For decades the University of Chicago has been a leader in the study of history, through its pioneering civilization studies programs, its intensive research-based undergraduate curriculum, and its training of academic historians as both researchers and teachers. Majoring in history not only enables you to become a consumer of academic knowledge, it also prepares you to become a producer of knowledge. Undergraduate history courses first train you to explore large-scale social, cultural, and political processes by defining concrete, researchable questions. Subsequently, as a history major, you are taught how to locate the primary and secondary sources necessary to develop answers to these questions. Finally, faculty assist you in transforming your research into historical arguments that shed light on the multiple ways in which our world, our very reality, has transformed over time. History is excellent preparation for a wide field of endeavors—from law, government, and public policy to the arts and business.

Students interested in a history major ideally should consult the undergraduate program coordinator before the end of their second year; it is, however, generally possible to join the major as a third-year student.

Program Requirements

In addition to the civilization sequences, students can choose from more than eighty history courses that are offered each year to undergraduates. Some of these are introductory lectures, others are small seminars devoted to the intense study of a particular historical moment, theme, or event. In some you will find only other undergraduates, while in others you will rub shoulders with graduate students.

Students must take twelve courses for the history major, one of which must be a history colloquium (HIST 29600s). Beginning with the 2017–18 academic year, history majors have the option of pursuing one of two tracks: the Regular Track or the Research Track, with the primary difference being that students in the Research Track complete a BA thesis and students in the Regular Track do not. Students wishing to pursue the Research Track must officially declare their intention to do so with the undergraduate program coordinator by sixth week of Winter Quarter during their third year. For students in the Research Track, the twelve courses for the major include the two-quarter HIST 29801-29802 BA Thesis Seminar I-II. Only students in the Research Track are eligible for honors.

Courses without a “HIST” number may be used only with departmental permission; students should submit a petition to the undergraduate program coordinator to have them considered (see Petitioning for Outside Credit below). Students may use one civilization sequence (up to three courses in the same sequence) to count toward history major requirements, but only if these courses are not also being used to count toward general education requirements.

Major Field

Students in both the Research Track and the Regular Track are required to take six courses in, or directly related to, their chosen main field. Students construct the main field and choose their other courses in close consultation with the undergraduate program coordinator, subject to final approval by the faculty chair of the Collegiate Affairs Committee.

The major field is usually defined by time and space. Examples are nineteenth- or twentieth-century US history, colonial Africa, the Atlantic world in the early modern or modern period, ancient Greece, or medieval Europe. Thematic major fields are also possible; for example, African American, Jewish, or gender history. Major fields may also be methodologically defined: for example, intellectual, economic, political, or urban history. Students pursuing a major field in urban history, for example, might take courses ranging from "Jewish Spaces and Places: Imagined and Real" to "Cities from Scratch: The History of Urban Latin America"; a focus on economic history might include "Economic Change in China" and "The History of US Capitalism." In the case of thematically or methodologically defined major fields, it is particularly important to consult closely with the undergraduate program coordinator to ensure coherence.

Electives

In addition to the six courses in the main field, students must also take a number of elective courses. Students pursuing the Regular Track take six electives, while students pursuing the Research Track take four electives and complete the major with two seminars for the BA thesis (See Research Track below). Electives should complement the main field, extend the range of your historical awareness, and explore varying approaches to historical analysis and interpretation. You are encouraged to take courses that introduce significant civilizational or chronological breadth into your studies, or a different methodology or theme than you are studying in your major field.

Research Colloquium (HIST 29600s)

Students who are majoring in history must take at least one history colloquium (HIST 29600s), though they are welcome to take more than one. Depending on the topic, the colloquium may count as one of the six courses comprising the student's major field or as one of the history electives. Students interested in pursuing the Research Track should take a colloquium prior to Spring Quarter of their third year, while those pursuing the Regular Track can take a colloquium at any point prior to graduation. The colloquia are offered on a variety of topics each year and enable advanced College students to pursue research projects.

These courses expose students to the methods and practice of historical research and writing. Students are required to compose an original research paper that is at least fifteen pages in length. For students who are planning to begin graduate
study the year following graduation, the colloquium provides them with the opportunity to produce a writing sample based on primary sources that they can use for their applications.

