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To Prospective Somerville Historians

17 August 2017

I need hardly say that my colleagues and I were very pleased to be able to offer you a place at Somerville to read History this October. And we are delighted that you have negotiated the terms of your offer successfully. I am now writing to ask you to make the initial choices for your first-year courses.

History at Somerville is run by a team of Tutors, some of whom you will have met at interview. I should say that for the next two years there will be a number of changes in the tutorial team, what with the retirement in 2018 of our long-standing Senior History Tutor in modern history, *Joanna Innes* (a historian of social policy in the C18 & C19), whose replacement will be appointed in the next year, and the return from project-work in 2018 of our early-modernist, *Natalia Nowakowska* (who works on Eastern Europe), whose role for another year will be filled by *Oren Margolis*, who covers the Renaissance in France and Italy. You will also encounter next term *Patrick Clibbens*, who studies twentieth-century India; for the first term he will be your Personal Tutor, organizing your studies and reviewing your progress, as well as being a point of contact for questions and problems. *I* hope I will be a constant presence through these changeover years: I am our earliest historian, of England from the Conquest to the Reformation.

The **History course** ('School') at Oxford is divided into two parts, 'Prelims' and Finals. Prelims is examined at the end of the first year, by means of four three-hour examinations on the courses you will study during the year. You will prepare for these papers primarily by reading books and articles and writing essays, with additional back-up from lecture-courses. Each essay will then be discussed in a tutorial or small class, with your tutor and one or more other students; you will have a tutorial at least once each week throughout the year, with ten or eleven tutorials in each of the first two eight-week terms.

Your **four courses** this year will be in the History of the British Isles (HBI), European & World History (EWH), a more closely defined Optional Subject (OS), and a Historical Methods option (Paper 4). ***I need you to choose now from the first and last of these menus***, for your Michaelmas Term papers. We will ask you to make provisional choices about the other papers when you arrive, and you may want to think about those now too.

There are various considerations which you will want to take into account in planning your choices, including the overall balance of the year's work. It is a good idea to use the first year to broaden your historical experience by exploring periods *other than those with which you are familiar*; this will then give you a good overview for deciding on the more specialized options later on in the course. **We therefore urge you very strongly not to choose your first-year papers from periods which you have done at A-level, IB or equivalent.** Apart from that, you may want to use the first year to cover different periods, or you may choose a British or EWH period which will match the Optional subject you will choose in the third term: the choice is up to you.

In the longer run, you need to be aware of the rules prescribed by the History Faculty, although these will have more impact in the second year. You are in fact the first year to take a reformed syllabus, which in terms of these rules has made life more complicated. At present, only one rule is relevant, which is that, of the *four* HBI and EWH papers which you take over the whole course, you must take *at least one* from *each* of three broad periods: Early, to c.1350; Middle, 1350-c.1700; Late, after c.1700.

In order to discover which options you take next year, and the various choices within those menus, you should go to the faculty website: <http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/undergraduate-admissions> (or <http://www.history.ox.ac.uk/>, Admissions menu, Undergraduate Admissions submenu), where 'History Single Honours', if you scroll down a bit, enumerates the History options.

For the **History of the British Isles** you need to choose one of the 6 periods. This year we offer three of the periods, one in each of the period-groups mentioned above:

HBI 2, 1000-1330 (counts as 'early')

HBI 3, 1330-1550 (counts as 'middle')

HBI 6, 1830-1950 (counts as 'late')

(You will have the opportunity to study 1, 4 and 5 later in the course if you wish.)

For the **Historical Methods** option (for which you will have tutorials fortnightly for the first two terms) you need to choose from three groups of options:

Foreign Text

Approaches to History

Quantification in History

We encourage you to choose a Foreign Text if you have the relevant language skills.

- If you choose the **Foreign Text**, please say which one. The texts are within the grasp of anyone with A-level knowledge of the relevant language, and also anyone with a good GCSE, especially if you are prepared to put some effort into improving your reading ability. Extra language teaching will be available for those who wish and need it. Choosing a Foreign Text is a good way of keeping up a language, either for its own sake, or for use later; for instance, some Special Subjects in the third year require a language for reading the source-material, and you may want to do a dissertation involving sources in other languages.
- If you choose **Approaches to History**, you will study two sections: for next term, please choose *either Gender or Anthropology*. You will be able to choose one of the others in the second term.
- **Quantification** is probably only for those with a serious interest in number-crunching!

Please return the **form** on the next page to the office, preferably by e-mail attachment, **as soon as possible, and definitely by 31st August**. Email to academic.office@some.ox.ac.uk

Having made your choices, some advance preparation will help to make you feel less pressured during the initial weeks of your first term. We will send you some suggestions when you have made your choices. For the Foreign Texts, you need to acquire and start reading the text.

We look forward to seeing you in the autumn.

With best wishes,

Benjamin Thompson

Choices for Somerville First-Year Historians, 2017-18

NAME _____

PERIODS & AREAS STUDIED in last two years at school:

—
—

Please select options by underlining, ticking, highlighting — or anything that makes clear what you have chosen.

I

History of the British Isles

Please select ONE of the periods 1-6

2

1000-1330 (early)

3

1330-1550 (middle)

6

1830-1950 (late)

IV

Historical Methods/'Paper 4'

Please select ONE of the options a-c, then further selections as appropriate.

a

Foreign Texts

Please select ONE language.

i

Greek: Herodotus

ii

Latin: Einhard and Asser

iii

French: Tocqueville

iv

German: Friedrich Meinecke & Eckart Kehr

v

Italian: Machiavelli

vi

Spanish: Juan Diaz del Moral

b

Approaches to History

*Please select **ONE** of the following:*

1

Anthropology and History

5

Gender and History

(You will have the opportunity to choose other papers in this menu next term.)

d

Quantification in History