American Historical Association

Liberal Learning and the History Major

By Michael J. Galgano

Preface by Patrick Manning

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Preface

Here is a concise yet rich statement of the values, principles, and practices of the study of history. Michael Galgano, an experienced university teacher of history and a teacher of teachers, has revised a statement first published in 1990, to fit it to the needs of our new century. The act of revising this statement caused the author and the AHA Teaching Division, which commissioned it, to ask what remains the same and what has changed in the teaching of undergraduate history courses. There is much on either side of the balance sheet.

The initial report was completed in cooperation with a national review of arts and sciences majors initiated by the Association of American Colleges as part of its continuing commitment to advance and strengthen undergraduate liberal learning. Generous funding for the project and dissemination of the reports was provided by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and the Ford Foundation. The Teaching Division wants to thank the Task Force that worked on the 1990 version: Myron Marty, Drake University, chair; Edward Gosselin, California State University at Long Beach; Colin Palmer, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Lynda Schaffer, Tufts University; and Joanna Zangrando, Skidmore College.

The changes are easiest to enumerate. The very institutions of education have changed, with costs rising at both private and public institutions. Community colleges have expanded in number, with class sizes more like those of liberal arts colleges than of big state universities. Subjects of instruction have changed: history now includes more regions of the world, more on the environment and gender, and large-scale world history as well as nations. History now gives more attention to museums and public performances. Technology has changed so that students are reading and writing online. Learning is cross-disciplinary as well as cross-platform.

Nevertheless, much remains the same. The basic dilemmas that humans experience—and that historians study—have changed little. The problems of learning remain the same. The complexity of the past requires the same care and complexity in our study of it. No computer algorithm or straightforward deduction can yield sound historical interpretation, yet there is a logic to the past that can be uncovered with patient effort. The core notions of liberal arts education and liberal learning provide a valuable continuity in the transmission of knowledge.

This fine essay, expertly updated, balances the continuity and change in undergraduate learning of history. It shows how the study of history prepares students for knowledgeable and critical assessment of their surroundings, and builds skills of reading, writing, speaking, and researching. This is the bedrock of undergraduate history education. The essay gives particular attention to the undergraduate major and minor, including the growing role of public history and teacher preparation in the major. At the same time, it addresses the needs of students whose exposure to history will be limited to courses in the core curriculum.

Teachers of college history courses would do well to reread this essay every term.

—Patrick Manning
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Liberal Learning and the History Major

Introduction

In December 1990, the American Historical Association in cooperation with the American Association of Colleges published *Liberal Learning and the History Major* "to advance and strengthen liberal learning." This influential report offered guidance to historians, history programs, and their varied publics about the study of history and its place as the keystone of a liberal education. The document has served the profession well and its basic principles remain central to the systematic study of history today. Developments since then, however, suggest the need to modify the document for the current generation and present century.

The new century challenges historians to rethink our purposes and practices, to seek and accept new commitments, and to ensure for the study of the past a vigorous future. Some problems of the last century persist and demand fuller commitment from those who value the study of history. Schools, colleges, and universities continue to compromise the place of history in their curricula. History is now a part of the social studies in the schools and must struggle for a place in the core curriculum on many campuses. Though educational institutions share responsibility for diminishing the study of history, historians have the authority to restore its value by educating those in their charge to think historically and to use knowledge and understanding of the past to challenge the present and the future. Historians must be advocates for history as a major and for the liberal arts in an age of consumerism and careerism in contemporary culture. If historians do not articulate forcefully and fully the values of the discipline, no one will. It is crucial to understand and argue for history, for liberal learning, and for the discipline's vital role in preparing the next generation of teachers and global citizens. These goals are essential to any program.

