History examines the past, seeking to understand the development and changes in human experience from its origins to the present. Historians are interested in documenting and interpreting the past from its diverse theoretical, ideological, and methodological approaches, and at all levels from local history to comparative and global history.

Courses range from surveys to research and intensive seminars, focusing on a rich array of topics - various regions (Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America, United States), time periods (ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern), methods (social, cultural, economic, quantitative), and comparative themes (gender and sexuality, imperialism, race and ethnicity). Interdisciplinary programs incorporate history into a variety of other programs (history of medicine, global studies, medieval studies, American studies, women's studies).

The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More Than a Major
When you study History at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts highlight the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

From small town Winona Historical Society to the Minnesota Historical Society, graduating senior Jane Sonneman is passionate about public history and archival work. She received the prestigious Chorn Family Scholarship for her commitment to being a societal storyteller.

Read more about Jane's story, and learn more about our undergraduate program.

Student Experiences

Learning Abroad Options in History: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy
“Study abroad offers unique insights into the world around us. It will enable you to foster your historical imagination, expose you to new cultures, enhance your language and critical thinking skills, and gain valuable international experience. Don’t miss this exciting opportunity—every student should study abroad.”
—Erika Lee, Associate Professor of History

Learn more about study abroad for History majors.

Student Organizations: Find Friends and Grow as a Leader

• History Club

Undergraduate Research: Turn Curiosity into New Knowledge

In the Department of History, we are fortunate to offer students the Hedley Donovan Scholarship to support exceptional research. Established nearly 20 years ago, the Donovan Scholarship is one of our most generous and prestigious awards for undergraduates. The scholarship is named after Hedley Donovan, a native of Brainerd, Minnesota and 1934 alumnus. A magna cum laude graduate and Rhodes scholar, Donovan had a distinguished career as a journalist and presidential advisor. After beginning his career as a Washington Post reporter, he rose to become editor of Fortune magazine and editor-in-chief at Time, Inc.

Historically, the History Department awards between one and four Donovan Scholarships. Donovan Scholars are among our most accomplished history students. Scholars craft a detailed plan of study for their individual research projects. They worked closely with faculty sponsors to shape their research topics and questions, which are broad and diverse, reflecting the unique interests of each student. For example, the Donovan Scholarship allowed Andrew Larkin to travel to Cameroon and Paris over the summer to conduct research on French public investment in Cameroon both before and after Cameroon’s independence. Andrew Larkin was later awarded a prestigious Fulbright where he continued to study the role of private industry in the evolution of French development aid to Africa.

Meet Our Faculty
“We tend to forget how central employment is to our lives. It doesn’t just shape who we are at work; it shapes who we are outside of work,” says Professor William Jones about his research on public sector employment. The relationship between employment and inequality is one that has persisted throughout history.

Read more about Professor William Jones's story.

Professor David Chang challenges persistent narratives about Hawaii’s past. “For too long, history has been written as if Hawaiians were passive observers of their own history, isolated from and uninterested in the outside world,” he says. In his new book, Chang aims to update our perspective on Hawaii’s past by presenting it through the eyes of the people who lived through it.

Read more about Professor David Chang's story.

Meet Our Alumni
Billy Bigham highlights the advantages of an interdisciplinary undergraduate career. Find out how a double-major in Russian and history prepared him for law school.

Read more about Billy’s story.

CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts education.

“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman
You might also explore

American Studies
Art History
Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature
Global Studies

Associated Careers

Archivists; Curators; Elementary, Middle, and High School Teachers; Historians; Librarians; Private-Practice Lawyers

Admission Information

FRESHMAN: Admission information

TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

• Did you know? CLA Transfer Advising has created an official "transfer guide" for a number of degree programs, including History, to help you determine which credits will transfer, and how.

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal
Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any of the topics below!

- Course plans before transferring
- Estimated time to graduation
- Career preparation in CLA
- Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
- Connecting with major/minor departments