



History Essential Learning Outcomes

The Department of History has adopted the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) framework for Essential Learning Outcomes and applied its categories specifically to our discipline. History students learn to identify fundamental social trends and analyze critical causal factors shaping the record of human experience. History students develop skills of research, analysis, and writing useful to work and life. A history major aids judgment in many fields of human endeavor.

1. Knowledge of human cultures -- History students will

- Identify people, events, and processes significant to their courses of study
- examine similarities and differences across chronologies, geographies, and themes
- explain how past peoples understood their worlds and how those understandings shaped the ways they acted
- analyze the range of social, cultural, political, and economic possibilities available to people in particular contexts
- analyze why change occurs

2. Intellectual and practical skills

Inquiry and Analysis – History students will

- develop a creative, focused, and manageable question for historical research
- synthesize evidence representing a variety of perspectives
- explain the challenges of constructing historical narratives using incomplete and contradictory evidence
- formulate a thesis and conclusion substantiated by primary and secondary source analysis
- critique alternative conclusions

Critical Thinking – History students will

- identify and analyze the central issues, arguments, and points of view in primary and secondary sources
- evaluate authors' arguments and assess their evidence and conclusions
- criticize their own and others' assumptions and the contexts in which they develop those assumptions
- use historiography to compare and contrast a variety of scholarly texts
- analyze the ways historical writing is a product of particular historical contexts

Written Communication – History students will

- establish the context, audience, and purpose of their written assignments
- master the conventions of historical writing, including: clear paper organization; logical paragraph organization; clear, direct, and engaging language; proper citation, using *Chicago* style
- compose papers employing narrative, descriptive, and analytical writing to convey their historical knowledge and analytical skills

Information literacy – History students will

- determine the types of sources that are relevant to a research question
- locate and evaluate appropriate materials for historical research, using book catalogs (Skyline, Prospector, WorldCat), article databases (particularly America: History and Life, Historical Abstracts, and JSTOR), and interlibrary loan
- demonstrate understanding of the ethical and legal issues surrounding the use of published and unpublished materials, including what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite sources

3. Personal and social responsibility

Intercultural knowledge and competence – History students will

- evaluate how their cultural biases inform their understandings of history
- evaluate the ways that historians of different cultural perspectives produce different histories
- interpret historical evidence with consideration to historical actors' various cultural perspectives

Ethical reasoning and action -- History students will

- analyze the ethical issues embedded in historical events and processes
- evaluate different ethical choices present in historical decision-making
- evaluate the ethical assumptions of the texts they read

4. Integrative and applied learning -- History students will

- demonstrate connections between different courses and readings
- synthesize academic experiences with their experiences outside the classroom
- seek out applications of their historical knowledge and skills beyond the classroom