and Title      Grade      Semester Completed

G \_\_\_\_\_  
Course # and Title      Grade      Semester Completed

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