Why History?
Because it’s the smart choice.

Some of the most influential leaders in government, business, and media started as history majors. What explains this success? It’s simple. History majors are trained to be critical thinkers—which puts them ahead in the workplace—and they tackle society’s biggest questions in the classroom.

Visit us at Social Science 145

Department of History | Telephone: 518-442-5300 | Email: history@albany.edu
Why study history?

Historians analyze evidence expertly. Our majors develop research skills, study the difference between primary and secondary sources, and interpret the meaning of documents, articles, and books.

Historians communicate clearly. Your coursework will teach you to choreograph your thoughts more effectively, back up your ideas with appropriate evidence, and explain your ideas to a variety of audiences.

Historians make history. In your senior year, you'll become a producer of knowledge as you design a capstone project.

The bottom line? Historians analyze evidence expertly. Our majors develop research skills, study the difference between primary and secondary sources, and interpret the meaning of documents, articles, and books. As a major, you'll study the ideas of particular time periods and regions, and learn how to differentiate the stuff that matters from the stuff that doesn't.

Q&A

Can I get a job with a history major?

Absolutely! Right this minute we have alumni who are working in government, business, education, NGOs, law, museums, and more. The history major gives you usable job skills and diverse career options in high-paying fields.

What sort of courses do you offer?

Everything! Our classes explore war and diplomacy, the environment, cultural conflict, and capitalism. You can take classes on the ancients or learn about the War on Terror. It’s up to you!

Do you offer internships?

Of course. You can earn internship credit through HIS 499, or take HIS 497 and work on a special research or a community project.
Fighting myths with facts:

Over the past twenty years, warnings from a variety of sources—from career counselors to administrators to government officials—have convinced many prospective college students (and their parents) that the only safe path to a well-paying job is through a STEM major.

But consider the facts. On average, history majors earn about $60,000 per year. Approximately one in five become educators, and 11% enter the legal profession. Another 15% become managers in the private sector. Many history majors work for government, and about half attain a master's, professional, or PhD degree. Less than 1% work in food preparation.

The plain truth is that history majors are not underemployed. It’s a myth. Our graduates enjoy success in a variety of fields, and you will too if you major in history. Take the plunge!
Want career options?

The history major is flexible and it provides different career options. Just take a look. Our recent graduates have landed jobs in the public and private sectors, and they have joined some of the country’s best graduate programs.

Alexis Corsello, ’15

I work at Stryker, a medical device company, and most of my coworkers have degrees in marketing or biology. My history major has been critical to my success. My colleagues often praise my writing skills and the way I choreograph arguments and interpret evidence. As Professor Wittern-Keller would say, I have used my “historian toolbox” to distinguish myself.

Greg Devine, ’14

I’m a strategy analyst at Morgan Stanley. My history major taught me how to write persuasively, which is a skill I use every day. My job basically involves writing effective arguments for clients and then representing their positions.

Laura Keme, ’16

My coursework in history is the reason I’m now pursuing an MA in Public Administration at SUNY Binghamton. In the history department, I encountered professors who believed in me. They taught me how to express my ideas with good research, and they listened as I found my voice. I wouldn’t have gotten into my current program without their support.

Dave Ostergren, ’15

I decided to join Teach for America after graduation because teaching is a career that lets you make a positive difference in someone’s life. Today, I teach physics in Miami, Florida. I was pretty intimidated when I learned I would be a physics teacher, but my major taught me how to research, and I’ve tackled this job just like I tackled my senior thesis. I analyze my textbooks closely and then organize lessons that help my students see the big picture.
Want career options?

The history major gives you usable skills and diverse options in high paying fields. Our alumni work in government, business, law, museums, NGOs, education, and more ….

Become a lawyer. Beau Melita is a graduate of UAlbany and Albany Law School. As an Assistant District Attorney in Rensselaer County, he prosecuted all varieties of crimes that occurred in Troy and regularly took cases to trial. As an Assistant Public Defender in Schenectady, he represents indigent people accused of crimes, and represents private clients in traffic and criminal cases.

Manage a company. Mariah Adin uses her history degree to collect and interpret enormous amounts of data for schools and private companies. She is a manager of Analytics and Coordinated Support Services at the Mid-Hudson Regional Information Center. Overseeing a $3.2 million budget and four departments, Mariah and her team have worked on a variety of projects over the years. Currently, she’s using data analytics to help an area school district to determine the efficacy of a Montessori-based elementary program, and she’s evaluating early warning systems software.

Run a museum. Nick DeMarco holds a BA in History from UAlbany and MA in History Museum Studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program. He is currently the Manager of Institutional Giving at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) in North Adams, MA, overseeing over $1.1 million annually in grants and solicitations from foundations and government agencies at the local, state, and federal level, plus $10,000+ from corporations and major donors. He serves as the Development office liaison for curators, educators, and artists to develop funding initiatives for institutional and community programming.
How does the program work?

First, we establish a foundation. You’ll begin with 100-level courses in American, European, and World history, and take a 200-level course in any area that interests you. These classes orient you to the events and themes that we’ll explore later.

Second, you master the historian’s craft. HIS 395 teaches you to think like an historian, and it’s mandatory for our majors. The course equips you with skills that are essential in the classroom – and necessary after graduation.

Third, you take six advanced classes. These 300-level courses give you a chance to develop expertise in an area that interests you. You’ll also take courses in American, European, and World history. The result? A perfect blend of depth and breadth.

Finally, you will make history. HIS 489z is a mandatory seminar that transforms you from a consumer of information into a producer of knowledge. You’ll research a topic that interests you and write an original paper about it, and maybe even present your findings at our annual research symposium.

The bottom line? As a major, you’ll learn to write, analyze, research, and communicate, and you’ll develop into an independent thinker. That’s our formula, and it works.

Outside the class

Want work experience?

Well, let’s get you into UNI 288 or HIS 499, so you can earn credit while working at a law office, gov’t agency, business, or museum. Many of our majors enter the NY Assembly and NY Senate programs, and we enroll lots of students in the Semester in Washington program.

Extracurriculars your thing?

HUGO is our student-led history group, and they’re very active, and Phi Alpha Theta, the department’s honor society, hosts events and brings speakers to campus all the time. Get involved!

We have your back.

The department offers travel support and awards tens of thousands of dollars each year to students who excel in the classroom. Take advantage of our support!