

What is History & Literature

History & Literature is the study of ideas in context. A rigorous honors concentration built on student-centered tutorials and individualized advising, History & Literature balances structure and flexibility. Designed for students who want to take charge of their education, History & Literature trains students in the study of more than one discipline, more than one language, more than one nation, more than one culture, and more than one century. Join our close-knit community of students, scholars, artists, and critics who want to do more with the humanities.

Harvard's oldest concentration, History & Literature was born in 1906 over dinner at a Boston tavern. English professor Barrett Wendell envisioned it as the first "concentration," which he imagined as a structure that would help students focus their studies in the context of an undergraduate experience that might otherwise descend into "anarchy." For more than a hundred years, despite dramatic changes in the content of our curriculum, the topics of our senior theses, the texts that we read, and the diversity of our lecturers and students, this commitment to an innovative and rigorous program of study continues to distinguish History & Literature. Our alumni, who have gone on to work in fields such as politics, journalism, medicine, the arts, public policy, finance, law, media, business and academia, proudly participate in this legacy by demonstrating through their success what History & Literature can do for you.



Structure

History & Literature's field structure provides the intellectual scaffolding to ensure that your individualized plan of study has breadth and depth. Each field is designed to be transnational and comparative, and as a community of scholars we believe in a practice of questioning the boundaries of each field. Whether your field is America, Latin America, Postcolonial Studies, Early Modern Europe, Modern Europe, or the Medieval World, concentrators feel a sense of community with other History & Literature students studying similar times and places.

To make sure you have ample time to explore new interests, concentrators do not declare a particular field of study until the end of the sophomore year. After declaring a field, students have the option to count toward the concentration an introductory course such as Humanities Colloquium 10a/b, Humanities Frameworks 11a/b/c, or a History & Literature 90 seminar on any topic, so you may begin completing your requirements even before you select a field.

Beginning in the junior year, concentrators have the option to adjust a declared field by proposing a subfield, which involves 2-3 courses in a geographic, temporal, thematic, or methodological area that will count for concentration credit. To ensure that your plan of study is intellectually coherent, subfield proposals go through a rigorous evaluation process that gives you a chance to articulate and refine your individualized interests. All of this is done in close consultation with History & Literature tutors, so that you may rely on the experience and expertise of gifted teachers working in a variety of disciplines throughout your career.

