

August 2023

Dear Students

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. You should feel confident that your success in your exams 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, followed by suggestions for preliminary reading. Further information about the History course generally, and about studying History at Oxford, is available on the Oxford University Faculty of History website at [www.history.ox.ac.uk](http://www.history.ox.ac.uk).

### **PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION: PROGRAMME OF COURSES**

The first-year courses lead to the Preliminary Examination in History, 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 (HBI)
2. European and World History (EWH)
3. Optional paper
4. one of: Foreign Texts, Approaches, Historiography or Quantification

You will normally take HBI in your first term (Michaelmas), EWH in your second term (Hilary) and your Optional paper in the third and final term (Trinity). Teaching for Paper 4 will be split across Michaelmas and Hilary. Across your degree, you will need to take papers from each of the different periods ('early', 'middle' and 'late') for your HBI and EWH requirements.

#### **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

## 2. European and World History

Studied in one of four periods, this is a paper which combines the study of an extended period with geographical range. It might be approached more thematically than British Isles History, with an emphasis on the conceptual categories – of gender, economy, culture, state and religion – which enable us to understand both what past societies have had in common and where they have differed. The medieval papers can be studied as either ‘European’ or ‘World’ papers:

- European and World History 1: The Transformation of the Ancient World, 370-900
- European and World History 2: Communities, Connections and Confrontations, 1000-1300
- European and World History 3: Renaissance, Recovery, and Reform, 1400-1650
- European and World History 4: Society, Nation, and Empire, 1815-1914

**You can make your choice for European and World History after you have arrived in Oxford**, during Michaelmas (first) term, but if you already know what you would like to study, it would be useful to hear now.

## 3. 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.

#### 4. Paper IV

Through this choice of papers students are encouraged to reflect on the variety of approaches used by modern historians, or on the ways in which history has been written in the past, or to read historical classics written in a range of ancient and modern languages.

You must choose **ONE** of the following papers:

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

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

**3. Quantification in History.** The purpose of this course is to introduce historians to the statistical exploration of historical problems. It imparts statistical skills which enable students to read and understand quantitative historical research, and also to undertake elementary quantitative work on their own. It does this by examining a sequence of historical problems. During Michaelmas term, this also constitutes a course on the quantitative approach to the social history of Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century. In Hilary term, the scope is extended to the twentieth century.

**4. Foreign Texts:** ONE of the following:

- Herodotus, V.26-VI.131, to be read in Greek, ed. C Hude (Oxford Classical Texts, 3rd edn, 1927).
- 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 contexitur, 10-25, 37-42, 73-81, 87-106 (excluding 106B).
- Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*.
- Friedrich Meinecke and Eckart Kehr: Two views of the German Sonderweg. I.e. Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Deutsche Katastrophe: Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen* (Wiesbaden, 1949), pp. 5-86; and Eckart Kehr, *Der Primat der Innenpolitik: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur preussisch-deutschen Sozialgeschichte im 19. und 20 Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1965), pp. 87-129, 149-83.
- Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Bk. 1.
- Vicens Vives, *Aproximación a la historia de España*.
- Leon Trotsky, 1905, pp. 1-9, 17-245

On **foreign languages**, please note the following. To take a Foreign Texts paper, you will normally need at least GCE level competence, but if you have the language skills, it's an excellent idea to learn how to read historical sources in them at university level, with an eye to being able to take one of the Special Subjects that requires foreign language skills, and/or write your third-year dissertation drawing on sources in another language. The **Language Centre** offers history-orientated teaching in all relevant languages to support your work for these papers. You can also take beginners' classes if you would like to learn a new language. As of this year, this includes Arabic language courses for historians.

**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](mailto: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.

## 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

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