HISTORY AT ST EDMUND HALL

Congratulations on gaining a place to read History 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 or one of its joint schools (including History and Politics and History and Modern Languages) is set by the History Faculty, which also arranges 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 . 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 British History paper, and fortnightly tutorials for your Methods paper. [Tutorial arrangements for students reading for one of the Joint Schools are sometimes different 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 in all Oxford colleges, as we want students to take advantage of the full range of specialist expertise available across the university, whichever college they are in and whichever papers they are study. 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 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 memorizing information. Knowledge of the relevant facts is 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 evidence and variety of interpretation, and to discuss and test your own views against those of other students and the tutors.

The purpose of your three years 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 p. 4, which you need to complete and return as soon as possible and no later than 31 August, indicating which two History papers you want to study in your first term (Historians study four History papers in all across the year; Joint School students generally study only two). 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 (Trinity Term). For this exam you will study four papers in all:

- in the first term, as indicated above, a paper on the History of the British Isles, and another on Historical Methods
- in the second term, you will complete your work on the Methods paper, and study a paper on European and World History
- in the third term, you will study a document-based paper known as an Optional Subject

For all four papers, you need to select one from among a list. You will not need to make a choice of papers for your second and third terms until after your arrival in Oxford. For you initial two papers, however, you need to make your choices **now**.

1. A History of the British Isles paper (7 weekly tutorials in your first term)

   There are six periods of British History in the Oxford History course. Please note that no undergraduate attempts to cover the full chronological range of any of these papers!

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

   You must choose *one* of these six papers for your first term. You will have to study one of the others in your second year: you are not permitted to take the same British History paper in both the first and the second year. Thus if you choose (say) the period before 1100 in the first year, you cannot study that period again in your second year.

   Note that the Faculty's regulations require that in the course of studying for your BA, students must also choose two European and one World paper, and at least one paper (British, European or World History) from each of the medieval, early modern, and modern periods. We will discuss the details and the implications of these (rather complex) rules when you arrive in Oxford. Our advice at this stage simply to pick a period of British history that interests you – but please avoid periods 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 have developed a particular interest in a period you have studied at school and are keen to develop that interest at university, you might find it better to set it to one side in the

first year, and then return to it in the second year when you can approach it from a more experienced perspective.

2. A Historical Methods paper (8 fortnightly tutorials or classes over the first two terms).
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 *contexitur*, 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

B. *Approaches to History*
Your options here are: Anthropology and History; Archaeology and History; Art and History; Economics and History; Gender and History; Sociology and History; Environmental History; and Histories of Race. Please indicate which *two* you would like to study from these eight 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 a very good foundation for the second year paper entitled *Disciplines of History*, which is compulsory for all students reading the main school in History. There is also an advantage in maintaining a language by taking one of the *Language Texts* papers, which allow those who already have a foreign language to 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 British History and Methods papers, and email it to filippo.devivo@history.ox.ac.uk as soon as you can so we can find you the best tutors, and **no later than 31 August**. You will then be sent preparatory reading lists for the subjects you have chosen.

History

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

I wish to choose papers as follows:

1. History of the British Isles. Please select one of the following seven options:

   (i) 300-1100
   (ii) 1000-1330
   (iii) 1330-1550
   (iv) 1500-1700
   (v) 1685-1848
   (vi) 1830-1951

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 to study:

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

HISTORY AND JOINT SCHOOLS AT ST EDMUND HALL

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 chloe.pieters@seh.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.

Note that you will be able to access most of these books online as soon as you are given your Bodleian Library credentials, but it may be worth sourcing a second-hand copy or looking them up in archive.org in advance.

We look forward to discussing these books with you,

Filippo de Vivo
Chloe Pieters
David Priestland

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)
Douglas A. Howard, *A History of the Ottoman Empire* (2017).
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)
Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2009 ed.)
David Edgerton, *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation* (2018)
Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells. West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (2019)
Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (1994)
Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991)
Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (1987; 2013 onl.)
Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (1998)
Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (2015)
Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995, 2015 online)

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)
Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (2015)
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 Tailor's Summer: A Scrivener, His City, and the Plague* (2011)
Christopher Clark, *Time and Power: Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (2021).
Joanna Bourke, *Loving Animals: On Bestiality, Zoophilia and Post-Human Love* (2020).