College of Arts & Sciences

History

Overview
A link between the past and the present, history is the record of humankind’s accomplishments and failures. It deals with vital contemporary problems, including the interrelationship between society and its environment, issues of war and peace, and the conduct of decision-making. History is a source of rigorous intellectual conditioning; it involves a process of disciplined thinking and training the mind to assess evidence and reach rational conclusions.

Professional options

Careers
Many students become history professionals teaching history on the secondary level; teaching, writing and researching at a university; working at a historic preservation or museum and archival curatorship; doing governmental research; or working in public history. Some of these professions require only a bachelor’s degree, while others require advanced professional training.

Employers value the communication and research skills of history students. History graduates’ training in the analysis of human affairs and their knowledge of social, political and cultural issues make them versatile individuals who frequently rise to positions of leadership. Many law schools and medical schools regard the history degree as excellent preparation for their programs.

Academics
The program
The history program at Kansas State University is not just for history majors but is intended for all students seeking a rewarding educational experience. Its most noteworthy feature is a curriculum containing courses in both traditional and nontraditional fields. Because the history faculty specializes in a wide variety of areas, the department offers courses in many fields. The Bachelor of Arts degree emphasizes the liberal arts and humanities foundation of the discipline and requires the study of a modern foreign language. The Bachelor of Science degree trains students in social science methodologies, requiring quantitative studies such as mathematics and statistics.

In both programs, students take 36 credit hours of history, beginning with an introductory seminar and a two-semester Western Civilization sequence, a two-semester United States history sequence, or a two-semester World History sequence. Each student chooses a combination of courses according to personal interest and professional needs. In order to obtain breadth of study, history majors must distribute course work so that it includes the study of preindustrial societies, the non-Western world, and the United States.

During the junior or senior year, majors take a historical methodology seminar in which they produce a research project that reflects the skills they have mastered in research and writing. All students must meet general college requirements outside the field of history. Both programs contain strong components in the social sciences, the humanities and the natural sciences. In addition, students may select up to one-third of their university credits as electives, creating programs that fit individual needs. Students may take a second major, an interdisciplinary secondary major or a combination of courses to build a professional expertise. Students earning a double major must complete 30 hours in history rather than the normal 36 hours.

Degree options

Geographical areas
United States history
More than 30 specialized courses ranging from the colonial era to contemporary times give students a sense of our society’s past and the skills to evaluate historical data. Course topics include African-American history, the American West and Native American histories, in addition to traditional courses on the American Revolution, Jacksonian America, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the history of the United States in the 20th century.

European history
Specialists in European history give instruction in topics as diverse as medieval religion and politics, the Reformation, the history of France, the cultural-intellectual history of Europe, and Russian civilization and Soviet studies. Those interested in international studies may supplement their course work in history with a secondary major consisting of interdisciplinary course work.

Non-Western history
In an era of global interdependence, a familiarity with world regions beyond Europe and the United States is crucial. Offerings include history of East Asian civilization, the civilization of South Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, China since 1644 and the history of Japan.

Thematic fields

Military history
The American Civil War, World War I, World War II, the history of war and society, and the history of American military affairs are among the many offerings in this strong specialization. Military history and the study of technology mesh in courses that focus on the history of military organization, while themes such as military thought, logistics and the role of political institutions in the conduct of war and foreign relations receive major attention.

Points of pride
- Each semester the history department sponsors guest speakers, special seminars and colloquia for students and faculty.
- The history department’s Chapman Center for Rural Studies is the institutional home of the renowned journal, Kansas History.
Agricultural and environmental history
Farmers have changed the ecology of the earth dramatically. The evolution of K-State is part of this larger story. Course topics in this specialization include American agricultural history, American environmental history, world environmental history, Kansas history, and American Indians and the environment. Students enrolled in the natural resources and environmental sciences secondary major will be interested in this emphasis, as well as those interested in the history of science.

Religious history
Religion has played a significant role in human history, and many courses devote significant attention to it. The department offers courses on the history of Christianity, religion in American history, religion and science, death and dying, and the history of the occult and witchcraft.

History of gender and ethnicity
Recent developments in the historical investigation of gender roles are represented in our courses on women in history. Similarly, considerations of race and ethnicity figure prominently in courses such as the history of the American South, Native American history and the attempted destruction of the European Jews and other peoples in the Holocaust. Several history courses count toward the major in women's studies and the major in American ethnic studies.

Social history
Historians pay much attention to the history of common people and the structure of everyday life in past eras. Courses on cultural history, the social history of sport and religion in society typify this creative thrust in the department's offerings.

History of science
History of science and history of medicine courses explore the interactions between science and society. Although most people realize science has had a major impact on recent history, there is less understanding of how culture has influenced science. Departmental courses in this field demonstrate that science has not developed independently from cultural and social values, but rather has been dependent upon them.

History minor
The history minor consists of a minimum of 21 hours in history, of which at least 15 must be at the 300 level or higher. The department also offers Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Secondary major
Students pursuing a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in a major other than history may earn a secondary major by completing 30 hours, including six hours of introductory survey, 15 hours of upper division course work, one elective, Introduction to Historical Thinking and Advanced Seminar. If the primary major is outside the College of Arts & Sciences, students must fulfill the general requirements of the College of Arts & Sciences in addition to those associated with their primary major.

Internships
Students may gain practical professional experience by participating in this program for one or two semesters. Faculty and working professionals supervise the interns. The department offers internships at historical sites such as the Riley County Historical Museum, the Fort Riley Cavalry Museum, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, the Kansas State Museum and Library and other historical institutions.

Activities
Clubs
Extracurricular activities include Phi Alpha Theta, the international honorary society in history that sponsors speakers, films and social events. Students with a potential for high scholastic achievement may be invited to join the honors program of the College of Arts & Sciences as well as the K-State chapters of Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Alpha Theta.

Study abroad
The department encourages history majors to gain international experience through study at universities outside of the U.S. Information can be obtained from the Office of Education Abroad, 304 Fairchild Hall, or from the website, k-state.edu/studyabroad. A semester or year abroad can be arranged in almost any region of the world. History advisors work with students to ensure they receive proper academic credit for international studies.

Service
An excellent way to gain practical experience and serve communities at the same time is to participate on one of K-State's international teams. K-State students are placed in developing countries for eight to 10 weeks during the summer. See the community service website at k-state.edu/leadership.