

# What Can I Do With A History Degree?

History is about more than understanding what happened in the past. Studying history develops skills that will make you successful in a variety of professional pursuits and will also enable you to be a more informed citizen. Learn to:

- ❖ Evaluate contradictory viewpoints, including differentiating between fact and opinion. Develop and practice empathetic thinking.
- ❖ Contend with and draw conclusions from incomplete or inconsistent evidence. Synthesize sources from a variety of perspectives and use evidence to inform critical discussion and argumentation.
- ❖ Grasp the significance of the past in shaping the present, including both continuity and change. Recognize the diversity of human experience across time and place as well as the forces that tie societies together.
- ❖ Use historical knowledge as a lens to understand contemporary issues.
- ❖ Understand that our ability to make choices and create change are constrained by circumstances and opportunity

## POPULAR CAREERS FOR HISTORY MAJORS

The size of these categories reflect recent data<sup>\*</sup> of career paths chosen by history majors. We hope these ideas and quotes provide inspiration as you consider your future career path.

Law, Politics, and Public Life: 11%		Business and Management (Administration, Sales, and Management): 35%				Education: 18%		Other <sup>**</sup> (Such as Research and Archival Sciences, as well as Journalism, Publishing, and Entertainment): 36%			
Law, Politics, and Public Life	Cultural Strategist	Lawyer	Politician	Political Campaign Manager	Documentary Filmmaker	Podcast Host	Journalism, Publishing, and Entertainment				
	<i>"It is important for all of us to appreciate where we come from and how that history has really shaped us in ways that we might not understand."</i> —Sonia Sotomayor			<i>"Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."</i> —George Orwell	Television Writer	Professional Athlete					
Judge	Development Associate	Community Organizer	Paralegal	Marketing Associate	<i>"History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again."</i> —Maya Angelou		Book or Newspaper Editor	Producer			
<i>"In a certain sense all [individuals] are historians."</i> —Thomas Carlyle		Market Research Analyst	<i>"The longer you can look back, the farther you can look forward."</i> —Winston Churchill								
Banking Associate	Advertising Account Executive		Journalist		Social Media Manager	Actor					
Equity Analyst	<i>"The past is never dead. It's not even past."</i> —William Faulkner			<i>"Study the past if you would define the future."</i> —Confucius	Museum Docent	Librarian	Historic Preservation Specialist	Archivist			
Sales Representative	Insurance Analyst	Customer Success Specialist			Interpreter	Public Historian	Cultural Resources Manager	Geographic Mapping Systems (GIS) Technician			
<i>"I have not observed such advantages from any branch of learning as I have from history."</i> —Ziauddin Barani	Business and Management			Teacher	Professor		Tutor	Research and Archival Sciences			
				<i>"[History] is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, ... [that] history is literally present in all that we do."</i> —James Baldwin							
				Education Director	Public Relations Specialist		Education		Historical Consultant	Policy Advisor	
Financial Planning Analyst	Curator	<i>"You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own."</i> —Michelle Obama									

<sup>\*</sup>Paul B. Sturtevant, "History Is Not a Useless Major: Fighting Myths with Data," Perspectives on History, April 1, 2017. <sup>\*\*</sup>Other represents a variety of careers including financial services, community and social services, healthcare, architecture/engineering, information technology, art, design, entertainment, sports, and media.

## Public Sector Career Possibilities

The government is one of the largest employers of students with training and degrees in history and related fields.

### Executive Branch

- ❖ In cabinet-level departments and in independent organizations within the federal government: Analyzing policy performance, long-range trends, etc.
- ❖ Preserving, editing, and organizing public and institutional records

### Legislative Branch

- ❖ In the historical offices of state legislatures, the Senate, and the United States House of Representatives:
- ❖ Performing staff and committee investigations
- ❖ Serving on study commissions

### Judicial Branch

- ❖ In the United States Supreme Court Curator's Office and various historical offices, projects, and regulatory agencies:
- ❖ Collecting and preserving records
- ❖ Analyzing policy
- ❖ Writing reports and various office correspondence

### Military Services

- ❖ Managing museums and archival and records centers for the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard
- ❖ Preparing institutional histories, etc.

### The Foreign Service

- ❖ Duties include researching and writing on the diplomatic, economic, political, social, and cultural history of various areas. A test is required for entrance and placement analysis.