The case for history must be thoughtfully constructed for those who recognize its value and in response to those who see education only as a preparation for a job or career. There are fundamental characteristics that merit emphasis in building an argument to support the study of history. First, those who study history can help explain an increasingly complex world characterized by an accelerated speed of change, increased global connections and interdependence, and the discouragement of independent thought by perpetual distractions and pitches. As a discipline, the study of history helps prepare the human mind able to adapt quickly to an ever-changing world. History is also an encompassing discipline. Its essence is exploring the connectedness of historical events and human experiences. By examining evidence of the causes, contexts, and chronologies of events, one gains a more dispassionate understanding of the nature of continuity and change in human experiences. Contemporary issues, ideas, and relationships take on unique meaning when they are studied from historical perspectives. The systematic study of history recognizes when change occurs and distinguishes it from continuity. It also explains how past became present, the limits and possibilities of the future, and how to manage or direct change.

History plays a central role in a liberal education and should be at the core of a college's offerings. While acknowledging that our discipline does not have all the answers and that vigorous and long-standing disagreements exist among us, we nonetheless share the conviction that knowledge, abilities, and perspectives gained through the study of history are applicable in many other disciplines. Part of historical study is learning how to locate, evaluate, and employ evidence to support argument. History is thus both a way of thinking about the world and a systematic process of analyzing evidence. As such, it should be central to any institution's academic programs. History and other liberal arts teach how to think, problem solve, weigh varieties of evidence, and detect bias, prejudice, motive and point of view.

Many in the general public support the study of history and maintain an active personal enthusiasm for it. Historical subjects dominate best-seller lists and historical sites and museums remain popular. History channels, documentaries, and historical websites attract enthusiastic audiences. Many of these citizens observe the status of history in the schools and colleges and wonder why the discipline does not enjoy more respect. Although they might concede that some of their fellow citizens regard history as irrelevant to contemporary life, they care about the place of history in the curricula of schools and colleges. As historians we are obliged to acknowledge their concerns and to work with colleagues to offer our students a coherent, integrated program of studies that strengthens the role of history at the undergraduate level.

History and Learning

The study of history incorporates the essential elements of liberal learning, namely, acquisition of knowledge and understanding, cultivation of perspective, and development of communication and critical-thinking skills; it reflects concern for human values and appreciation of contexts and traditions.

History, in Carl Becker's phrase, is the "memory of things said and done." Establishing historical memory requires the systematic reconstruction of human actions and events, ordered chronologically or topically and firmly rooted in the evidence. This reconstruction depends upon the acquisition of knowledge that is both broad and deep, incorporating facts, principles, theories, ideas, practices, and methods. Historical inquiry in pursuit of knowledge goes beyond simple explanations of what happened, and how, to investigate the "why" from multiple perspectives. Students of history learn to locate and analyze written, oral, visual, and material evidence, including, but not

limited to, artifacts, images, audio files, and oral interviews. Their analyses of these evidence types yield compelling arguments and interpretations, properly qualified and placed in contexts that reveal the processes of change, continuity, or some precise combination over time. They may also demonstrate the contradictions found in the evidence. Understanding is the extension of knowledge. Analysis and synthesis contribute to historical understanding and lead to informed judgments and interpretations. Historical understanding is enhanced further by connecting it with studies in other liberal disciplines—the natural sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences.

An essential ingredient in knowledge and understanding is perspective, cultivated through sensitivity to cultural and geographical differences and awareness of conflicting interpretations of the same occurrences. Perspective is accompanied by a sense of sequence, that is, of the ordering of events, and a sense of simultaneity—of understanding relationships of diverse events at a given moment. It is also heightened by a close reading of sources and analysis of varying evidence types.

New technologies make a wide array of primary sources more readily available online than ever before for those studying history. Access to online evidence has the potential to alter undergraduate instruction and level the playing field for students everywhere. Undergraduate primary research is more possible because of vast digitized collections online that encourage students to grapple with complex evidence directly and begin to develop their own historical skills firsthand. Student research is less confined by the holdings of their college or university library than ever before. There are a growing number of student conferences and online journals designed to showcase the products of undergraduate scholarship. There are thus enormous opportunities to challenge students intellectually, and creative faculty should design curricula that encourage undergraduates to research and write history.

