History, as one of the core disciplines of a liberal arts education, provides students with the opportunity to master skills that will serve them well in whatever career they choose to pursue. Through seminars, lectures, and independent research projects, history students learn to research, evaluate evidence, think critically, and write clearly as they analyze the complex events and issues of the past.

**Sample Courses**

**Losing the Farm: Globalization and Food Production in the 20th Century**
Who grows the food you eat? How and where do they grow it? And how is it that you can buy fresh fruit in the dead of winter? This course examines the development of industrial agriculture in the 20th century.

**War and Society in the Graeco-Roman World**
This course examines the interplay between warfare and the political, social, and economic structures of the ancient Mediterranean world. Students explore such topics as the motivations for and ideology of armed conflict, and the relationship between military organization and civic structure.

**Tolkien: Medieval and Modern**
This course seeks to understand the appeal of *The Lord of the Rings*—one of the most popular works of imaginative literature of the 20th century—by situating J. R. R. Tolkien’s creation within the context of his larger work as artist and scholar.

**Class and Inequality in 20th-Century China**
In the last 30 years, China’s income distribution changed from one of the most equal in the world to one of the most unequal. This course looks at the roots of inequality in Maoist developmental strategies, changes in the working class, and administrative structures and ideologies.

**History and Popular Culture in Japan**
This course investigates the role of popular culture in producing historical knowledge in contemporary Japan. Using manga, television period dramas, films, documentaries, historical novels, and games, students explore specific historical moments and problems.

**Curriculum**
More than 140 history courses are offered each year to undergraduates. Within these offerings, students can choose to pursue a wide range of specializations, methodologies, and philosophies of history. Each history major is assigned to a preceptor or adviser, who helps him or her define an appropriate and coherent course of study within the department’s expansive offerings. The third-year research paper and fourth-year BA essay allow students the opportunity to pursue independent research on a topic of their choice. A history student’s plan of study may include such regional fields as African history and British history, such temporal fields as ancient history and early modern history, and such topical fields as the history of medicine, gender history, and the history of human rights. In addition, students can construct their own major field in consultation with the undergraduate...
Many students complement their history course work with electives in such fields as anthropology, classics, English, languages, philosophy, political science, and religious studies.

In their third year, history majors participate in a history colloquium. The colloquia are small seminar-style classes on specific topics that introduce students to the tools and methods of historical research and writing. Students in the history colloquia write a research paper of 20 to 25 pages. The topics of recent colloquia have included French intellectual history, Chicago’s South Side, and U.S. women’s history.

Central to the experience of all history students is the writing of their BA essay, an original research paper of approximately 50 pages, in their fourth year. Students working on the BA essay are enrolled in the two-quarter senior seminar, where they work closely with a preceptor and a group of their peers. In addition, each student has a faculty adviser who offers advice at each stage of the project.

To support students who wish to pursue research in libraries and archives off campus, the Department of History sponsors three competitive fellowship programs, the Mann Travel Grant for travel to archives in the United States and the Sack and Montag Fellowships, which can be used for research-related travel within the United States and abroad. In recent years, students have traveled to various sites around the United States and to Germany, the United Kingdom, and France to pursue research.

Each year, the Department of History awards two prizes to students whose BA papers are judged to be particularly distinguished. Recent prize-winning essays include “First-Class Americans, Second-Class Texans: The American GI Forum and the Politics of Citizenship in Post–World War II Texas,” “‘Cain, where are they, those whom you brought here?’ Soviet War Correspondents Confront the Nazi Genocide, 1941–1945,” and “The Myth of the Foreign Enemy: The Brunswick Manifesto and the Radicalization of the French Revolution.”

Resources for Research and Study Abroad

The city of Chicago is an excellent resource for history students. A constellation of Chicago institutions—including the Chicago History Museum, Newberry Library, Art Institute of Chicago, DuSable Museum of African American History, and the Chicago regional facility of the National Archives—maintain specialized libraries and archives that UChicago undergraduates may use in their studies. In addition, many of these and other institutions offer undergraduate internship programs.

For example, history students have recently assisted in developing the Children’s Gallery at the Chicago History Museum, documenting African American oral histories for the Chicago-based History Makers project, and preparing online exhibitions on premodern Japan at the Field Museum.

On campus, history students have access to one of the nation’s best private research libraries: the University of Chicago Library system, which contains more than eight million catalogued volumes, is rich in foreign language materials, rare books, specialized reference works, microfilms, and journals.

Study abroad programs in civilization studies provide history students with an opportunity to supplement their course work at the University. UChicago currently offers civilization studies programs in Athens, Barcelona, Beijing, Cairo, Cape Town, Jerusalem, Oaxaca, Paris, Pune, Rome, and Vienna. Students can also participate in a variety of other summer-, quarter-, and yearlong study abroad programs, including in Berlin, Botswana, Kyoto, London, and St. Petersburg.

After Graduation

The Department of History works closely with PRISM (Planning Resource Involvement for Students in the Majors) to mentor undergraduate students through individual and group meetings, and to provide workshops and events to encourage students to explore history and its professional application in academic and nonacademic settings. In recent years, PRISM and the Department of History have cosponsored workshops on applying to graduate school, drafting a curriculum vitae and a resume, and exploring nonacademic careers.

Many history students go directly to graduate school in history or in such allied fields as American studies, film, public policy, or law. Others seek careers in the arts, education, journalism, politics, and public service. History students have won many top prizes, including the Rhodes Scholarship and the Dorot Foundation Travel Grant, and have participated in the Gilder Lehrman Scholars Program and the New York Urban Fellows Program.