



May 2026

## History

I enclose a sheet giving you information about the History course at Oxford. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to email me – [selina.todd@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk](mailto:selina.todd@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk).

You will see that you have to choose three of the four papers which you will take in the first-year Preliminary Examination (Prelims) course: a period of British Isles History, a period of European and World History, and a historical methods option. British Isles History will be taught in Michaelmas Term, European and World History in Hilary Term and the Optional Subject (which you may choose once you have arrived in Oxford) in Trinity Term, all in weekly tutorials; and the historical methods option will be spread over the first two terms, in fortnightly tutorials or classes. There will also be lectures on each course.

You can choose any period of British Isles History and European and World History. In making your choice of British Isles History and European and World History, you should bear in mind the requirement that during your three-year course, you will have to take at least one paper from each of the following periods: early (pre 1330); middle (1330-1700); and late (18th-20th centuries). You should also bear in mind that there are certain 'illegal' combinations of papers. This will be explained more fully when you begin your degree, but it is worth considering how this might affect your choice of British Isles History papers for your first Michaelmas Term. You will study two British Isles History papers at Oxford: one for Prelims (in your first year), and one for Finals (in your second year). You *cannot* study the same chronological period twice; so if you are certain that you wish to specialise in (for example) medieval British Isles history at Finals, you should consider taking a modern British Isles paper in your first year. We strongly encourage you to branch out beyond your school work in your first year with us. We are quite happy that you should do a certain amount that is familiar to you; but you should also have the intellectual challenge of embarking on new periods, which will help you to make the transition to the more open-ended and exploratory style of work expected at undergraduate level.

For historical "methods", choose between Approaches to History, Historiography: Tacitus to Weber, Quantification and one of the foreign text options. Approaches to History provides an excellent introduction to the methods and theories that historians use. We believe it provides a strong foundation for the other papers you will choose to study. In particular, we recommend the 'Gender' component to the Approaches to History course, which we teach in College during your first term. Studying this can also provide a way for all our First Year historians to get to know one another. If you wish to study the 'Gender' component, please let me know.

In choosing your options, consider the courses you may want to study in your final year. If you want to keep open the option of specialising in medieval European history, or in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Latin American, or Russian history, you may consider offering a Foreign Language Text. These papers are designed to be accessible to anyone with an 'A' at GCSE or equivalent in the appropriate language. 'Arabic for Historians' is also available. If you wish to begin or continue to learn

a language, the University's Language Centre also offers a range of courses that you can undertake alongside your degree studies. These include classes for History students who wish to take specialist papers in that language during their degree.

I enclose introductory reading lists. If you offer a foreign text, you should ensure that you have read it before coming up.

Please let me know (via the email address above) by **Friday 17 July** which period of British Isles History, European and World History and which historical methods option you would like to offer.

Best wishes,

Professor Selina Todd



**Introductory Reading Lists for the History Preliminary Examination**

**A. History of the British Isles**

**1. 300-1100**

- J. Campbell, ed. *The Anglo-Saxons*  
M. Alexander (trans.), *Beowulf* (Penguin ed.)  
P. Strafford, *Unification and Conquest*  
H. R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest*  
C. Brooks, *The Saxon and Norman Kings*

**2. 1000-1330**

- N. Saul (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval England* (1997)  
D. Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain, 1066-1284* (2004)  
R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (2000)  
M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers, 1066-1272* (2nd edn, 1998)  
R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles, 1093-1343* (2000)

**3. 1330-1550**

- M. H. Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages* 2nd edn. (2003)  
W. M. Ormrod, *Political Life in Late Medieval England, 1300-1450* (1995)  
G. L. Harriss, *Shaping the Nation. England, 1360-1461* (2005)  
R. H. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland, 1050-1530: Economy and Society* (2004)  
C. Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages. The People of Britain 850-1520* (2002)

**4. 1500-1700**

- J. Guy, *Tudor England* (1994)  
D. L. Smith, *A History of the Modern British Isles, 1603-1707* (1998)  
B. Coward, *The Stuart Age* (1994)  
T. Harris, *Restoration. Charles II and his Kingdoms, 1660-1685* (2005)  
T. Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (2006).  
M. Kaufmann, *Black Tudors: the Untold Story* (2017)  
K. Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (various editions).