Studying history as a discipline requires one to engage one's mind with the facts, ideas, and interpretations conveyed or suggested by historical evidence, to give contexts to discrete pieces of evidence, and to devise plausible explanations and judgments based on the evidence. For public historians, the sifting of evidence normally includes much broader source types such as artifacts, structures, and music. All historians sort, arrange, and interpret what they see in ways that help make better sense of the evidence. Public historians more often draw upon the insights of archaeologists, art historians, and others in helping to shape their interpretations of the evidence. They also more commonly work collaboratively with specialists than do more traditional historians. They share the same results, however, since it is the discipline of history that equips them to extend facts, ideas, and interpretations into new realms. All weigh the validity of arguments, assess the soundness of historical judgments, and otherwise practice critical thinking.

In coming to know the past, one becomes aware of contrasts between peoples of different times and places and within one's own time and place. These contrasts reflect differing value systems translated into action. Similarly, one becomes sensitive to the artistic interests and expressions of various peoples, demonstrated through their efforts to create and cultivate beauty in forms that may help to define them as a people, recognizing always the inevitable distinctions that exist within any culture. In a different vein, for centuries, but at a more rapid pace in recent decades, science and technology played important roles in the unfolding story of humankind. Through appreciation of the aesthetic, scientific, and technological forces of the past, one gains a fuller understanding of the complexity of human history.

By engaging with the past in a well-designed major, students come to understand and appreciate how historians gather and weigh evidence, shape and test hypotheses, and advance conclusions. They recognize the continuing need to rethink the past, reinterpreting it in the light of new evidence and

new concerns or questions and using new tools of analysis and interpretation. If rethinking history is a continuing theme in undergraduate studies, as it should be, students will carry their abilities to inquire, analyze, and interpret into their studies in other fields and into all aspects of their lives and work. They will be equipped to approach their careers and lives as citizens knowledgeably, sensitively, and critically.

History is at the heart of liberal learning. It equips students to:

- Participate knowledgeably in the affairs of the world around them, drawing upon understanding shaped through reading, writing, discussions and lectures concerning the past.
- See themselves and their society from different times and places, displaying a sense of informed perspective and a mature view of human nature.
- Read and think critically; write, speak, and listen clearly and fully; and conduct research effectively.
- Exhibit sensitivities to human values in their own and other cultural traditions, and, in turn, establish values of their own.
- Appreciate their natural and cultural environments.
- Respect scientific and technological developments and recognize their impact on humankind.
- Understand the connections between history and life.

In sum, if history is studied openly and critically, it is central in developing civic engagement based upon analysis and empathy.

The following discussion will focus on four broad areas of recommended best practice: the undergraduate major, public history at the undergraduate level, the involvement of history faculties in teacher preparation, and the inclusion of history in the core curriculum. It will also include some observations about the history minor.

The Undergraduate History Major: Structure and Requirements

In designing a major consistent with the purposes of studying history, faculties should include the following framework, then develop it in a manner that reflects their own expertise, the nature of their institution, and the unique purposes of their program. The program of study should include:

- a strong foundation course (which may be waived for those with extraordinarily strong backgrounds in history)
- a course expressly designed to acquaint students with the diversity of the global setting in which they live
- a course in historical methods
- research seminars with significant writing requirements that integrate or synthesize

History, in contrast to many other fields of study, is a discipline in which there is no standard content, no prescribed sequence of courses. The coherence of a history major therefore depends upon the success that students and faculty, working together, achieve in developing clear organizing principles for their work. Each recommended component of the major contributes to the development of such principles.

A history major should include a well-designed foundation course, taught ideally in small classes with diverse methods to establish the bases for helping students understand the historian's approach to the past. This course—whether in American history, world history or Western civilization—should use a syllabus with principles and practices agreed upon by all who teach it, and if possible by the entire department. The course should, where possible, build upon the precollegiate experiences of the entering college students and focus more on historiographical or thematic topics instead of a replicating the more

familiar narrative chronology. The faculty should agree on the basic outline of the course and generally on common course coverage and expectations if the course is to constitute a true foundation for the major. Students should be introduced to some carefully developed analytical skills and some essay writing. The foundation survey should also seek to expose students to multiple societies and diverse cultures. It should also include the most recent scholarship in blending the principal approaches to history (political, diplomatic, social, economic, intellectual, and cultural).

