WELCOME to the Department of Historical Studies

The Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town has a long and proud tradition of academic excellence, professional leadership and social sensitivity. It is the oldest university history department in sub-Saharan Africa.

For more than a century, it has hosted and trained many of South Africa’s most creative, authoritative and impactful historians. Our students have been successful in a wide range of careers both within academia and beyond.

As one of the most prestigious departments in the highest ranked university on the continent, we are intent on maintaining our traditional strengths in original research on southern African history, while actively developing research and teaching interests in connected and comparative histories.

WHY consider a Major in History?

The first thing you need to know is that History is much more than dry dates and petty events. It is a way of making sense of the world.

What do we teach you at the Department of Historical Studies? Apart from everything else, we teach you how to engage and intervene in debates, how to make informed and reasoned decisions, how to substantiate your claim against the contending views, and how to express yourself in a clear, concise and compelling narrative.

We help you appreciate every facet of life as part of a broader and more complex context. Where others see chaos, confusion and randomness, history students recognise patterns, processes and interconnections.

Along with very useful technical skills, students of this department develop a remarkable aptitude for original thinking, cogent reasoning, persuasive writing, and critical analysis. This allows them to become some of the most sophisticated decision-makers in their age-group.

It is no surprise therefore that very different kinds of employers – law firms, media houses, advertising agencies, NGOs, government bodies, even finance companies – look so favourably upon Historical Studies graduates.

“Where others see chaos, confusion and randomness, History students recognise patterns, processes and interconnections”
**History**

Core courses include:
- Worlds in Contact
- Worlds in Collision
- Empires and Modernities
- Historical Approaches
- History Research Project

**Electives:**
- Conflict to Conquest: South Africa to 1900
- Subjects to Citizens: South Africa since 1900
- Themes in African History
- Film and History
- Memory, Identity and History
- Genocide: African Experiences

**Economic History**

Core courses include
- The Making of the Modern World Economy
- 20th Century Industrialisation
- Approaches to African Economic History
- Economies of Feast and Famine
- Research Project in Economic History

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"My long-term goal is to work in a regional organisation towards socio-economic development, poverty alleviation and the combating of HIV/AIDS on the African continent."

Janice Bleazard
BA Honours in Historical Studies

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**WHY consider a Major in Economic History?**

Based in the Department of Historical Studies, Economic History at UCT offers a Humanities centred approach to understanding the economic past.

You do not need to have a background in History or Economics to major in Economic History. Throughout each of our courses, students will develop the conceptual language and quantitative reasoning necessary to talk about economies over time and space.

The undergraduate programme covers a range of themes but at its heart it asks the question: Why are some countries/people rich and others poor? As such, Economic History is a field full of debate and controversy.

It is not only about markets and businesses but is deeply concerned with politics, geography, institutions, inequality, and the incentives that affect behaviour in societies both large and small.

A major in Economic History equips students with the necessary research, analytical and writing skills as well as concepts and terminology to become informed citizens as well as sought after graduates working in a variety of fields including: economic policymaking for government and NGOs; the private financial sector; marketing and advertising; management; social responsibility in the corporate sector; and further postgraduate study.

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**For further information**

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