

St. Catherine's College · Oxford · OX1 3UJ

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Dear Student,

I'm writing to say how much we are looking forward to welcoming you to the college, and to explain how the course works in your first year. You may still be waiting for exam results to know if your place on the course is confirmed, but I am writing now to allow you more time to make a start on some reading over the summer.

As Director of Studies for English I will be coordinating your day-to-day academic activities once you arrive, together with my colleagues in English and History. The Director of Studies for History will be writing to you separately. Of the English tutors, in your first term you will work directly with Ms Alice Huxley, who teaches Approaches to Literature, and, depending on your choice of options, you will also be taught by me for Early Medieval Literature, or Ms Huxley—and, later in the year, Professor Kirsten Shepherd-Barr—for Victorian or Modern literature.

Altogether, you'll be taking four papers in your first year: two from the English side and two from History. The compulsory paper on the English side is the 'Introduction to Language and Literature'. This is taught partly through college classes and tutorials, and partly through university lectures and seminars. In the first term, you will be studying 'Approaches to Literature', with a special focus on historical approaches. You will also be attending classes in college on approaches to literature more widely, which will acquaint you with a range of theoretical issues and reading skills, and encourage you to think for yourself and to exercise critical scrutiny. To help you get a sense of the topics and approaches of this course, we recommend that you read Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction, Second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

In addition to this compulsory paper you will choose any one of three English 'period papers': Early Medieval (c. 650–1350); Literature 1830–1910 (often referred to as the 'Victorian Paper'); or Literature 1910–the present (the 'Modern Paper'). When choosing your options, you may need to bear scheduling in mind: the Victorian paper is mainly taught in the first term, the Modern mainly in the second, and Early Medieval throughout the year but with the greatest part of the written work in the second term. Please give some thought to which of these three options you would like to pick. Because there is reading to prepare in advance of the start of teaching, most urgently for the Victorian paper, you should aim to make your choice as soon as you can. Once you've decided, please email me directly at jeremy.dimmick@stcatz.ox.ac.uk. We will be happy to answer queries by email if you are not sure which paper to choose.

The College Office will be in touch with you about practical things such as accommodation and term dates. However, if you have any concerns about work or personal matters then please feel free to contact me about those. If you want to know more, the college website (www.stcatz.ox.ac.uk) is a good source of information about St Catherine's and about English specifically. You can also find out more about the English course and explore the diversity of our work at the Faculty of English's website (www.english.ox.ac.uk).

I hope you are looking forward to arriving in Oxford. All being well, I will see you in October; meanwhile, have an excellent summer.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Dimmick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'D'.

Dr Jeremy Dimmick
Fellow by Special Election and Lecturer in English

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Dear Student

Very many congratulations on achieving your required grades. We know that this has not come easily and we're delighted that you have done so well, particularly in the uniquely trying circumstances of the pandemic. You should be proud of all your hard work. Your success is proof that, if you work hard and intelligently, you will do well at Oxford.

This letter gives you information about the first-year courses in History, and suggestions for preliminary reading. Further information about the History course generally, and about studying History and English at Oxford, is available on the Oxford University Faculty of History website at www.history.ox.ac.uk.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION: PROGRAMME OF COURSES

The first-year courses lead to the Preliminary Examination in History & English, taken in June at the end of Trinity (third) term. All candidates are required to offer four papers, as follows:

1. History of the British Isles

Studied in one of six periods, this paper requires students to consider the history of the societies which have made up the British Isles over an extended period of time. It aims to encourage appreciation of the underlying continuities as well as the discontinuities within each period, and to explore the relation between political, gender, economic, social and cultural developments in determining the paths followed by the societies of the British Isles, severally and together:

History of the British Isles 1, 300-1100

History of the British Isles 2, 1000-1330

History of the British Isles 3, 1330-1550

History of the British Isles 4, 1500-1700

History of the British Isles 5, 1688-1848

History of the British Isles 6, 1830-1951

Please let me know by e-mail which Paper 1, History of the British Isles course you would like to do.

Paper 2. EITHER: an Optional Subject

Offering a choice of around 20 subjects, this paper is based on the study of selected primary texts and documents, and provides the opportunity to engage with a range of more specialist approaches to understanding the past. You will make your choice for this paper in Hilary Term (at which time a final list of papers running in 2022-23 will be available):

Theories of the State (Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx).

Alfred and the Vikings: Conflict, Culture and Identity in the Early Middle Ages

Early Gothic France c.1100-c.1150.

The Mongols.

English Chivalry and the French Wars c.1330-c.1400.
 Crime and Punishment in England, c.1280-c.1450
 Nature and Art in the Renaissance.
 Witch-craft and Witch-hunting in Early Modern Europe.
 Making England Protestant, 1558-1642.
 Conquest and Colonization: Spain and America in the Sixteenth Century.
 Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815.
 Women, Gender and the Nation: Britain, 1789-1825.
 The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914.
 Haiti and Louisiana: The Problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery
 Imperial Republic: The United States and Global Imperialism, 1867-1914
 The New Woman in Britain and Ireland, c. 1880-1920.
 The Rise and Crises of European Socialisms: 1883-1921.
 1919: Remaking the World
 Living With The Enemy: The Experience of the Second World War in Europe
 Viewing Communism: Cinema and Everyday Life in Eastern Europe, 1944-89
 Radicalism in Britain, 1965-1975.
 The World of Homer and Hesiod, as specified for Preliminary Examination in Ancient and Modern History.
 Augustan Rome, as specified for Preliminary Examination in Ancient and Modern History.