Research Track

Students admitted to the Research Track are required to complete twelve courses for the major: six in a major field, four electives, and two BA seminars. The research colloquium may count toward either the major field or the elective field requirement. Students planning to pursue graduate study in history or those wishing to go into a research-intensive career, such as journalism, law, or policy analysis, are encouraged to pursue the Research Track.

Application to Research Track

Students wishing to pursue the Research Track must submit a major form indicating their plans as well as a short description of their proposed BA thesis topic to the undergraduate program coordinator by sixth week of Winter Quarter during their third year. With the approval of the faculty chair of the Collegiate Affairs Committee, the committee places students into a Spring Quarter BA thesis seminar before the end of Winter Quarter. In the seminar students develop a research proposal, which they submit at the end of Spring Quarter. The committee also assigns each student a BA thesis advisor from among the Department of History's faculty.

BA Thesis Seminars (Hist 29801 and 29802)

Students pursuing the Research Track are required to complete a BA thesis and the two BA thesis seminars. The BA thesis is a three-quarter-long research project in which students develop a significant and original interpretation of a historical issue of their choosing. Theses are the culmination of the history program and range from forty to sixty pages in length, but there is neither a minimum nor a maximum requirement. The BA thesis seminars assist students in formulating approaches and developing their research and writing skills, while providing a forum for group discussion and critiques.

Students formally register for two quarters, during the Spring Quarter of their third year (HIST 29801 BA Thesis Seminar I) and Winter Quarter of their fourth year (HIST 29802 BA Thesis Seminar II), though they are also expected to be actively engaged during the intervening Autumn Quarter. Students who are out of residence in Spring Quarter of their third year, take BA Seminar I in Autumn Quarter of their fourth year (see Study Abroad below). BA Thesis Seminar I meets weekly in the Spring Quarter of the third year, but only every other week during the autumn and winter terms of the fourth year. Throughout the period of researching and writing the thesis, students benefit from the company of their peers and the guidance of their preceptor, who is an advanced history graduate student, serves as the seminar instructor, and is the second reader of the thesis.

BA Thesis

The deadline for submission of the BA thesis is the second Friday of Spring Quarter. Students who wish to complete their papers in a quarter other than Spring Quarter must petition the department through the undergraduate program coordinator. Students graduating in a quarter other than Spring Quarter must turn in their theses by Friday of seventh week of their final quarter. When circumstances justify it, the department establishes individual deadlines and procedures.

With approval from the undergraduate faculty chairs in two departments, history students may be able to write a BA thesis that meets requirements for a dual major. Students must consult with both chairs before the end of Spring Quarter of their third year. A consent form, to be signed by both chairs, is available from the College adviser. It must be completed and returned to the College adviser by the end of Autumn Quarter of the student's year of graduation.

Students are eligible to apply for research funding for summer research from the Department of History and the PRISM (Planning Resources and Involvement for Students in the Majors) program. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of funding that is available for language study abroad through the Foreign Language Acquisition Grant (FLAG) program. For details on available funding, students should consult the undergraduate program coordinator.

Honors

Students pursuing the Research Track who have done exceptionally well in their course work and have written an outstanding BA thesis are recommended for honors. Candidates must have an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher and a GPA of 3.7 or higher in the twelve courses counting towards the major. Readers submit BA theses for departmental honors that they judge to be of particular distinction. If the department concurs, the student is awarded honors. Students who fail to meet the deadline for submission of the BA thesis are not eligible for honors consideration.

Summary of Requirements for the Major

Regular Track

Six courses in a major field 600
Six electives 600
One of the 12 courses above must be a Research Colloquium (HIST 29600s)

Total Units 1200

Research Track

Six courses in a major field 600
Four electives 400
One of the 10 courses above must be a Research Colloquium (HIST 29600s)
Students on the Research Track should complete their Research Colloquium before Spring Quarter of their third year.

Reading and Research Courses

Students interested in pursuing a program of study that cannot be met by means of regular courses have the option of devising a reading and research course (HIST 29700 Readings in History) that is taken individually and supervised by a member of the Department of History faculty. Such a course requires the approval of the undergraduate program coordinator and the prior consent of the instructor with whom the student would like to study. Note: Enrollment in HIST 29700 is open only to students who are doing independent study that is not related to the research or writing of the BA thesis. As a general rule, only one reading and research course can be counted towards the history major.