In establishing a foundation or introductory course, faculty should carefully consider its purpose and relationship to other courses in the program. There is no generic survey that will suit all programs. The chronological frame may be narrow or all-encompassing, the focus may be thematic, the geographical region traditional or specifically designed to fit a department's need. The most traditional design for world, western, and U.S. surveys has been the all-encompassing chronological survey, but it is neither the sole, nor even always the best model. Surveys of world history may profitably vary the location of the earth's axis to focus on particular ways of explaining the past. Maps of the world produced in Asia in 1500 may vary significantly from those produced in Europe, Africa, or the Americas. A survey of the United States that explores the roles of native peoples, West Africans, and the Spanish, for instance, differs greatly from one that does not. Foundation courses may be organized by themes, more focused chronologies, or differing conceptions of geography. A survey of North America may be more suitable for a program than a survey of the United States. However conceived, there should be a thoughtful rationale for the approach taken that relates directly to the program of study being developed.

The foundation course should lead naturally into one or more regional, national, thematic, or chronological selections that build

on it and extend analytical, writing, and other skills. For instance, courses at this level might include more critical essay writing, synthesis of primary and secondary accounts, annotated bibliographies, historiographical essays, response papers, web sites, or other exhibition formats to introduce students to different ways to present historical scholarship. They should require higher-order thinking skills. The faculty should consider what particular mix of courses best suit their students and program.

Instruction in historical methods and historiography is at the heart of efforts to develop organizing principles for a major. As the past grows more vast and formidable, more and more of its content necessarily lies beyond the reach of even the most dedicated and competent historians. No one will ever know more than just a slice of the past, and only a slice of that slice can be known during a student's college years. The course in historical methods should therefore be designed to help students bring some order to their study of the past by knowing where to find and evaluate primary and secondary evidence with confidence. Complicating the difficulty of understanding large chunks of the past however, digitized archives have revolutionized access to primary evidence for students around the globe. With so much source material potentially available, history faculties are obliged to equip students to go beyond the content and interpretations treated in their courses by introducing them to the full sweep of historical methods and historiography, enabling them to learn how to research and write history, how to manage an ever-increasing volume of evidence and interpretation, and how to better understand the value and limitations to our knowledge of the past. The methodology course should help students recognize their own potential for discovery and further develop the skills found in the earlier courses. Students should be taught methods of locating resources in print and online, using standard reference collections, analyzing and interpreting primary and secondary historical evidence, developing questions, and producing a

finished research paper, web page, or exhibit that reflects the product of their scholarship. In the process, they should learn the standard disciplinary custom for source citation. Finally, a part of the methodology seminar should focus on oral presentation of research findings to introduce this important skill.

A portion of the course in methodology should also consider the full range of extant historical interpretations. It may also be useful to explore with students the evolution of history as a discipline. This can be done by tracing it from the days, more than a century ago, when it was introduced in colleges and universities as a "scientific" field of study, or by examining an idea that has been at the center of many debates over the nature and purpose of studying history, such as historicism or postmodernism.

While offering a specific course devoted exclusively to the study of historical methods, history faculties should insist that all courses in the major reinforce the elements of research methods and give attention to historiographical questions. To develop the habits of an inquiring mind requires accepting the tentativeness of historical explanations and the necessity for ongoing revisions—the essence of the historian's craft. The more integrated these skills are into all major courses, the more students will comprehend and apply them. Beginning with the introductory course, all parts of the curriculum should include some elements of historiography and students should become increasingly familiar with the monographic literature in book and journal article formats that are the basic tools of the profession.

The other required senior course(s) should teach students to gain new insights by drawing together what they have learned in earlier experiences and turning them loose, with close faculty mentoring, on research project(s) that culminate in written or exhibit work of some distinction. In such a course or courses, typically built around a broad theme, students are challenged to relate what they have learned in history to their studies in other

fields. Such courses should connect the basic elements emphasized throughout the major, especially the elements of independent research and writing, in meaningful ways. Whenever possible, the students should be encouraged to present their research findings in public forums either on campus or in the growing number of regional or national undergraduate research conferences. The increasing study abroad and internship opportunities available to majors ought to be considered in establishing these levels of reflective courses.