### Civil Service

- ❖ Duties vary according to location and particular job. A test is required for entrance and placement analysis.

### National Archives and Records Service

- ❖ Managing archives, manuscripts, records, and collections

### Other Opportunities

- ❖ The public sector offers many other possibilities, such as: Working in libraries, historic sites, museums, community history education centers, etc.
- ❖ Working in areas of policy history, oral history, public administration, cultural resource management, genealogy, and family history, public works, land-use management, urban history and development, demographic history, environmental history, archaeological projects, etc.
- ❖

## Non-Profit Sector Career Possibilities

In addition to the appointments within the United States government, the non-profit sector offers a wide array of professional positions in research, administration, education, and exhibition design. Many historians hold appointments and work in fundraising for these organizations:

- ❖ Historical commissions, associations, and societies, scholarly and professional organizations, galleries and museums, colleges and universities, research foundations and institutional "think tanks," service institutions, other philanthropic organizations that provide educational, social, and cultural services to the public.

## Private Sector Career Possibilities

The private sector offers many opportunities for students with a history or liberal arts background. Listed below are numerous examples of businesses and industries that rely on employees who can research, document, analyze, synthesize, and communicate effectively.

### Law

- ❖ Researching public and private archives and records collections
- ❖ Developing support material from historical evidence

### Banking

- ❖ Producing historical financial, economic, and political risk analyses
- ❖ Researching policy issues

### Insurance

- ❖ Researching and evaluating case histories
- ❖ Preparing studies of policy matters
- ❖ Performing legislative analyses

### Investment Services

- ❖ Performing research and analysis for companies that specialize in the purchasing, issuing, and selling of corporate equity (such as brokerage firms and investment banking houses)

### Communications

- ❖ Researching and writing historical documentaries and narratives
- ❖ Providing information and archival services to motion picture firms, networks, cable television companies, and digital media

### Journalism

- ❖ Researching historical records
- ❖ Interviewing with oral history techniques
- ❖ Writing and editing for newspapers, news, trade, and professional (scholarly) journals, historical and popular periodicals and magazines, textbooks, books, and new media

### Marketing and Advertising, Publishing, Public Relations

- ❖ Researching and analyzing public trends
- ❖ Presenting clients' activities based on historical interpretation
- ❖ Managing company archives

### Manufacturing

- ❖ Analyzing markets, finances, economics, and political risk over time
- ❖ Training staff in corporate history and foreign cultures through diversity and multiculturalism workshops

### Industries in General

- ❖ Performing analysis studies
- ❖ Writing public relations, educational materials, and corporate communications
- ❖ Managing archives and information retrieval services

### Mineral Extraction Industries

- ❖ Analyzing political risk and key political figures with reference to economic implications for business
- ❖ Researching claims and geographical and land-use history

### Utilities

- ❖ Reviewing local issues and concerns
- ❖ Carrying out policy and management studies
- ❖ Performing historical analysis

## Career Possibilities in Education

If teaching is what you would like to do, appointments can be found in:

- ❖ Public and private elementary and secondary schools
- ❖ Community colleges
- ❖ Small and large undergraduate and graduate colleges and universities

## Career Possibilities with Small Firms and Independent Enterprises

If you have the entrepreneurial spirit and wish to get involved with a small firm or start one of your own, fields where a history major will come in handy include the following:

### Consulting: Cultural Resources

- ❖ Preservation and cultural resource management policy
- ❖ Researching and preparing cultural resource statements for environmental impact reports
- ❖ Selecting structures for legal protection
- ❖ Preparing and teaching preservation education programs

### Research/Writing

- ❖ Preparing histories, etc.
- ❖ Searching and researching public and private records
- ❖ Performing legal and policy research service
- ❖ Interviewing and transcribing for oral histories
- ❖ Historical editing and indexing

### Genealogical Services

- ❖ Searching, researching, and preparing reports on family and community histories

### Preservation/restoration services

- ❖ Working in firms offering preservation/restoration services
- ❖ Rehabilitating historically accurate buildings and artifacts

### Writing (as professional writers, editors, journalists)

- ❖ Author your own historical books, pamphlets, articles, and research papers
- ❖ Freelance



Department of History  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

<https://www.colorado.edu/history/undergraduate-studies>



*"The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand society of the past and to increase mastery over the society of the present is the dual function of history."*

— E. H. Carr