

HISTORY AND POLITICS AT ST EDMUND HALL

Congratulations on gaining a place to read History and Politics at St Edmund Hall! The History tutors look forward very much to welcoming you in October. These introductory documents about History in the first year include some information about teaching arrangements for your first term in Oxford.

History in the first year

The syllabus followed by all students reading History and Politics is set by the History Faculty and the Department of Politics and International Relations, which also arrange the lectures and classes. Full details of the syllabus, and of all individual papers, can be found online at <https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/ba-history-and-politics>. Tutorial teaching in each term, by contrast, is arranged by the colleges, who keep an eye on individual student progress.

- In your first term, therefore, the Faculty offers a number of introductory sessions on Study Skills and Library use, and twice-weekly **lectures** for the first-year British History papers, plus additional lectures for some of the papers on Historical Methods. The timetable for these lectures will be available in October, and we shall give you advice on how to listen to and take notes on lectures when you arrive in Oxford.
- You will also have weekly **tutorials** for your History of the British Isles OR European and World History British History paper, and fortnightly tutorials for your Methods paper. [Please note however that tutorial arrangements for students reading for one of the Joint Schools sometimes differ in order to fit the teaching in the two disciplines together neatly.] Throughout the degree, tutorials typically involve two students and a tutor, although occasionally you may find yourself being tutored individually. Tutorials are arranged by the college, and may take place in St Edmund Hall; more usually, however, you will go to a tutor in another college. That is true for all Oxford students, as we want students to take advantage of the full range of specialist expertise available across the university, whichever college they are in. For each tutorial, you will be expected to read about an agreed topic, and then complete an essay or some other form of written task, usually in answer to one or more questions about the topic set by the tutor. Your tutors in each paper will provide detailed reading lists to guide your research. We shall give you advice on how to research and write your essay when you arrive in Oxford.

You will quickly notice that the topics discussed in the lectures and in the tutorials do not always match up week by week, for the obvious reason that there are usually more lectures than tutorials. Don't worry about this. You might think it would be preferable to listen to a lecture on a topic before you tackle a question on it for your tutorial essay; in fact, it is often better to listen to the lecture after you have read about the topic yourself and started to develop your own ideas about it.

Remember that History as a discipline does not involve simply the memorizing of information. A knowledge of the relevant facts is of course essential. But it is not so much what you know that matters, but your capacity to deploy what you know to develop your understanding of the past. That requires a critical engagement with the evidence and the capacity to develop and engage with alternative perspectives, as well as a grasp of current academic debates. It is your responsibility to

start this process through your own reading, thinking, and writing. The lectures will help, and the tutorials will provide you with an opportunity to raise questions about the evidence and the variety of academic interpretation, and to discuss and test your own views against those of other students and the tutors.

The purpose of your three years studying History in Oxford is therefore to develop your analytical skills and intellectual flexibility, to advance your ability to construct a coherent and persuasive argument, and to cultivate your sense of the complexity and the subtleties of the human past.

You will find below some information about the first-year syllabus, and a form on the final page, which you should complete as soon as you can, and no later than 31 August, indicating which two History papers you want to study in your first year. We will then send you details of who your tutors for those two papers will be, along with some preparatory reading to get you started.

Choice of papers

Your work during the first year will lead to the Preliminary Examination, which you will sit at the end of the summer term 2022. For this exam you study four papers, two in History and two in Politics. We need to ask you now to choose your two History papers.

1. EITHER **History of the British Isles** OR **European and World History** (7 tutorials)

There are six periods of **British History** in the Oxford History course

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| (1) 300-1100 | (4) 1500-1700 |
| (2) 1000-1330 | (5) 1688-1848 |
| (3) 1330-1550 | (6) 1830-1951 |

There are four periods of **European and World History** in the first year of the degree.

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|--|---|
| (1) 370-900: The Transformation of the Ancient World | (3) 1400-1650: Renaissance, Recovery and reform |
| (2) 1000-1300: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours | (4) 1815-1914: Society, Nation and Empire |

You must choose *one* of these ten papers to study in your **first term**. Our advice at this stage is that you do not study, in the first year, a period of British or European and World history that you have already covered in your last two years at school. It is preferable to start your work in Oxford with a fresh mind. If you developed a particular interest in your A-level period and are keen to pursue it further at university, you might find it better to wait until the second year, when you can return to it from a more experienced perspective.

When choosing, you should also bear in mind the Faculty's regulation that in the course of studying for your BA, students on the History and Politics degree must choose at least one of the British History or European and World History papers that covers a period wholly before the nineteenth

century. If you do not satisfy this provision in your first year, therefore, you will have to do so in one of your Finals papers. Please note also that you will not be permitted to study the same period of British History in both the first and the second year. Thus if you choose (say) the period before 1100 in your first year, you cannot study that period again in the second year.

2. A Historical Methods paper (7 tutorials). Here you must choose *one* of three options:

A. *Language texts*: you will need a reading knowledge of at least GCSE (or equivalent) level in the relevant language if you wish to study one of the language text papers. If you choose this option, you will have to select one of the following texts or pair of texts, to be read in the original language:

1. Herodotus, V.26-VI.131, ed. C. Hude (Oxford Classical texts, 3rd ed. 1927)
2. Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, ed. L. Halphen (Paris, 1947), and Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi*, ed. W.H. Stevenson and revised by Dorothy Whitelock (Oxford, 1959), chaps. 1 to contextur, 10-25, 37-42, 73-81, 87-106 (excluding 106B)
3. Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*
4. Friedrich Meinecke and Eckart Kehr: Two views of the German *Sonderweg*. Meinecke, *Die Deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (Wiesbaden, 1949), pp. 5-104; Kehr, *Der Primat der Innenpolitik: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur preussisch-deutschen Sozialgeschichte im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1970), pp. 87-129, 149-83
5. Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, Book 1
6. J. Vicens Vives, *Aproximación a la historia de España* (1960)
7. Leon Trotsky, *1905*, pp. 1-9, 17-245 [photocopied texts can be purchased from the History Faculty Library]

You will need a reading knowledge of at least GCSE (or equivalent) level in the relevant language if you wish to study one of the language text papers.