All courses in the major, where possible, should be offered in small-group settings that permit the kind of focused research experiences suggested. Undergraduates need to have ample opportunities to engage historical evidence in full and meaningful ways, to question the sources and challenge existing interpretations in a workshop atmosphere. They need to learn how to construct reasoned oral arguments and to have their work fully critiqued as part of an ongoing process designed to improve their skills. Finally, they need to develop the confidence in their own critical abilities that will enable them to evaluate the work completed by their peers and professionals according to the accepted standards of the discipline.

A history major, in sum, is more than a string of courses covering specific time periods, geographic areas, or topical fields designed simply to transmit knowledge. It is more than a set of requirements for a degree. A sound major is built on a commitment to helping students understand more fully the purposes, principles, and methodologies involved in the study of history and grasp essential particulars and universals of societies past and present. By actively engaging students with the content of their courses and with each other, it also explores questions of judgment and interpretation, of good and bad, of right and wrong, leading to a mature view of humankind.

The size and areas of competence of the faculty offering the major obviously affect the major's content. Small institu-

tions, with faculties of fewer than seven or eight, probably find it impossible to "cover" all of the standard fields in which their larger counterparts offer specializations. Such faculties have several options. One is to capitalize on their strengths by concentrating their offerings in their fields of competence. In these offerings, the faculty stress the development of research and writing skills that enable students to move knowledgeably by independent study into some fields that are necessarily left untreated in the posted curriculum. This typically cannot be done in large classes, but it can be done in colloquia through directed reading or guided writing assignments. Independent studies, however, may tax faculty resources and should be established with care to serve genuine needs.

Another option is to devote resources to the continual retraining of the faculty, enabling them through released time and support for advanced study to move beyond the fields in which they have concentrated their studies into new ones that serve local needs. While this approach risks extending the faculty too far, leading to superficial treatment of fields in which it lacks expertise, it enables the program to offer more comprehensive programs. It also raises important questions, however, concerning the effects of such retraining over a long career. The effects will be more beneficial if the retraining is elected by a faculty member rather than imposed by the institution and if it is not expected to happen repeatedly. The courses that result must always be held to the same professional standards as all other parts of the curriculum.

A third option is to establish academic partnerships with neighboring institutions to permit students from one campus to enroll at another. These may be actual or virtual relationships. Students at the smaller institutions are the more likely beneficiaries of such partnerships, but this is not always the case. These relationships may also help to build a richer culture between faculties who share the same discipline.

Regardless of the size of the faculty, every care should be taken to ensure that the student-faculty "fit" is productive. A small department risks the danger of creating too close a discipleship, and departments of all sizes face the possibility of encouraging anonymity and overspecialized work.

Some Specific Considerations for the Major

The structure and requirements of a history major should demonstrate first of all a faculty's awareness of its ideals and aspirations, as well as its limits. The major should concentrate its offerings in areas which make the most of the faculty's strengths. Although the major may of necessity neglect certain areas, it can assist students in developing skills they need to begin their own independent study in these areas. In all that it does, a history faculty should recognize that its goal must be a comprehensive, well-balanced major that finds meaning in the past through discovering the connectedness of things. The core of the major is discovery that both satisfies and stimulates intellectual curiosity.

The purposes of the history major are both general and specific. The major helps to educate students broadly in the best tradition of the liberal arts. It stresses content knowledge, encourages questioning, and develops critical skills in research, writing, and oral communication. While not necessarily taken in sequence, the courses in the major should cultivate in students a sense of historical chronology. In more specific terms, the major prepares students for graduate work in history or related disciplines; for studies in law, business, medicine, and other professions; for careers in public history; and for careers demanding the knowledge, understanding, perspective, skills, and sensitivities one gains through studying history. The sound major is designed to accommodate the needs of all.