Petitioning for Outside Credit

The Department of History offers a wide variety of courses each quarter, and majors are encouraged to take history courses to fulfill the requirements of the major. In some instances, courses that originate outside the department can be used to fulfill the course requirements of the major. To receive history credit for nondepartmental courses, you must petition the Collegiate Affairs Committee for approval. A few things to keep in mind:

- Petitions must include a course description, a syllabus, and a statement of purpose that addresses the value of the course for your proposed course of study.
- Allow sufficient time for committee review and to enable you to take one or more additional history course(s) should your petition be denied.
- You should give your petition to the undergraduate program coordinator, who shares it with the chair of the Collegiate Affairs Committee.
- Courses taken abroad may also be used towards the major, pending approval of the petition, however more than half of the requirements for the major must be met by registering for courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers.
- Petitions for courses abroad must include course syllabi, descriptions, and course work.
- Generally, no more than two petitions per student will be approved.
- Documentation of approved petitions must be provided to the College adviser in a timely fashion for processing.

Grading

Courses counting towards the history major are normally taken for quality grades. The History Research Colloquium (HIST 29600s), HIST 29801 BA Thesis Seminar I, and HIST 29802 BA Thesis Seminar II must be taken for quality grades. In exceptional circumstances, students who are majoring in history may petition to allow a course taken for a pass/fail grade to count towards the requirements of the major. Students wishing to do so should consult with the undergraduate program coordinator. A pass grade is to be given only for work of C– quality or higher. Students should also consult with their College adviser about the appropriateness of pass/fail grading options in their larger program of study.

Minor in History

Students specializing in all disciplines are welcome to minor in history. Majors in such fields as international studies, political science, public policy, economics, and philosophy find that a history minor complements their major by providing a historical understanding of social, cultural, political, and economic issues, while those majoring in such disciplines as mathematics and the sciences use the minor to explore a different area of interest and to develop their humanistic understanding of the world. Students may choose to take courses in a variety of fields, time periods, and thematic topics, with the aim of developing a broad understanding of historical change across time and space, or they may choose to focus specifically on a more narrowly defined field of interest.

Students wishing to pursue the minor should contact the undergraduate program coordinator and complete the minor declaration form no later than the end of the third year. The program coordinator's approval for the minor program should be submitted to a student's College adviser by the deadline above on a form obtained from the adviser.

Requirements

The history minor requires a total of six courses chosen in consultation with the undergraduate program coordinator. Courses in the minor (1) may not be double counted with the student's major(s) or with other minors; (2) may not be counted toward general education requirements; (3) may not be petitioned in from other departments; (4) must be taken for quality grades; and (5) must consist of more than half of the courses bearing University of Chicago course numbers.

Course Numbering

History courses numbered 10000 to 29999 are intended primarily for College students; 10000-level courses are introductory. Some 20000-level courses have 30000-level equivalents when they are open to graduate students. To register for 20000/30000 cross-listed courses, undergraduates must use the undergraduate number (20000). History courses numbered 40000 to 49999 are intended primarily for graduate students, but are open to advanced College students with the consent of the instructor. Undergraduates registered for 40000-level courses are held to the graduate-level requirements.
Double Major

Students planning to double major in history and another discipline are encouraged to do so, with the following stipulations:

- Double counting: Courses that are cross-listed with another department may be used for both majors.
- BA thesis and seminar: Double majors pursuing the Research Track must fulfill the requirements pertaining to the BA thesis, including taking part in the BA seminar.

Study Abroad

The Department of History strongly supports study abroad. We have arranged the course work requirement to make that possible, but a little prior planning is required, especially for those pursuing the Research Track. If at all possible, it is best to study abroad during Autumn and/or Winter Quarters of the third year. However, if a full-year study abroad experience is desired, that is still compatible with the Research Track history major. One section of the BA seminar (combining requirements of BA Seminar I and II in an accelerated manner) meets in Autumn Quarter to accommodate fourth-year students who have been abroad third year; these students register for BA Seminar II with the rest of their third-year cohort. All Research Track history majors are required to be on campus for Autumn and Winter Quarters of their fourth year in order to complete the BA thesis.
Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

- Times was used instead of Trajan.
- Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.