What Can I Do With a History Major?

History Program
Utah Valley University
CB Suite 303

What is History?
The discipline trains both the mind and the imagination of those who study it. History imparts the vital skills of discernment and synthesis through critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. In particular, History confronts students with worlds, times, places, and cultures – including their own – in ways they never before considered.

To study history is to affirm the commitment to exploring issues of diversity within both a national and global context. To study history is to engage intellectually in the confrontation of peoples, ideas, and values in part because the past, no matter the society, is a foreign country.

Leaders in every industry, from business to the arts, can point to their training as history majors as the starting point for their success. Below is a brief examination of the sorts of skills developed by the study of history and various career options available to history majors. History majors develop valuable career skills in research, writing, argumentation, and documentation.

What are the skills one learns as a history major?
One of the key ways of thinking about what a history major prepares you to pursue after graduation is to focus on the skills one acquires as a history student. These include:

- **Research skills**—vital to any job, research skills mean the ability to understand past practices and policies and to trace the roots of any issue, to find new information which bears on that issue, and to incorporate that information into one’s analysis of an issue.

- **Effective writing skills**—vital to any job for which a college degree is a necessity, effective writing means the ability to successfully and precisely communicate one’s ideas in text.

- **Critical analysis skills**—vital to the decision-making process for any job, critical analysis means the ability to analyze a situation and come up with creative and practical solutions.

- **Interdisciplinary thinking and training**—vital to any position, interdisciplinary thinking and training means the ability to think about a problem in a multitude of ways, to analyze it using multiple tools, and to provide solutions which draw from different traditions of thought.

- **Curiosity and inquisitiveness**—vital to any position, curiosity and inquisitiveness mean the desire to learn more and to continue learning, to examine reasons beneath issues, and to come to understand them as part of a continual, life-long, education process.
What are some of the careers paths which history majors commonly follow?

Historians as Educators:

Many history majors go on to become educators, focusing on the communication of their ideas. Educators include teachers in Elementary and Secondary education. They also include Higher Education on many levels, including teaching at community and junior colleges, undergraduate colleges, and universities. But educators are also important members of other educational institutions that you may not think of as immediately as schools. These include historic sites and museums, where history majors can become education directors, curators, guides, and interpreters. In addition, there are other forms of teaching than standing up in front of a classroom. These include work as historical consultants, contract archivists, public historians, writers, and even filmmakers.

Historians as Researchers:

Many history majors go on to careers as researchers, emphasizing their skills in evaluating and analyzing documentary evidence. Historians as researchers include public historians as well as policy advisors, who serve as planners, evaluators, and policy analysts, often for state, local, and federal governments. In addition, historians often find employment as researchers for museums and historical organizations, or pursue additional specialized training to become professionals in cultural resources management and historic preservation.

Historians as Writers and Editors:

Because success as a history major depends upon learning to write effectively, many historians become writers and editors. They make their living as authors of historical books, or more commonly, they work as editors at a publishing house. Many historians become print and broadcast journalists, and others become documentary editors who oversee the publication of documents such as those produced by government agencies.

Historians as Information Managers:

Because history majors must learn to deal with documents, many pursue a one- or two-year graduate program in library studies (commonly, a Master of Library Science, or MLS, degree) or archival management and enter careers as information managers. With this additional training, they enter the fields of archives management, information management, records management, and librarianship.

Historians as Advocates:

Many history majors find that historical training makes a perfect preparation for law school, as historians and lawyers often do roughly the same thing—they argue persuasively using historical data to support their arguments. Many history majors become lawyers; others undertake careers in litigation support as paralegals. Others enter public service and become policymakers, serve as legislative staff at all levels of government, and become officers of granting agencies and foundations.

Historians as Businesspeople:

Most people overlook the value of a history major in preparing an intelligent person for a career in business. Yet, historians track historic trends, an important skill for those developing products to market or engaged in corporate or financial planning. Many history majors enter
banking, insurance, and stock analysis. Historians also learn how to write persuasively, and this training gives them an edge in advertising, communications media, and marketing. Finally, many industries depend on an intimate knowledge of government policies and historical trends; thus, history majors have found their skills useful in extractive industries and in public utilities.

Related Career Titles
(Some of these jobs require education beyond the bachelor's degree.)

Anthropologist
Archeologist
Archivist
Biographer
Clergy
Community Relations Dir.
Congressional Aide
Consultant
Consumer Advocate
Counselor
Criminologist
Demographer
Digital Humanities
Documentary Editor
Economist
Editor
FBI Agent
Foreign News Corresp.
Foreign Service Officer

Foundation Staffer
Genealogist
Government Official
Grant Writer
Historian
Historic Preservationist
Historic Site Tour Guide
Historical Society Staff
Information Specialist
Insurance Agent/Broker
Intelligence Analyst
International Relations
Journalist
Lawyer
Lecturer
Legal Assistant/Paralegal
Librarian
Lobbyist
Market Research Analyst
Media Consultant

Museum Curator
Museum Tech. & Specialist
Park Ranger
Peace Corps/AmeriCorps Worker
Political Scientist
Psychologist
Public Relations Specialist
Records Manager
Research Assistant
Social Worker
Sociologist
Teacher, Social Studies
Technical Writer
Travel Agent
Urban Administrator
Urban Planner
Writer/Author

Some Employers of History Majors:

Administration & Legislation
Advertising
Broadcasting
Bureau of the Census
Business and Industry
Campaigns
Central Intelligence Agency
 Corrections & Court Systems
Department of State
Education
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Health and Human Services
Housing & Community Development
Legislators
Library
Media
Museums & Archives
Non-Profit Organizations
Paralegal Profession
Parks & Recreation
Peace Corps/AmeriCorps
Police & Fire Protection

Political Parties
Public Interest Groups
Research Foundations
Schools and Universities
Social & Welfare Services
State and Local Governments
Think Tanks
Transportation
Travel and tour services
Related Major Skills

Explaining ideas
Interpreting events and ideas
Writing and presenting information
Examining evidence
Analyzing ideas and information
Developing a world view

Explaining the present by referring to the past
Decision making
Seeing relationships between factors
Oral & written communication

Job & Internship Search Links

UVU Career Development Center http://www.uvu.edu/cdc/

UVU Internship Services http://www.uvu.edu/internships/


American Alliance of Museums Job HQ http://aam-us.org/resources/careers


Government Jobs https://www.usajobs.gov/

AHA Career Center (mostly academic jobs) http://careers.historians.org/jobs


Career Planning Links


Professional Associations Links

American Historical Association www.historians.org

American Association for State and Local History http://www.aaslh.org

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