All these courses are based on prescribed texts in English or English translation (full details will be found in the *First Year Handbook* to be found on the Faculty of History web site). You will make your choice during Hilary (second) term.

OR: Approaches to History: you will study two of the following options: Gender; Race; Anthropology; Archaeology; Art; Economics; Sociology

OR: Historiography: Tacitus to Weber: Tacitus, Augustine, Machiavelli, Gibbon, Ranke, Macaulay, Weber (you will study four of these)

Some Paper 2 courses extend over the whole year, **so you will need to make your choice in advance**. If you decide to do an Optional Subject you will make your choice of Optional Subject during Hilary (second) term.

Paper 3. Introduction to English Language and Literature

Paper 4. EITHER: Literature in English 650-1350 OR: Literature in English 1830-1910 OR: Literature in English 1910-present day.

IMPORTANT: PLEASE INFORM THE HISTORY DIRECTOR OF STUDIES, DR AMANDA POWER, OF YOUR CHOICE OF COURSES UNDER PAPERS 1 AND 4 ABOVE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND BY 5TH SEPTEMBER AT THE LATEST.

Dr. Power can be e-mailed at amanda.power@stcatz.ox.ac.uk

If you feel unsure about your choices, please write or e-mail for further advice. Reading advice can also be offered on request.

GENERAL ADVICE

One easy way of familiarising yourself with some of the subjects you will cover, and introducing yourself to the kinds of discussion you will engage in at university, is to listen to some podcasts. It is well worth looking out for relevant episodes of Radio 4's In Our Time (old episodes are archived through podcasts in the iTunes store and are available for free and also at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2Dw1c7rxs6DmyK0pMRwpMq1/archive>).

PRELIMINARY READING

We would like everyone to read at least two books taken from the following list before term, preferably choosing topics you've never studied before. Some of these books have been recommended by the St. Catherine's College history tutors; others by history students. They have been chosen partly to give you the opportunity to consider areas not usually taught in school history curricula. **We will discuss these as a group during your first week.**

Historians are paying much more attention to the interactions between climate, human populations, and the environment:

- Debjani Bhattacharyya, *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The Making of Calcutta* (2018)
- Faisal H. Husain, *Rivers of the Sultan: The Tigris and Euphrates in the Ottoman Empire* (2021)
- Kate Brown, *Manual for Survival: A Chernobyl Guide to the Future* (2019)
- Dagomar Degroot, *The Frigid Golden Age: Climate Change, the Little Ice Age, and the Dutch Republic, 1560–1720* (2018)
- Bathsheba Demuth, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait* (2019)
- Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (2017)
- John McNeil, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (2010)
- Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City* (2015)
- Maya K. Peterson, *Pipe Dreams: Water and Empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea Basin* (2019)
- James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (2017)
- Julia Adeney Thomas (ed), *Altered Earth: Getting the Anthropocene Right* (2022)
- Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015)
- Ling Zhang, *The River, the Plain and the State: An Environmental Drama in Northern Song China, 1048-1128* (2016)
- David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (2011)
- David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021)

- John L. Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey* (2014)

Some of you will have looked at non-European history before, but look at a region with which you are unfamiliar:

- Marisol de la Cadena, *Earth beings: ecologies of practice across Andean worlds* (2015)
- Caroline Dodds Pennock, *On Savage Shores: How Indigenous Americans Discovered Europe* (2022)
- Valerie Hansen, *The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World – and Globalization Began* (2021)
- Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim West Africa* (2016)
- Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* (2012)
- Michael Coe and Damian Evans, *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization* (2018)
- Timothy Pauketat, *Cahokia: Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi* (2010)
- Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (2004)
- Sujit Sivasundaram, *Waves Across the South; A New History of Revolution and Empire* (2020)
- Bruce Pascoe, *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the birth of agriculture* (2018)

You will no doubt be aware of the conversations currently happening around race and the legacies of empire. Here are some of the prominent contributions:

- The Rhodes Must Fall Movement, Oxford, *Rhodes Must Fall: The Struggle to Decolonise the Racist Heart of Empire* (2018)
- Akala's *Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire* (2018)
- Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (2019)
- C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo revolution* (1938)
- David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (2016)

Histories of women, and indeed, histories written by women, can be hard to find in the A-Level curriculum:

- Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (2006)
- Keisha Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (2018)
- Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (2010)
- Anne Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire* (2018)
- Dyan Elliott, *Proving Women: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (2004)
- Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (2011)
- Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast* (2015)
- Durba Mitra, *Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought* (2020)
- Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze* (2006)

My colleagues, Marc Mulholland, David Kennerley and I look forward to welcoming you in October.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Power

Associate Professor of Medieval History and Director of Studies, St. Catherine's College