

Unit 1: Video 4 Transcript

Q13: What is the most important thing a first-year student can take away from a history course?

A: I think that the most important thing that a first-year student entering history courses can take away from those courses is the enormous range of really exciting opportunities that you've got. You can study whatever you want, whatever you are interested in. You can follow your interests down so many different paths.

My particular area of interest; there's so much that can be done, for instance, with the history of family in Canada. The history of children, what is the role of children in families? There is much more that we can do with the history of women, and their roles in families, and the entry of women into the paid labour force, for instance. There's much more that could be done with how it was that families tried to cope with the problems of inequality and the problems of poverty. Not just in the depression of the 1930s, but earlier. How did families attempt to cope prior to there being a welfare state? Prior to there being Medicare, for instance. One of the answers is that they tried very hard to survive and very often they didn't. Very often they died. Mortality rates were much higher, and mortality rates in Canada a century ago were connected to issues such as health, nutrition, standards of living, and so on. I could go on.

There are just so many different opportunities that are available to somebody who wants to study the history of families and households, that basic social unit in our society. The way in which it changes, evolves, and the way in which people relate to each other. It is fundamental to our understanding of Canada and its history. There are just so many opportunities out there. I think it's an exciting future for anybody who wants to go into history.