B. *Approaches to History*

Your options here are: Anthropology and History; Archaeology and History; Art and History; Economics and History; Gender and History; and Sociology and History. Please indicate which *two* you would like to study from these six options.

C. *Historiography: Tacitus to Weber*

You should bear in mind that all the Methods papers are designed to develop the foundations for your work in future years. *Approaches to History* and *Historiography*, for example, serve as an introduction to the many ways that the past can be studied, and also to the ways historians have been influenced (to their benefit) by other academic disciplines. The *Language Texts* allow those who already have a foreign language to maintain and develop it in preparation for some of the Finals Further and Special Subjects, or for the Thesis.

No prior qualifications are needed for the *Approaches* or *Historiography* papers.

Please complete the form below to indicate your choice of History papers, and email it to filippo.devivo@history.ox.ac.uk as soon as you can, and no later than 31 August.

History and Politics

Name.....
Address
.....
Email

1. Please select one of the following ten options:

History of the British Isles.

- (1) 300-1100
- (2) 1000-1330
- (3) 1330-1550
- (4) 1500-1700
- (5) 1685-1848
- (6) 1830-1951

European and World History

- (1) 370-900: The Transformation of the Ancient World
- (2) 1000-1300: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours
- (3) 1400-1650: Renaissance, Recovery and reform
- (4) 1815-1914: Society, Nation and Empire

2. Historical Methods

(a) Please select one of the following:

- Foreign Texts
- Approaches to History
- Historiography: Tacitus to Weber

(b) If you have chosen Foreign Texts, please select the language you will offer:

- Classical Greek French Russian
- Latin Italian German Spanish

(c) If you have chosen Approaches, please indicate which two options you would prefer:

Anthropology and History	Archaeology and History	Art and History
Economics and History	Gender and History	Sociology and History

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Preparatory task

The best way to prepare for your degree is to read as widely as you can, and to think as carefully and sensitively as you can about what you are reading. To that end, we would like you to select and read **one** book from the lists below, then write a two-page review of it. Please send the review by email to david.priestland@history.ox.ac.uk and filippo.devivo@history.ox.ac.uk by 1 October.

The purpose of this exercise is to encourage you to spend a bit of time learning *and thinking* about a topic that interests you, so that you can subsequently write a critical assessment of what you have read. You may already be familiar with some of the titles on the lists; and it might make sense to select a title that deals with a period you are familiar with. But don't be afraid to tackle a title or a topic that is completely new to you.

The books are divided into three lists. Lists A and B include broad histories of a region or era; books in List A are predominantly pre-modern (i.e. they deal with a period before c.1800), while books in List B are predominantly modern in focus. The titles in List C range across the pre-modern and modern periods, but deal more with topics in social, cultural, and intellectual history.

A review is (or should be) more than just a report of what the author says in the book. While reviews may, and often do, provide a summary of the book's central argument(s), the value of the exercise for the reader lies in the reviewer's assessment of those arguments, and more generally of the success of the author's contribution to our understanding of the period or topic under discussion. In other words, your review should be a *critical appraisal* of the book you have read. You may find it helpful to think about the following issues when preparing your review:

- what are the main arguments of the work? Are they convincing? Why/why not?
- what sorts of evidence does the author use? How does s/he approach her/his sources?
- who is the intended audience? Is it written primarily for other academics ... for students ... for a wider public ...? How does that impact on the type of text that the author has produced?
- what (if anything) makes this book special?

Some of these books are controversial and opinionated, and it may be worth looking up any reviews available online to get a sense of other historians' reactions.

List A

- David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (2011)
J.H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World. Britain and Spain in America* (2006)
Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923* (2007)
Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis. War, climate change and catastrophe in the seventeenth century* (2013)
Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (2006)

List B

- C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1700-1914. Global Connections and Comparisons* (2004)
Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells. West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (2019)
Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (2009)
Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991)
Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (1994)

Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1998)
Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (2015)
Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2009 ed.)
David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation* (2018)

List C

Sarah Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails* (2016)
Maya Jasanoff, *The Dawn Watch. Joseph Conrad in a Global World* (2017)
David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001)
Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London. Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (2006)
Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (1992)
Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton. A Global History* (2014)
Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (2015)
Craig Koslofsky, *Evening's Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (2011)
Emmanuel le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French village, 1294-1324* (1990)
Ulinka Rublack, *The Astronomer and the Witch: Johannes Kepler's Fight for his Mother* (2015)
Karl Schlögel, *Moscow, 1937* (2012)
Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw's Generation's Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (2009)
Billy G. Smith, *Ship of Death: A Voyage that Changed the Atlantic World* (2015)
Heather Williams, *Help Me to Find My People* (2012)
Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People. Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (2013)
Keith Wrightson, *Ralph Taylor's Summer: A Scrivener, His City, and the Plague* (2011)

Filippo de Vivo
David Priestland