



GUIDE TO MAJORS AT YESHIVA: HISTORY

Choosing a major can be stressful, but it is important to understand that you can pursue almost any career regardless of which major you choose. While there are some exceptions, most entry-level positions simply require general transferable skills—those that can be learned in one setting and applied in another. Relevant experience through internships and activities is generally more important to employers than a major. It is best to choose an area that you find interesting and where you have the ability to do well.

What is the History Major?

According to the History department's web site: The mission of the History Department is to provide students with a better understanding of their world by examining past people and events and to instruct them in the critical examination of evidence. Like travelers in foreign lands, students of history come face to face with the diversity of the human condition. They undergo the unsettling but salutary experience of nonrecognition and so arrive at an understanding that peoples in the past were other, that "then" was different from "now", "there" different from "here". Enriched by that understanding, they are able to view their own time and place in a new light, as the outcome of local and contingent circumstances rather than as the inevitable product of human nature. No other discipline in the humanities and the social sciences covers so wide a range of topics as history. Instead of studying just one or another segment of human activity—e.g., politics, economics, literature, art, philosophy, etc.—history integrates all of them. Located at the intersection of multiple disciplines, it is of crucial importance to all students of the humanities and the social sciences. Finally, and most important, history teaches students how historical knowledge is constructed. Through hands-on instruction in seminars, students learn how to locate documents relevant to an historical subject and what questions to put to those documents: Where do the documents come from? Through what intermediary stages did they pass before they reached us? Who wrote them? And why?

Trained in the critical methods of historical interpretation, students of history come to understand that no document provides a transparent window onto the reality that it purports to describe. They are uniquely equipped therefore to deal critically with the unprecedented abundance of documents that circulate electronically in the information age of today.

What can I do with a Major in History?

A major in history prepares students not only to teach, work for historical organizations, and work for the government, but also to work in a broad range of careers demanding critical thinking, writing, research, and analytical skills. History is one of the recommended majors for pre-law students, and it provides a useful background for those contemplating careers in business, public service, journalism, diplomacy, museums, or archival work. Some of the many career options to consider as a history major include:

Business
Equity Research Analyst
Financial Writer
Human Resources Generalist

Investment Banker
Paralegal
Travel Agent

Communications

Advertising Executive
Auctioneer
Book Publishing Professional
Editor
Film Director
Journalist
Magazine Editor
Marketing Professional
Public Relations Professional
Television Producer
Television Reporter
Tour Guide
Web Editor
Writer

Government / Social Service

Customs Official
Foreign Service Officer

Grant Writer
Historic Site Administrator
Higher Education Administrator
Historic Preservationist
Human Rights Advocate
Legislative Aide
Museum Administrator
Nonprofit Organization Administrator
Politician
Teacher
Volunteer Coordinator

Graduate Study Required

Lawyer
Librarian
Physician
Professor
Psychologist
Theologian / Rabbi

Skills and Abilities

A student of history learns to think critically, analyze information, and develop interpretations. Students also develop the ability to think clearly, interpret sophisticated written material, and articulate their ideas in person and on paper. Some of the additional skills and abilities cultivated through the history major include:

Research

- Analyzing and organizing ideas and information
- Compiling information
- Finding and utilizing resources
- Comparing and contrasting ideas
- Understanding the present and the past
- Understanding different cultures

Critical Thinking and Analysis

- Analyzing and summarizing ideas
- Comparing information
- Evaluating text, information, and historical events
- Thinking independently

Communication

- Explaining and interpreting events
- Describing and evaluating issues and problems
- Compiling research
- Writing concisely and analytically
- Presenting thoughts, ideas, and information

- Writing concisely and creatively