**5. 1688-1848**

- P. Langford, *The Eighteenth Century: A Very Short Introduction* (2000)  
J. Hoppit, *A Land of Liberty? England 1688-1727* (2000)  
P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People. England 1727-1783* (1989)  
B. Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? 1784-1846* (2006)  
P. Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (new ed 2010)  
D. Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (2016)  
J. Uglow, *In These Times: Living in Britain through Napoleon's Wars 1793-1815* (2014)  
A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (1998)

**6. 1830-1951**

- P. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism* (Vol. 1) (1992).  
A. Calder, *The People's War* (1968 or any other edn)

- P. Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (new ed 2010)
- V. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree* (1994).
- K. Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (2001)
- P. Johnson (ed.), *Twentieth Century Britain* (1992)
- D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain* (2007).
- D. Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (2016)
- L. Raw, *Striking a Light* (2009).
- P. Thane, *Divided Kingdom* (2018).
- E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963 or any other edn)
- S. Todd, *The People: the rise and fall of the Working Class* (2014)

## **B. European and World History**

### **1. The Transformation of the Ancient World, 370-900**

- P. Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, 2nd edition (2003)
- J. Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom* (1987)
- M. Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Europe, 300-900: The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (2007)
- C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (2009)

### **2. Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours, 1000–1300**

- R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (1994)
- P. A. Linehan & J. L. Nelson, eds., *The Medieval World* (2001)
- D. Power, ed., *The Central Middle Ages. Europe 950-1320* (2006)

### **3. Renaissance, Recovery and Reform, 1400–1650**

- D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (2003)
- R. Mackenney, *Sixteenth-Century Europe. Expansion and Conflict* (1993)
- T. Munck, *Seventeenth-Century Europe, 1598–1700* (1990)
- Beat Kümin, *The European World 1500-1800: An Introduction to Early Modern European History* (2009)
- Ulinka Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (2005)

### **4. Society, Nation and Empire, 1815-1914**

- M. S. Anderson, *The Ascendancy of Europe, 1815-1914* (2nd ed. 1988)
- R. Gildea, *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800-1914* (2nd ed.1996)
- E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (1962)
- E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (1975)
- E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (1987)
- K. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950* (2000)

## **C. Approaches to History, Historiography, Foreign Texts, Quantification**

These papers will be taught in lectures and fortnightly tutorials during the first two terms of the first year.

### **1. Approaches to History**

In this paper undergraduates study ways in which the writing of history has been influenced by other disciplines. There will be a choice of themes: anthropology, archaeology, art, economics, gender and

sexuality, race, environmental history, and sociology. The following books are useful by way of introduction:

- M. Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (1994, or any other edition)
- S. Berger, H. Feldner, and K. Passmore, *Writing History: Theory and Practice* (2010 edn)
- O. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her* (1997)
- S. Rowbotham, *Promise of a Dream* (2000).
- R. Shoemaker and M. Vincent (eds.) *Gender and History in Western Europe* (1997)
- A. Sullivan and S. Todd, *Sex and Gender: A Contemporary Reader* (2023)
- J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (fifth edition, 2010)

## 2. Historiography: Tacitus to Weber

John Burrow, *A History of Histories* (2007)

## 3. Foreign Texts

This paper is based on a text or texts in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Latin or Classical Greek. The options are:

- a) A. de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Gallimard paperback).
- b) F. Meinecke, *Die Deutsche Katastrophe, Betrachtungen Und Erinnerungen* (Brockhaus Verlag, Wiesbaden. 4th ed. 1949) pp. 5-86, and E. Kehr, *Der Primat der Innenpolitik, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur preussisch-deutschen Sozialgeschichte im 19 und 20 Jahrhundert* (Gruyter/Berlin, 1965) pp.87-129 and 149-183.
- c) Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, Book 1.
- d) J. Vicens Vives, *Aproximación a la historia de España* (1960, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).
- e) Leon Trotsky, 1905.
- f) Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni Imperatoris*, ed. L. Halphen, and Asser, *De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi*, ed. W.H. Stevenson, c.1 to contexitur, cc.10-25, cc.73-81, cc.87-106 (excluding 106B).
- g) *Herodotus* (Oxford Classical Texts, ed. C. Hude) v.26-vi.131.

It is essential to acquire and read the texts themselves in the original language.

## 4. Quantification

P. Hudson and M. Ishizu, *History by Numbers*, 2ed., Bloomsbury, 2016.

**You might also be interested in these as fun history reading:**

- T. C. W. Blanning, *The Triumph of Music: Composers, Musicians, and their Audiences, 1700 to the Present* (2008).
- Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing with Strangers* (2007)
- Angela Davis, *An Autobiography* (1988)
- Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (1985)
- John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World* (1928)
- Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (2004)
- Selina Todd, *Tastes of Honey: The Making of Shelagh Delaney and a Cultural Revolution* (2019)