The major should require about one-fourth of the total hours needed to complete a four-year degree (typically 30–33 semester

hours or 40–50 quarter hours, probably not including six hours in foundation surveys). In addition, to acquaint students with other forms of inquiry, it should require another six to twelve carefully related hours in humanities or social science fields. Indeed, because contemporary historical scholarship draws so heavily upon other disciplines, the undergraduate major is strengthened and enriched through a coherent interdisciplinary approach.

Because learning in history is not necessarily cumulative and does not need to be chronological, the content of lower- and upper-division courses cannot be prescribed, as it can in some disciplines. Nor are there approaches that are appropriate at one level and inappropriate at another. The principal distinction between courses at the various levels of study lies in the sophistication of knowledge and understanding they reflect and the abilities they require of the students enrolled in them. Students should, however, be encouraged to embrace as broad and varied a curriculum as possible.

More than half of the credits toward a history major should be earned in upper-division courses. Typically, the foundation courses, carrying the lowest numbers, are followed by those with greater depth, by the methodology course, and then by the senior-level seminars and colloquia that provide for studying specific topics in depth. While a history major requires specific courses to be taken in sequence by all students, it can convey a sense of coherence, and implicitly of sequence, by ensuring that courses at each level make increasingly more rigorous demands. Specifically, as students progress to the senior seminars, there should be a greater emphasis on higher-level analytical, writing, and other skills, as well as more attention to historical interpretation.

Courses in a history major should include substantial writing requirements related to textual and other analyses. Starting with the foundation course, students should be required to identify a position in a source and deal with it critically, marshalling

the evidence found there to support any conclusions they present in writing. They should be introduced to more complex writing assignments as they progress through the major. These assignments should call upon students to demonstrate the ability to understand, analyze, and synthesize what they have read, heard, or observed. Reviews, comparisons, and essay responses introduce students to the basic writing tools in the major. Such assignments prepare students for extensive use of the library, digital resources, field research, and the many forms of historical evidence.

History courses should blend the rich variety of extant classroom resources at every level. These may include, but are not confined to, textbooks, primary sources, monographs, scholarly journal articles, images, artifacts, and maps. Drawing upon a variety of resources is as important as using a mix of teaching methods in sustaining interest and encouraging students to recognize the rich variety found in the discipline. Wherever appropriate, field experiences and internships should also be a part of the course of study for undergraduates.

Fostering depth of knowledge and understanding in one area within the major is desirable. A concentration aimed at developing such depth typically requires at least four courses. Ideally, courses taken in other disciplines should also relate to the concentration. At the same time, to foster breadth of knowledge and understanding there should be limits in the concentrations, with no more than half of the courses credited toward the major taken in a single field.

Concentrations within history majors may be by theme, period, geographical region, area of study, skill development, or some combination of these options. Whatever the integrating element, it should be clearly understood by both faculty and students. The significance of undergraduate concentrations in history has become more obvious as majors are demanding a greater connection between their program of

study and potential career opportunities. Those seeking careers in public history, for example, increasingly see the value of a concentration that helps develop skills and provides internship and other applied experiences. Other critical skills merit some comment in preparing majors: digitization and editing. There are growing demands for history students whose training blends the traditional methodologies of the discipline with significant computer abilities that permit them to create web or other forms of source databases or more interpretive resources. Persons with this combination of methodological and technical expertise are in great demand and departments should begin to include such training in their undergraduate preparation.

Two other elements are vital to the successful history major: proper advising and career planning. Sustained conversations between students and faculty about courses and sequences can help move students away from the perception that progress through a major is measured by checklist. Advising involves discussions beyond requirements to help students better understand the nature of the major and its future prospects. Career counseling is equally important. Faculty must think more deeply about how courses and majors prepare students for the future and the kinds of opportunities that may exist. While an individual faculty member may be designated to coordinate career planning and work more closely with the college's central career planning staff, knowledge of the kinds of possibilities available for majors is everyone's responsibility. All history faculty should be able to answer the question: "What does one do with a history major?"

