Major Possibilities: History

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Here to help you get ahead.

Summary

- Historians research, analyze, and interpret the past. They usually specialize in a country or region, a particular period, or a particular field, such as social, intellectual, cultural, political, or women's history.
- Usually, advanced study, such as a Master's degree or even a Ph.D., is required for higher level positions.
- Numerous local museums and other organizations offer internships and research opportunities. Archaeological field schools instruct future anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians in how to interpret historical sites.
- Learning a second language related to your area of interest will be beneficial to you in your career.

History major synopsis

The History program at Southwestern University provides students with a global perspective and a solid grounding in the methods and fields of history, while also encouraging interdisciplinary connections. Students take courses in world history, historiography, a course with a pre- or early modern component, and a Senior Seminar (Capstone). One upper-level course must be taken from four of the five geographical areas: Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the United States of America; two additional courses of your choice must be taken for a total of nine courses (36 credit hours). History may be paired with Feminist Studies for a 15-course major or may serve as a disciplinary major paired with an area concentration as part of an International Studies major. See the education department for information on teacher certification.

Sample occupational areas

Education
A degree in History can lead to a job as an educator in secondary or post-secondary education. All teachers of grades K-6 also need to complete a general studies curriculum. For high school teachers, a broader range of history courses is required because of the sole emphasis on a specific area of history, such as American History, World History, Western Civilizations, etc. History majors can also continue their education to become a professor. Jobs are available for educators in museums and historical sites. Educators are needed at such sites to interpret the past to visitors with a wide range of education and experience. Those who teach at museums and historic sites may need more than traditional history courses to qualify for their positions.

Research
Research in museums includes authentication, verification, and description of items; more basic research that focuses on the meaning, significance and context of artifacts; and research (usually team-based) that is aimed at assembling an exhibition or educational program based on the museum's collections. A BA may suffice for these jobs in small museums. Other options are cultural resources management (CRM) and historic preservation, which enable historians to research the pasts of these historic places. Independent research is also possible, especially if one is a professor at a research university. Historians publish their research in many forms. They can use monographs, academic articles, documentary films, brochures, exhibits, reports on historic buildings for federal agencies, or documents to help businesses or government agencies understand their past when making decisions to display their research.

Business
Within a particular company, those with a background in history may find careers in the areas of external relations, marketing, information resource management, legal affairs, finance and control, administration, human resources, and operations. In almost every type of business, archivists and records managers are employed to oversee current and archival records, using them to provide information and archival services. In the area of human resources, historians with knowledge of foreign languages and foreign cultures, working in an international company, can help employees and customers communicate effectively.

Another option is to be a contract historian. In order to become a consultant, an entrepreneurial attitude and determination are mandatory. Museums, nonprofit organizations, federal agencies, businesses, and individuals all may hire consultants who contract for particular projects. Contract historians can own or work for history businesses--firms that specialize in providing history services for a variety of clients, from providing litigation support to preparing text for a museum exhibit, researching a historic site for a cultural resources management project, or declassifying documents for a government agency.

Law
Students of history can also go on to law school or become a paralegal. A background in history would be useful for the research required for working in law. Historians can work in litigation support by being witnesses in court. They can also be important staff members for government officials who are responsible for making laws. Ability to conduct primary source research is invaluable when seeking to determine the original intent of a law or regulation under scrutiny.

Library
Librarians use the latest information technology to perform research, classify materials, and help students and library patrons seek information. A master's degree in library science is the main qualification for most librarian positions, although school librarians often need experience as teachers to meet State licensing requirements. Librarians can act as both educators and researchers. Librarians are classified according to the type of library in which they work: a public library; school library media center; college, university, or other academic library; or special library.

Sample job titles

Anthropologist
Archaeologist
Archivist
Art Gallery Director
Bank Officer
Biographer
Community Relations Director
Congressional Aide
Conservator
Consumer Advocate
Contract Historian
Correspondent
Criminologist
Curator
Demographer
Exhibit Designer
FBI/CIA Agent
Foreign Service Officer
Freelance Writer
Genealogist
Geographer
Government Official
Historian
Information Specialist
Insurance Agent
Intelligence Analyst
International Relations Specialist
Journalist
Judge
Lawyer
Librarian
Market Research Analyst
Museum Worker
News Reporter
Paralegal
Peace Corps Volunteer
Preservation Advocate
Professor
Program Coordinator
Public Administrator
Public Relations Officer
Researcher
Teacher
Technical Writer
Travel Agent
University Staff
Urban Planner

Sample internship employers of SU students

American University – Washington, DC
Art Institute of Chicago
Boston National Historic Park
Congressman Pete Sessions - Washington, DC
Dawson, Sodd, Ellis, and Hodge, LLC
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Fort Caspar Museum/Historic Site – Caspar, WY
Magazine Publishers of America
Scott & White Hospital – Round Rock, TX
Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza – Dallas, TX
Smithsonian Museum of American History – Washington, DC
Southwestern University Special Collections – Georgetown, TX
State Farm Insurance Company – Austin, TX
Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation
The Museum of Modern Art
The Museum of Texas University – Lubbock, TX
Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site
Williamson Museum

Sample full-time employers of SU Grads

Admissions Counselor (Houston Baptist University)
Background Investigator (Omniplex World Services)
Business Analyst (Hewitt Associates)
Gallery Assistant (Texas State Preservation Board)
Gallery Educator (Austin Children's Museum)
Freelance Writer (Self-Employed)
Information Coordinator (Houston Museum of Natural Science)
Law Clerk (Dunaway Law Firm, PC)
Legal Assistant (Law Offices of Richard Pena)
Office Assistant (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee)
Office Clerk (United States Census Bureau)
Paralegal (Ihfe and Associates, PC)
Patient Care Secretary (Lighthouse Hospice)
Program Director (Lutherhill Ministries)
Refugee Resettlement Specialist (Caritas of Austin)
Teacher (Various Public and Private Schools, Teach for America ,Amity)
Technical Writer (National Instruments)

Professional associations

American Alliance of Museums: http://www.aam-us.org/resources/careers
American Association for State and Local History: www.aaslh.org
American Cultural Resources Association: acra-crm.org
American Historical Association: www.historians.org
Association of Science-Technology Centers: www.astc.org
International Students of History Association: www.isha-international.org
Organization of American Historians: www.oah.org
Phi Alpha Theta-National Honors Fraternity for History Majors: www.phialphatheta.org
Society for American Archaeology: www.saa.org

Additional Web resources

American Museum of Natural History: www.amnh.org
American Quarterly: www.americanquarterly.org
Careers with a History Degree: www.historians.org/pubs/free/careers/Index.htm
Smithsonian Institution: www.sihr.si.edu/jobs.cfm
SU History Department Resources: http://southwestern.edu/departments/history/resources.php
Other History Websites: www.besthistorysites.net/index.php

Career Services' print resources

Careers for History Buffs and Others Who Learn from the Past
Careers in Education
Careers for Scholars and Other Deep Thinkers
Career Opportunities in Education and Related Services
Career Opportunities in Library and Information Sciences
Great Jobs for History Majors
Inside a U.S. Embassy
Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices
Opportunities in Overseas Careers
Opportunities in Museum Careers
Top Careers for History Graduates
Vault Guide to Capitol Hill Careers