CHECKLIST FOR HISTORY MAJORS

This is a checklist for students majoring in History. Filling it out will help you prepare for your meeting with your History advisor during preregistration or registration, and it will also help you with long-term course planning and anticipating a possible thesis project in your senior year.

You may not be able to fill out the checklist completely at this point, but it will still give you some guidelines for the major. If you have any questions about the major or the checklist, you should bring them up with your advisor in your meeting during preregistration or registration.

Information about the major is also available in the printed course catalog and on the department’s website: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/history/major

FULFILLMENT OF THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN HISTORY

NUMBER OF COURSES: Completion of the History major requires at least nine history courses.

Number of history courses already completed (including Five College and cross-listed courses): _____

Number of history courses you are taking during the current semester: _____

CONCENTRATION IN THE MAJOR: You must have a total of four history courses in one geographic or thematic area (see the catalog or the website for more information).

Concentration: ________________________________

Courses:

1.

2.

3.

4.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION/BREADTH REQUIREMENT: You must complete one history course in at least three different geographic areas (one of these areas can be your area of concentration).

Course 1:

Course 2:

Course 3:
PRE-1800 AND COMPARATIVE HISTORY REQUIREMENT: You must complete either two history courses that principally cover a time period prior to 1800 (designated by a superscript “P” in the course description in the catalog), OR one pre-1800 course and one comparative history course (designated by a superscript “C” in the course description).

Course 1:
Course 2:

RESEARCH PAPER REQUIREMENT: You must complete a 20- to 25-page research paper, based on primary documents, either in a course designated as an upper-level history seminar (usually 400 level) or by special arrangement with a professor teaching a nonseminar course. The paper must conform to the department’s “Guidelines for Research Papers,” available on the department’s website. (The guidelines are available here: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/history/major/guidelines)

BEST PRACTICE IS TO COMPLETE THE SEMINAR AND THE RESEARCH PAPER REQUIREMENT BY THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR.

Course/seminar in which this paper was (or will be) completed:

HISTORICAL THEORY AND METHODS REQUIREMENT: You must complete either History 301: Writing the Past OR History 402: Wine, History and the Environment (not currently offered).

Course #:

- Completed
- Not yet taken; I intend to take it in (indicate what semester you will take it):

HISTORY COURSES TAKEN AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OUTSIDE THE FIVE COLLEGES (INCLUDING STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS AND HISTORY COURSES TAKEN ELSEWHERE BY TRANSFER STUDENTS)

Students who have taken history courses outside of the Five College Consortium (including history courses taken in study abroad programs and history courses taken by transfer students at other institutions) must petition the department to receive approval to count those courses toward the major requirements. If you are planning to study abroad, you should have a conversation with your major advisor before starting the program to discuss possible courses and how your program of study will help fulfill the Amherst History major. In general, a course taught in a history department by history department faculty at a college or university stands a very good chance of being accepted for the major. Approval of individual courses taken elsewhere to count for the major is not automatic, however: you must petition the department.

To petition the department, you should complete the online form, available here: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/history/major/petition-for-outside-course-credit
Note that the petition form asks that you attach a syllabus, reading list and/or papers written for the course. You do not have to attach all of these documents if you do not have them in your possession, but you should attach whatever documents you do have. Once you have completed the form, the petition will be discussed and approved or denied by the department at the next department meeting.

Please petition the department in a timely manner: if for some reason the petition is denied you will need to make up the additional course(s) at Amherst.

Have you taken history courses outside of the Five Colleges that you want to count toward the major?

- No, I do not need to submit a petition
- Yes, I need to submit a petition for a course taken at another institution or study abroad program.

If you need more information about how to petition the department, please ask your advisor.

**COMPREHENSIVE REQUIREMENT FOR THE HISTORY MAJOR**

All majors must satisfy a comprehensive assessment by either

- Completing a capstone project.

**OR**

- Completing a senior thesis (see description below)

**CAPSTONE PROJECT FOR MAJORS NOT WRITING AN HONORS THESIS**

If you elect not to write an Honors thesis in History, you will fulfill the comprehensive requirement by preparing a Capstone project. The Capstone project is a reflection on a research paper that you completed in an upper-level seminar. The project consists of a brief (ten-minute) oral presentation based on the research paper, and a short (five-page) written commentary on the research paper. The presentation should highlight the research question, the sources and methods of investigation, and the overall conclusion, while the brief paper reflects on larger issues that emerge from the topic and the broader historical context. The Capstone project (including both the presentation and the paper) is ordinarily due early in the second semester of the senior year, so it is imperative that you complete the research paper no later than the first semester of the senior year. Additional information will be available from the department for majors entering their senior year.

**DEPARTMENTAL HONORS IN THE HISTORY MAJOR: WRITING A THESIS**

The department recommends Latin Honors for any senior who has achieved distinction in his or her course work and who has completed a thesis of Honors quality. A student who wishes to be a candidate for Latin Honors will write a thesis, normally by taking two courses, History 498 and History 499, in addition to the nine courses required of all majors. With the approval of the thesis advisor, a student may take either History 498 or History 499 as a double course. In special cases, and with the approval of the entire department, a student may be permitted to devote more than three courses to his or her thesis.

The thesis is researched and written on an independently chosen topic, and the student participates in an oral defense of the thesis with three faculty members chosen jointly by the student and the department. The
faculty who constitute the thesis committee make a recommendation to the department about the level of Honors that should be recommended based on the thesis. The different levels are 1) summa cum laude, 2) magna cum laude, 3) cum laude, or 4) rite (no Honors). While the department makes a recommendation about the level of Honors, the actual level awarded upon graduation is also dependent upon the individual student’s GPA.

If you are thinking about possibly writing a thesis, you should discuss this with your History advisor, even if you do not yet have a firm idea of what you would like to write about.

**ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT WRITING A THESIS IN HISTORY?**

- Yes, definitely. I intend to write a thesis in the following subject area / on the following topic:
  - I have already discussed this topic with a member of the department who is interested in advising the thesis project; or
  - I have not yet discussed this with a potential advisor, and I may need suggestions.

- Maybe, but I still have not decided.
  - I’m not sure what I would write about; or
  - I have a general topic I’d like to work on, but I don’t know whether I could find adequate sources; or
  - I’m interested in writing a thesis, but I’m not sure if I can fit it into my schedule.

- No, I don’t intend to write a thesis.

If you have any questions about any of the requirements for the major, or about writing a thesis or completing a Capstone project, please contact your advisor or the chair of the History department.

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