As part of career planning in the major, it may be useful to establish a portfolio reflecting a student's best work, examples of the variety of work completed, or some other appropriate criteria defined by the faculty for a particular program. The portfolio can also be used as a part of assessment to help measure where a program is successful and where it needs to

improve. It also helps students to see a practical purpose in their undergraduate class papers and to recognize their own progress in the major over time.

The majors offered by history faculty should be reviewed and evaluated regularly and formally to complement the continuing informal evaluations that take place each term by students and faculty. The review should include the coherence of the major, how it serves students and reflects faculty expertise, and the degree to which it is meeting the goals and objectives established at its inception. Some programs rely upon a regular institutional assessment to assist in this process. At a minimum, departments should survey graduates regularly to determine their perceptions of the strengths and limits of the major. Their observations may also provide information about how the major is being used.

In conclusion, the history major should have coherence, integrity, rigor, focus, and imagination. Coherence is evident in majors that fit together conceptually and practically. A major with integrity is one with principles and practices that cannot be compromised. Testimony to rigor lies in the significance of the demands the major places on those who offer it as well as those who pursue it. A major with a focus is one with a specific, readily defined purpose. Imagination in a major means that it is designed to capture images of the past, to make new images of the past, and to play with the past as well as to work with it.

Public History

Public history programs, either as part of the history major or allied with them as a discrete department, experienced significant growth in recent decades. Public or applied programs may be broadly defined as those designed to prepare students to practice history outside of an academic setting. They include,

but are not limited to, documentary filmmakers, museum specialists, archivists, preservationists, costume specialists, genealogists, historical archaeologists, and government and business historians.

Whether organized as a freestanding undergraduate major, a concentration, or a minor, public history programs share three common characteristics

- ❖ a foundation course
- ❖ an emphasis in all courses on collaborative, hands-on learning
- ❖ internship experiences.

The foundation course is designed to introduce students to public history and its methodologies. Since programs are so interdisciplinary, the course should survey as many areas of the discipline as possible. Some of the principal topics might include historic preservation, archival administration, historical archaeology, museum studies, business and policy history, documentary editing, digital history, documentary films, oral history, community and local history, and exhibitions. The topics will vary according to the emphases and special focus of individual programs. The course should also introduce some of the methods of interpreting and presenting information to diverse audiences.

Collaborative, hands-on learning includes two distinct elements. Students learn how dependent their work is on the achievements of other professionals and how necessary it is to work with colleagues in many disciplines. Preservationists may work closely with archaeologists to document particular sites, with architects to better understand a structure, or with museum specialists to mount actual or virtual exhibits. They must not only understand the methods of other specialists, they must also often team directly with them. While traditional academic scholarship is most often undertaken by individuals critically examining the resources, research and presentation in public

history frequently is completed in small or extended teams with each specialty contributing to a project's completion. Courses in public history help prepare students for careers in which teamwork or close collaboration is essential.

Internships offer students supervised opportunities in which they can apply what they have learned in the classroom to specific work experiences in museums, historic sites, and other venues. Internships should be formally structured between the home department and agency, require a face-to-face interview to discuss the possible internship activities, and be governed by a written document that specifies responsibilities, required hours, and evaluation standards. Internships normally range between 140 and 160 hours of supervised work. Interns should generally be supervised by faculty on their campus and by someone on site. There should be regular communication involving all parties.

History and Teacher Preparation

The commitment of historians to the discipline compels history faculties to provide the best possible history courses for prospective teachers; teach them as imaginatively as possible; encourage potential teachers to major in the discipline to make certain they have a firm foundation in history if this is not possible; and collaborate with education professors who teach instructional methods courses, seeking to make the purposes of these courses consistent with those offered in history and drawing upon the extensive research into the effectiveness of various instructional approaches. They should also acknowledge the useful scholarship of fellow historians whose research interests focus on improving the quality of history instruction.

