

Theory of History (A001819)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 1)	Dutch	Gent	independent work lecture
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Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Bevernage, Berber	LW03	lecturer-in-charge
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Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject History)	5	A
Master of Arts in Historical Linguistics and Literature	5	A
Master of Arts in History	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Facts, interpretation, truth, causality, positivism, historicism, epistemology, historical time, presence, memory, witness, history and ethics

Position of the course

This is a core subject that encourages abstract thinking about history and its concepts, boundaries, codes and conventions.

Contents

Theory of history reflects on history as a collection of events in the past (res gestae) and history as the collection of stories that have been formulated about the past (historia rerum gestarum). There are two big subfields:

1. The long tradition of 'substantive' philosophy of history which reflects on the nature of the shape of the past (e.g. division of history into periods, causality, recurrences and patterns)
2. The analytical philosophy of history which primarily focuses on epistemological or knowledge problems on the one hand and narrative techniques and representation techniques which historians use on the other hand

The relationship between the present and the past; text and context, cause and contingency, individual and structure, truth and values, objectivity and subjectivity, science and commitment is studied using examples from the theory of history.

Initial competences

Students are familiar with the fundamentals of historical criticism and have some experience of historical practice (Bachelor degree in history)

Final competences

- 1 To be able to demonstrate advanced knowledge of the epistemological and ontological problems of historical thinking
- 2 To be able to critically assess the truth of historical sources and narrative
- 3 To be able to critically approach and evaluate existing theories of historical practice
- 4 To be able to construct a well-founded arguments about the fundamental problems relating to the theory of history

5 To be able to critically reflect on the position of the historian in society

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Lecture, Independent work

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Reader Theory op History (pdf)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: yes

Language : Dutch

Oldest Usable Edition : Lorenz Ch., De constructie van het verleden: een inleiding in de theorie van de geschiedenis,

Boom: Amsterdam, 2008 (all editions ok)

Available on Ufora : Yes

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Additional information: The reader is available for free in PDF format via Ufora. The optional literature (book Lorenz) is available in the library or can be purchased second-hand or new.

References

Jorn Rüsen, Western historical thinking: an intercultural debate. Berghahn Books, 2002.

Course content-related study coaching

Via Ufora and email, and individual coaching after appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Calculation of the examination mark

100% End-of-term assessment

Facilities for Working Students

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance.

2. Alternative time for feedback

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy