HISTORY MAJOR

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

How do I join?
Any history faculty member may serve as an advisor by agreement with the student. If you are not certain which faculty member would be an appropriate advisor for your intended course of study, you should meet with the department chair, Ethan Kleinberg. Talk to your advisor or the chair and then go to your portfolio and declare the history major.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HISTORY MAJOR FOR THE CLASS OF 2020 AND BEYOND

In general: The major program in history consists of at least nine history courses. This must include one Introduction to History course (numbered 150–189), normally taken as a first-year or sophomore, and eight other courses, numbered 200 or higher. Students must also complete two modules and fulfill a capstone research requirement.

In detail, a major will have:

- nine history courses, including
  - one Introduction to History course numbered between 150 and 189, normally taken as a first-year or sophomore at Wesleyan
  - A minimum of eight other HIST courses, including the following:
    - All majors must include at least one course focused on the period before 1800 in their nine HIST courses. It can also count toward a module.
    - HIST362, the required seminar that all majors must take, typically during the fall semester of the junior year
    - two other HIST seminars, numbered 300 or above, taken at Wesleyan
    - Note that only two history courses taken outside of Wesleyan may be counted toward the nine required history courses and these will count as non-seminar classes.
  - Modules: Students pursue two modules, each composed of four courses with a thematic, geographic, or chronological unity, assembled from both history and non-history department courses. Students may create their own modules, but most select their modules from the large list prepared by the department faculty. In either case, students work closely with their advisors to identify their modules and the specific courses that are at the core of their major programs.
    - Here are a few things to remember about the courses in your modules:
      - A course may be used in only one of a student’s modules.
      - Most courses in modules will be HIST courses, but up to three courses from other departments or programs may count towards the modules.
      - HIST362 cannot be included in any module.
      - Pre-1800 courses may count towards modules.
  - Research Project: Every major must complete a substantial research project completed at Wesleyan under departmental faculty supervision.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Majoring or minoring in history develops valuable skills transferable beyond the classroom. Learning goals broadly include: critical thinking, flexible interpretation of diverse source material, and persuasive writing, as well as analytical and research skills for tackling complex questions that will prepare majors for the changing professional world.

History students learn to make sense of complexity and to tell a good story.

Important departmental learning goals are met incrementally as students combine diverse courses and course types:

1. *Introduction to History courses (numbered 150–189)* provide key foundational elements of historical work, beginning to teach students the following:
   a. how to read like a historian, searching for details and doubting what the author says
   b. how to research history in both primary and secondary sources
   c. how to develop historical writing both in terms of argument and style
   d. how to manage historiographical informatics: library, internet, and archival searching skills, bibliographic software for an ongoing career bibliography
   e. introduction to archives where possible, including material culture where appropriate
   f. introduction to both digital and quantitative concepts for history

2. *200-level history courses* continue learning goals from category 1 but also contribute to specific regional and period knowledge acquisition and the ability to synthesize and then analyze historical material in written and oral expositions.

3. *Issues in Contemporary Historiography (HIST 362)* develops advanced skills in critical historical reading; pointed writing to summarize what students read; recognition of key historical concepts; and the ability to research and plan a compelling, large-scale research project. These build on learning in categories 1 & 2.

4. *Upper- or 300-level history seminars* focus on specific areas of knowledge and develop real subject expertise and research acuity. Students develop and execute research projects, critically assess previous historians’ work, and refine their expository skills in writing and speech.

5. *Research requirement*: All history majors develop and deploy their skills in a senior research project, the capstone of their historical learning, through a senior thesis, a senior essay written in a tutorial, or as an extra assignment in a 300-level seminar. Students work under close faculty supervision and are given detailed feedback on their progress. This project brings together analytical skills, research skills (including finding and organizing large amounts of complex and diverse material), and skills in making a case and writing persuasively and professionally.

Assessment is continuous and complex. It occurs within each individual course and assignment but also through advisors’ monitoring of students’ overall progress, including student self-assessment and the shaping of student’s specific substantive learning goals through two subject modules, and through the capstone research assessment, requiring departmental certification of adequate research standards.
LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

Is there a foreign language requirement? There is no foreign language requirement for history majors, but the department strongly advises all history majors to learn at least one foreign language.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Transfer credit must be preapproved by the appropriate department before the course is taken. All preapproved credits will be posted to the student’s transcript for graduation credit. However, history majors wishing to count transfer credit toward the history major must consult with their history advisor in advance, and upon their return to Wesleyan provide their advisor with syllabi and other materials, such as exams and papers, from the course(s) that they wish to apply toward the history major. Once approved by the advisor, it may count for major credit.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

APPLIES TO ALL CLASS YEARS

All history majors apply their skills in a senior research project. It can be a senior thesis or a senior essay written in a tutorial or in a 300-level seminar. The senior research project gives all history majors an opportunity to explore a topic they are passionate about.

- Research Project: Every major must complete a substantial research project completed at Wesleyan under departmental faculty supervision.
  - This project may take the form of an honors thesis or a senior essay done through an individual tutorial (e.g., HIST409 or HIST403) or a research paper completed in an advanced seminar in one of the student’s chosen modules, with the approval of the student’s advisor and the instructor of that course. A paper completed in an advanced seminar must be in addition to the course’s normal requirements.