History programs actively involved in teacher preparation should

- form partnerships with schools, museums, sites, archives to improve history education
- use the partnerships to determine and publicize what high school students should learn prior to their enrollment in college
- invite history teachers from the schools to participate in departmental colloquia or seminars as colleagues
- offer continuing education and in-service learning opportunities for teachers that enable them to remain current with new developments in history
- serve as guest teachers in the schools on special occasions
- participate in such activities as local history fairs and National History Day
- encourage teachers to become more active in professional societies and organizations

Simply showing interest in the work of elementary and high school teachers and students may be the most important contribution college teachers can make to the larger cause of history education. If collaboration is to occur, someone, probably a member of the college or university faculty, must take the initiative, and collaborating institutions must provide incentives for those who participate in the jointly offered activities. Some faculty work closely with high school classes to help students improve their skills writing essays and analyzing evidence. Others use e-mail to answer questions from classes about content or interpretations. Some colleges offer opportunities for advanced high school students to enroll in introductory classes. These experiences build relationships between the various institutions.

History faculties should also participate in writing state curriculum documents for elementary and secondary school social studies curricula. They must be alert to legislative issues relating to the study of history and to policies implemented by state departments of education, for curriculum requirements imposed by legislatures may be treated lightly by state officials responsible for enforcing them. Since most state requirements are posted to the web, it is a simple task for departments to be familiar with state and national curriculum guidelines and standards.

Teacher certification standards are of special concern to history faculties, for the long-standing inclination to increase requirements for education courses while minimizing the importance of studies in the teaching field always threatens to populate precollegiate history classrooms with people not equipped to teach their young charges. Where trends in particular states seem to be in the opposite direction, history faculties should encourage them. They might, for example, support efforts to require all social studies teachers to have a minor in history regardless of their social studies specialty. Should legislatures, responding to efforts to strengthen the place of history in social studies curricula, mandate new history courses or proficiency exams for students, they should also provide support for educating teachers to teach them. College departments need to be actively engaged in these and other conversations designed to set certification standards for teachers and to work with students seeking to achieve licensure. It is critical for departments to work vigorously to ensure that primary, middle, and secondary teachers have followed a strong and relevant curriculum. It is equally important to serve as resources for practicing teachers by providing in-service seminars, serving as guest speakers for classes or assemblies, and encouraging their students' participation in events like History Day.

History and the Core Curriculum

To faculty, the arguments for including history in the core curriculum are clear. History is a part of the foundation of liberal learning. It helps develop basic skills in critical reading, thinking, and questioning and represents a useful way of understanding the world. Other faculty and university administrators may not be swayed by such self-evident arguments, however, and history faculty must become advocates for their discipline in discussions of the core. Historians must become directly involved by understanding the goals and objectives of the core curriculum at their college and participating fully in the debates and discussions about the kind of courses necessary. When justifying the inclusion of history courses in the core, it is important to emphasize the analytical elements of the discipline as too many in other fields define history as simply a mass of facts. The list included above offers a starting point. Historians must do more on their own campuses to alter this perception. In designing foundation courses for the major, faculties should be especially aware of the potential role such courses can play in the core curriculum. Thus, they should be willing to adapt existing courses or create new ones that will better accommodate institutional requirements.

History Minor

The history minor is an important component in any department's program. It appeals to students interested in history, but committed to other disciplinary studies. It also often complements study in a specific field. It may be part of an area study program or a thematic or topical study. It may also serve as a path by which some students ultimately elect the history major. Finally, it is a critical part of teacher preparation in states where students must select a multidisciplinary

program of studies in order to gain licensure. The role of the minor is multifaceted and departments should pay close attention to developing and sustaining courses that serve this special programmatic need. The development of minors may involve faculty from several departments or colleges. Minors may be tightly or loosely structured. The former tend to have a foundation course to introduce the program and some common capstone to wrap it up. The latter may be clusters of related courses. In establishing or participating in minors, departments should consider how they best serve student needs.

Conclusion

The present is the most exciting time to teach and to study history. For those devoted to the discipline, access to a potentially infinite variety of source material makes possible a genuine transformation in what can be taught and how it is taught in college. The undergraduate major can be changed in the current generation from one driven primarily by textbooks and paperbacks to a more workshop environment in which students with mentoring faculty can actually learn to do history. It is more possible than ever before for undergraduate students to engage in meaningful dialogue with the sources as they develop analytical, writing, or other presentation proficiencies.

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