Contact Us

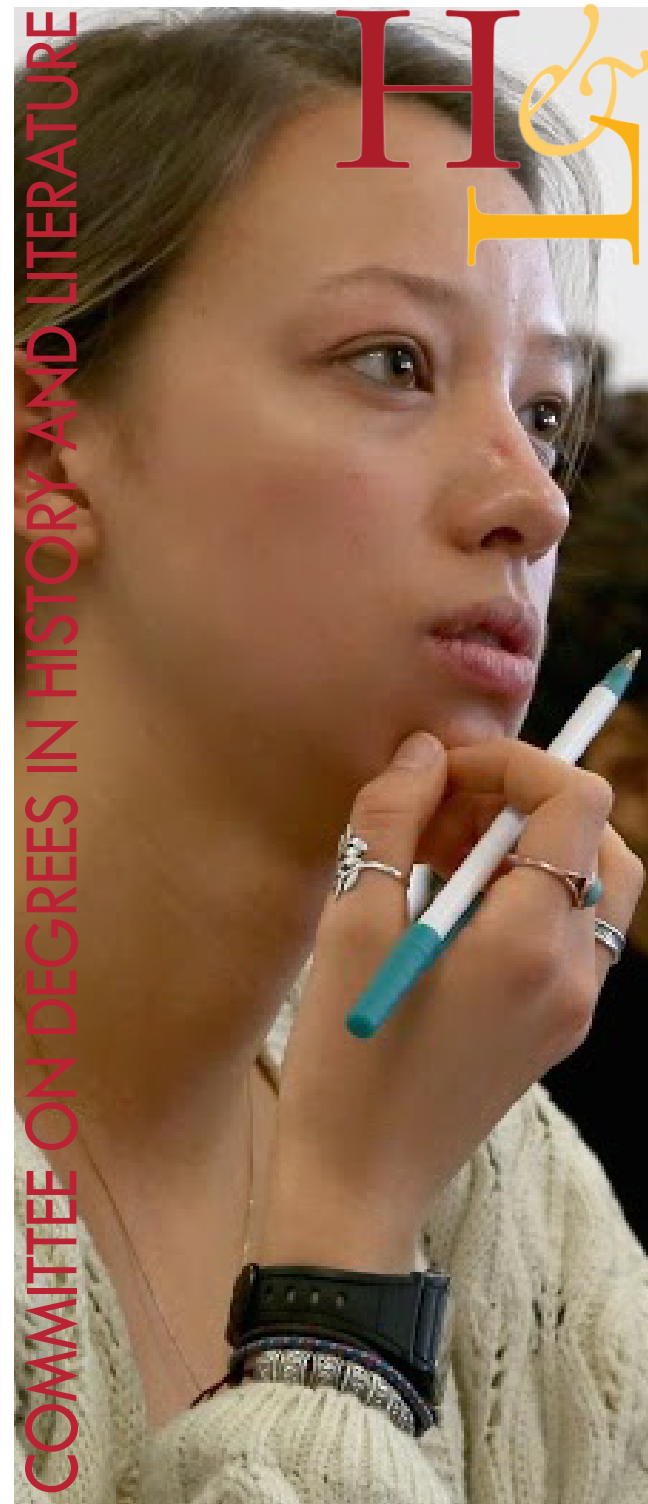
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Flexibility

Students choose History & Literature because they want an interdisciplinary concentration that will give them breadth and depth. Our concentrators analyze texts to ask far-reaching questions about empire, art, race, religion, class, sex, power, religion, inequality, and other crucial topics that shape our contemporary world. In addition to traditional texts composed of words, our concentrators study cultural products such as film, photography, music, paintings, buildings, advertisements, sitcoms, musicals, maps – indeed, any object that can be analyzed to learn something about a student's area of interest.

History & Literature concentrators take courses across the College, in departments such as Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies; African and African American Studies; Religious Studies; History of Art and Architecture; South East Asian Studies; Visual and Environmental Studies; Philosophy; Sociology; Government; as well as in History; English; Comparative Literature; Romance Languages and Literatures; Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures; Near Eastern Languages and Cultures; and East Asian Languages and Civilizations, just to name a few.

The possibilities are endless, but History & Literature offers a robust system of academic advising to help you identify your priorities and ensure that your plan of study is coherent and rigorous, combining coursework from various disciplines and programs to become an expert in your own individualized area of study. By the senior year, a History & Literature concentrator is prepared to write a prize-winning senior thesis based on original research that reaches across disciplines.

Tutorials

History & Literature concentrators center their plans of study around tutorials in each of the sophomore, junior, and senior years. Many rank these tutorials among the most intensive and rewarding courses they take at Harvard – courses that teach important research and writing skills and form the heart of the History & Literature community. Sophomore tutorial is a small seminar led by two tutors that focuses on interdisciplinary methods. Sophomore tutorials are organized around a variety of topics and fields, which concentrators are invited to rank in order of preference. Junior tutorial is composed of 2-3 students; in the fall, the tutor and students collaborate on a group syllabus, and in the spring the focus shifts to producing the junior essay. The senior thesis is the focus of the senior tutorial. Both junior and senior tutorials offer concentrators an exceptional degree of control over the topics they study.

Advising

At History & Literature, we take great pride in our dedication to teaching and advising. We match you with a personal advisor each year, from the moment you enter the concentration until you graduate. Your advisor works with you to shape a satisfying and coherent plan of study that equips you with the knowledge and skills you need to complete your particular academic journey. Your tutor works with you and with the Directors of Study in History & Literature to update your plan each year as both courses and your interests change and develop.

