

Why History at Brandeis?

Majoring in history at Brandeis allows students to uncover the multiple pasts of the contemporary world beneath the veneer of the present. The major reflects the breadth and variety of available pasts by allowing students to immerse themselves in those they wish, far or near in distance or time. A dozen broad survey courses reveal the sweep of regional or even world history, while about seventy specialized offerings explore selective moments, peoples, or places in time. Students may combine these in any way they choose, thanks to the organizing principle of the major—flexibility.

Curriculum Overview

Majors may choose any eight courses they wish, but the faculty strongly recommend that students take at least one of the broad geographical survey courses offered by the department, including:

- History of the United States: 1607-1865 (HIST 51a)
- History of the United States: 1865 to the Present (HIST 51b)
- Europe from 1789 to the Present (HIST 52b)
- World History to 1960 (HIST 56b)
- Latin American History, Pre-Conquest to 1870 (HIST 71a)
- Latin American History, 1870 to the Present (HIST 71b)
- Introduction to East Asian Civilization (HIST 80a)
- East Asia: Nineteenth Century to the Present (HIST 80b)

The department offers other survey courses, less defined by geography than by theme:

- History of the Family (HIST 55b)
- Fire and Ice: An Ecological Approach to World History (HIST 100a)
- Roman History to 455 C.E. (HIST 103a)
- War in European History (HIST 145a)

Students may take as few or as many survey courses as they wish, but most find that only a strong mix of more specialized offerings can do justice to the richness and diversity of history. These offerings invite students to immerse themselves in a place in time, an intellectual or cultural movement, a social crisis or revolutionary upheaval, and they typically introduce students to the practice of historical research and writing full-length papers—skills that will stand them in good stead throughout their Brandeis careers and beyond.

Students are guided through the history major with the help of the undergraduate advising head and faculty advisers. They are not “locked into” a course of study from the day they declare the major, but rather have the opportunity to design a course of study that reflects their vast interests and opens the door onto an almost infinitely varied discipline.

A Versatile Major

Versatile by nature, the history major lends itself particularly well to joint programs of study, including double-majors such as history and politics. It can also be combined with many other courses of study in the arts and sciences, such as Latin American, Russian and East European studies, or women’s and gender studies. Additionally, students have the option to write and defend joint honors theses, and thus graduate with double honors.

Career and Education Opportunities

History is an excellent general preparation for a range of professional careers, especially in light of the emphasis placed on developing research and analytical skills. Law, business, and graduate schools in other disciplines attract and welcome qualified history majors, and every year, at least one of our graduates goes on to pursue a master of arts or doctor of philosophy in history itself.

Faculty

Following is a list of department faculty members and their areas of specialization:

- **Paul Jankowski, chair**
Modern European and French history
- **William Kapelle, undergraduate advising head**
Medieval history
- **Michael Willrich, graduate advising head for American history**
American social and legal history
- **Govind Sreenivasan, graduate advising head for comparative history**
Early modern European history, Germany
- **Silvia Arrom**
Latin America, women’s history, social history
- **Rudolph Binion**
Modern history; culture and thought; psychohistory
- **David Engerman**
History of American foreign policy, international and cultural history
- **David Hackett Fischer**
Modern history, social institutions
- **Gregory Freeze**
Russia and Germany, social and religious history
- **Mark Hulliung**
Intellectual, cultural, and political history; European and American history
- **Jacqueline Jones**
American southern and women’s history
- **Jane Kamensky**
Colonial America; American social and cultural history
- **Alice Kelikian, chair, film studies**
Modern history, social institutional history
- **John Schrecker**
East Asian history and civilization, Sino-Western relations
- **Ibrahim Sundiata**
Africa: social history; slavery, the African diaspora, Afro-Brazil