

Top 5 Reasons to Study History

by the Department of History, Rutgers-Camden

1) **We don't prepare you for a job—we prepare you for *every* job.** What do the CEO of Goldman Sachs, the National Security Advisor, and Conan O'Brien have in common? All of them were history majors. The vast majority of jobs in the world do not line up with a specific college major, and studying history prepares you well for any job that requires broadly applicable skills in communication, creativity, and critical thinking. Studying history may lead to careers in teaching or serving the public in museums, historic sites, or archives—but very few of our majors go on to become “historians” in the strictest sense. Instead, our majors use the skills they have developed in research, writing, and critical thinking to become extremely successful in a wide variety of careers including management, business, finance, law, marketing, entertainment, media, consulting, journalism, and public service.

2) **Learn what you want to learn.** History is a truly exciting major because you can study literally anything you want! There is no other major where you can study everything humans have ever done from the dawn of time to the present day; think about any topic from ancient Rome to Japanese samurai to World War II to contemporary politics; and employ tools, theories, and insights from economics, political science, science, medicine, psychology, gender studies, literature, art, film and everything in between. Since history is the study of everything from the earliest times to the present, it can be the study of whatever you are interested in. No courses in our major have any prerequisites, so you can take them in any order you want. A history major is whatever you want it to be.

3) **Learn from the best, in an intimate setting.** Our faculty consists of top-flight researchers who value small class sizes and getting to know our students. We have PhDs from the nation's most prestigious universities, and we're actively engaged in cutting-edge research. We bring that research into the classroom as an integral part of our teaching rather than reading from yellowed lecture notes written ten years ago. When you meet with us during office hours, you meet with *us*, not with graduate teaching assistants. You get to know us, and we get to know you.

4) **Our classes aren't the high-school history classes you hated.** Our students sometimes tell us that high-school history classes made them lose interest in the past because it was all about memorizing names and dates. But that's not what our classes are about. Far more than just learning what happened and when, your professors will ask you to consider how and why things happen the way they do. In other words, we'd much rather you learn *how* to think than tell you *what* to think. We encourage our students to do meaningful work of their own through research and hands-on projects. In every case, you'll be expected to come up with your *own* interpretation, no matter how unusual, unexpected, or different from the professor's, and learn how to justify it with evidence and argumentation.

5) **We respect your intelligence.** We don't deny that history majors will be expected to read and write and discuss and think hard—in fact, we're proud of it! It's no surprise that the leaders of campus organizations are often history majors (as are the CEOs and managers of major companies, for that matter). These are the kinds of people who are driven to explore topics in depth and who are passionate about communicating their insights to others. The stimulating conversations taking place your history classes every day will help you hone the intellectual skills you will apply in the professional world.