

## Department of History Learning Outcomes

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Historical training prepares students to be informed, engaged citizens and enables them to understand other societies. A history education puts social, political, cultural, and economic change into context and enables students to evaluate multiple lines of causation. History imparts knowledge of the past, intellectual tools for understanding the relevance of the past for the present, and specific disciplinary skills for constructing and analyzing a wide array of sources and ways of interpreting them. The history program provides students with expertise in distilling complex information into coherent, synthetic arguments; it enhances their critical and imaginative capacities; and it teaches communication skills.

### **Lower Level Classes (100 & 200)**

History courses at both the 100 level and the 200 levels provide foundational knowledge and skills for understanding how the world around us has emerged. They are appropriate both for prospective history honours, major, and minor students, and for students planning to specialize in other disciplines. 100-level courses are global and thematic, focusing on a range of issues of concern to students in today's world. 200-level courses provide more focused explorations of national and regional histories. These are normally lecture courses, most of which require written assignments and examinations, and many of which include a discussion group component.

In lower level history courses students acquire the following intellectual capacities and tools:

Historical perspective: a framework for contextualizing past and present events, making sense of the world around us, and supporting informed decision-making; a foundation from which to interpret diverse kinds of human experience over time.

Historical literacy: the capacity to analyze and evaluate the various kinds of original materials from which knowledge of the past is developed and the ability to assess narratives and interpretations, including scholarly and popular historical accounts.

Research skills: the ability to explore a wide range of sources that shed light on the multifaceted nature of the human past; to weigh the relative merits and limitations of diverse forms of evidence; and to evaluate interpretations of the past. This may include writing essays, planning and completing projects, organizing material, analyzing original documents, and using a range of print and electronic resources.

Communication skills: the ability to convey informed analysis in written and/or verbal arguments, to marshal evidence effectively, and to cite sources appropriately.

Students who successfully complete History courses at the lower level will have begun to develop valuable analytical, organizational, and communication skills.

### **Upper Level Classes (300 & 400)**

Courses at this level vary by instruction method. The 300-level includes courses that are lecture format as well as courses that combine lectures and discussion formats. For the most part, 400-level courses are seminars. These offerings enable students in history programs to pursue geographic, thematic, and methodological specialization while continuing to promote a broad grounding in the discipline. They regularly benefit from the participation of students with advanced historical interests who are majoring in other programs. Assignments at this level will normally include substantial essays.

Students are expected to develop their intellectual capacity and skills as follows:

Historical perspective: a focused and specialized framework to contextualize past and present events, to explain humanity's diverse and shifting forms of experience and organization, and to support informed decision-making.

Historical literacy: to carry out more advanced and deeply contextualized readings and analyses of primary and secondary sources, as well as to understand the importance of historical change and continuity. This may include the ability to understand how historical knowledge is produced and to analyze the nature and political relevance of historiographical debate.

Advanced research skills: analytical skills include ability to read historical evidence and arguments closely and critically, to synthesize material from a broad range of sources, and to independently apply knowledge of changing contexts to solve problems. Research and project design skills fostered at this level include the ability to locate, gather, and analyze varied historical sources; to sift and master information; to conceive original arguments; and to design sophisticated evidence-based research projects. Typically, this will involve crafting research essays, including the critiquing and refining of successive drafts.

Communication skills: the ability to craft coherent and convincing arguments about historical events and processes, to engage effectively with others in oral discussion, to present complex explanations in substantial essays.

*400-Level*

History courses at this level are normally discussion-based seminars. Students are expected to further polish the skills and capacities built up at the 300-level as well as to develop several additional skills:

**Enhanced Oral Communication Skills:** the capacity to participate in vibrant, evidence-based dialogue. This includes: mastering complex readings in preparation; listening actively to peer and instructor contributions; and intervening productively in ongoing discussion and debate.

**Enhanced Research Skills:** Courses at this level may include advanced research projects that build student capacity to connect their own their own research with historiographical and theoretical discussions in the field and to formulate independent interpretations of historical experience.

Students who achieve a high grade on several upper level History courses will have demonstrated a capacity for graduate level research and further professional training. They will have developed an understanding of the world, conceptual rigor, and strength in communication that will facilitate their civic and intellectual engagement and help them to succeed in their chosen careers.