

## **Departmental Learning Goals**

The History major helps students learn to think critically and deeply about the historical processes that have shaped the world we live in. History majors are exposed to a temporally and geographically broad range of historical experience, but they are also required to concentrate on a world region or theme or period of history, both in order to develop depth of understanding and in order to prepare for the ‘capstone’ of the History Major: an article-length, primary-source based, original research project. The major is designed to develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills that will be needed to succeed in this capstone course.

### **Specific learning outcomes**

I. Knowledge outcomes. Students will learn to:

- A. Distinguish and characterize significant periods of historical experience in multiple societies from different parts of the globe.
- B. Describe events and developments in the history of multiple societies in terms of continuity, change, and causation.
- C. Understand interpretive debates about the past.
- D. Appreciate the complexities involved in interpreting societies and social change: for example, the local and the global, particular and general, contingent and structural.
- E. Identify different kinds of historical evidence and understand their role in the production of historical knowledge.

II. Skills outcomes. Students will be able to:

- A. Recall factual claims about the past and synthesize them into coherent interpretive arguments.
- B. Read documents closely and critically.
- C. Formulate a well-organized, well-supported argument.
- D. Demonstrate clear writing in the form of essays of varying lengths.
- E. Make cogent oral arguments about reading assignments in the context of a seminar discussion.
- F. Conduct original research with primary sources.
- G. Locate good, relevant secondary scholarship, and distinguish good from poor scholarship.
- H. Observe ethical practices of citation and intellectual self-presentation.

### **How these outcomes connect to learning in core courses**

I. Lower Division lecture courses. These courses advance all of the goals listed above. Students generally take four lower division lecture courses, at least one in U.S. history, at least one in European history, and at least one in the history of another world area. The fourth course can be an additional course from the areas mentioned above, History 2 or the freshman/sophomore

seminar (History 39). For all these courses (except History 39) sections are mandatory. Sections are small, usually limited to 20 students, and regular oral participation as well as multiple, guided writing assignments, often based on primary sources, are required. There are two different categories of lower division lecture courses:

- A. Survey courses of particular times and places (e.g. History 4A, "The Ancient Mediterranean World," History 5, "European Civilization from the Renaissance to the Present," History 8B, "Modern Latin America");
- B. Comparative courses. History 2, for example, is a comparative world history survey focused on a theme (e.g., "Cities").

II. Upper division lecture courses. All of these courses advance most of the goals listed above. Large lecture classes may or may not have a strong discussion component, so the construction of an oral argument is not always emphasized, in which case, the construction of arguments in writing is the main focus. Upper division lectures are more focused than lower division lectures on particular times and places, and are often organized around themes (e.g. History 109A, "The Rise of Islamic Civilization, 600-1200," or History 125, "History of African-Americans and Race Relations in the United States"). Upper division lecture classes are particularly important in advancing the goals associated with interpretive knowledge and skills (I.A-D, II.A-D).

III. Seminars. There are two main kinds of seminars:

A. Lower division seminars. Each semester the Department of History offers a variety of freshmen/sophomore seminars (History 39, History 24, and History 84). These seminars introduce students to a subject (e.g. "The Palestinians," "Animals in European History") in a seminar setting, emphasizing oral arguments, written arguments, and reading skills. They provides an unparalleled opportunity for faculty members and small groups of lower-division students to explore a scholarly topic of mutual interest together, following an often spontaneous flow of dialogue and interchange in the spirit of learning for its own sake. By taking a seminar a student becomes an active member of Berkeley's intellectual community. The faculty benefit too: interacting directly with a handful of bright and talented new students can be inspiring and energizing.

B. Upper division seminars. There are two kinds of upper division seminars:

1. Reading seminars. Each academic year the department offers some thirty versions of History 103. These courses, like the lower-division seminars, are organized around particular themes, and are keyed to addressing the goals associated with interpretation, writing, and oral arguments. Many 103s are comparative. Recent examples include "Food and Eating Practices in the U.S. and Europe Since the 19th Century," and "Technology and Philosophy in China and the West: Explorations in Comparative Cultural History." Most 103s offer students a project that helps them to prepare for History 101, the required research seminar.

2. Research seminar (History 101). This seminar is required of all majors. It is an experience that captures key expectations for student learning as reflected within the core courses of the major. Students carry out a major primary-source based research project of their own, under the close guidance of an instructor and with peer workshopping. From conceptualizing a historical problem, to researching it (often in archives, and even sometimes in archives in foreign countries), to developing an argument, to presenting it in ways that respect the craft and ethics of the profession, the required senior thesis is in every way the capstone experience of the History Major.

### **How do faculty evaluate whether or not they are attaining these outcomes?**

#### **Routine assessment methods:**

Student papers, from the one-page reader response paper to the substantial research paper;  
Student presentations;  
Exams and questionnaires.

#### **Feedback:**

Feedback from GSIs who supervise discussion sections;  
Feedback from staff advisers;  
Faculty reports on their experience as History 101 instructors;  
Student evaluations;  
Faculty office hours;  
Exit surveys.

#### **Assessment of student learning outcomes:**

Yearly report produced by the Committee on the History Undergraduate Major (CHUM).  
This report focuses on the products of the History 101 courses, as a reliable source of direct evidence of student learning.