

Read what recent alums have to say about majoring in History!!

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Caroline Soloway **(Class of 2017)**



Midway through my first semester of sophomore year, in which I took a mix of philosophy, history, and political science classes, it dawned on me that history provided me with the largest and most complicated picture of the world. In the course of four years within this department, I've found myself considerably better at understanding nuance and approaching the world with a healthy sense of perspective and skepticism. Professors have such enthusiasm for their subject matter that, regardless of my initial interest in the material, I've been enthralled in every history course I've taken here. I would recommend this major to any Barnard woman with curiosity and a love of writing!

Lyra Cooper **(Class of 2017)**



I majored in history because I am fascinated by everything. After all, history is the study of everything over time. In order to understand our current state of affairs, we must understand the historical events and trends that have led us to the present. Moreover, studying history at Barnard taught me how to research effectively, think critically about primary and secondary sources, write beautifully and logically, and voice my arguments cohesively. While history may not lead to a specific job, it has equipped me with the skills to write copy and grants for organizations, conduct research for think tanks, and orate persuasively in almost any professional setting. However cliché this may sound, studying history at Barnard has provided me with myriad skills and a long list of histories that I cannot wait to continue learning throughout my life.

Rachel Belfer
(Class of 2015)



As a Barnard first-year, I knew that I wanted to prepare for a career in medicine. I mapped out a four-year plan that would combine pre-med requirements with my interest in the humanities. My love for stories led me to major in American History, a choice that ultimately complemented my basic science classes in unanticipated ways. I developed the ability to think historically in regard to sourcing, contextualizing, and corroborating evidence. As is the case with science, history evolves. In both disciplines, perception profoundly shapes hypotheses. I have studied how historical research can encompass scientific discovery and can intersect interest with medicine and culture. For example, in doing research for a paper on blood donation policies, I learned that although scientists and policy makers during World War II knew there was no significant difference in blood among races, they maintained blood segregation for racist reasons. I look forward to bringing my awareness of the interplay between culture and biology to medical school and my career as a doctor.

Zoe Heisler
(Class of 2015)



There are two reasons I chose to major in history. The first is that I find the narrative nature of the subject the most compelling way to convey and consume information. The second reason I chose history is that I believe history is the subject that offers the most variety and versatility. Within the realm of history I can learn anything from public health to warfare. Being a history major has also equipped me with the skills to analyze information and identify trends, as well as the ability to clearly and concisely write my insights. I would recommend history as a major to anyone who has a wide array of interests and wants to be able to effectively synthesize information.

Chaya Himmelman
(Class of 2015)



History is inherently interdisciplinary, so when I study history I study art, culture, political science, literature, and anthropology. I feel that although I have the opportunity to study a wide range of subjects, I am also able to delve deeply into specific time periods and specific events, making my experience both focused and general. Majoring in history has taught me how to write and how to research, which are skills I know will be useful in my professional life. The Barnard History department is one of the best departments at Barnard and Columbia, providing me with interesting courses, intelligent insights, and a ton of academic support!

Bella Pori
(Class of 2015)



After taking a class with Professor Carnes in my freshman year, I realized that not only did I love history, but that history wasn't just old documents and long books. History could be relived, acted out, and could be used to tell a dramatic story. My history classes have given me a new way to look at the world and made me a stronger writer. The best classes I have taken in college have been my history classes, from my first survey class, to my last thesis seminar. Of course, sometimes, when I tell people I'm majoring in history, they ask what I'm going to do with it. What they don't realize is that with the skills I've learned in the history major, I can do anything.

Serena Rappaport
(Class of 2015)



There are so many things that I love about the history major but I'll list just a few. History can be both extremely broad and very specific. You can learn broad strokes about a civilization (I have, for example, taken a class on the history of gender in China), and you can also take a deep dive into a particular event or personality. As opposed to other subjects, I find that with history, there are no limits in terms of classes to take because every single event, phenomenon, people, and place have driving historical forces. In terms of what I have gained from the history major, I feel that a sustained focus on historical issues has enhanced my analytical skills and my ability to write at length on complex topics with many layers. Anyone who is interested in the driving forces behind human nature would find much of interest in a history major in Barnard. Barely a day goes by that a headline or article in a newspaper does not have echoes to past historical events. In this sense, my academic study of history leaves the classroom and is directly linked to contemporary episodes.