

Dr Benjamin Thompson

Somerville College

Fellow & Tutor in Medieval History

OXFORD OX2 6HD

Benjamin.Thompson@Some.ox.ac.uk

Tel. 01865 270600

Direct Line: 01865 270682

Fax. 01865 270620

To Prospective Somerville History & Economics Students

17 August 2017

I need hardly say that my colleagues and I were very pleased to be able to offer you a conditional place at Somerville to read History & Economics 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 & Economics** 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 the History 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.

Introductory Economics is taught through all three terms; the other courses are from the History menu, although they have Economics content **European and World History**; a more closely defined **Optional Subject**; or a **Historiographical** option.

A complication for students reading for Joint Schools tends to be that their work is harder to timetable, since they have to fit in to some extent with the rhythms of two parent schools. You will find that you are carrying quite a heavy burden of work in the first year, and that the timetabling may well seem less than ideal; sometimes you will have two tutorials, and therefore essays or other work-assignments, each week. It will be helpful to us if you can make your choices in all three of the History subjects, so that we can try to timetable the work to make it as even as possible for you across the year. You won't have to stick absolutely by these choices, especially of Optional Subject, but it will help to have some idea of what you wish to do.

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.

I need you to make one choice in each of the following three menus:

European and World History: you choose one of four periods:

1

370-900: The Transformation of the Ancient World

2

1000-1300: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours

3

1450-1600: Renaissance, Recovery and Reform

4

1815-1914: Society, Nation and Empire

Optional Subject: you can choose any of the subjects in the menu.

For the **Historical Methods** section you choose one of the following groups of options, and you then choose further within them.

- **Quantification in History** is an obvious choice for Economists who have a serious interest in number-crunching!
- 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, including **Economics**.

- 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.

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 EWH paper from periods which you have done recently.**

Please return the **form** overleaf to the office, preferably by e-mail attachment, **as soon as possible, and certainly by Friday 31 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 Modern History & Economics, 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.

II European and World History

Please choose ONE of the periods.

1

370-900: Transformation of the Ancient World

2

1000-1300: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours

3

1450-1600: Renaissance, Recovery and Reform

4

1815-1914: Society, Nation and Empire

III Optional Subject

Please choose ONE of the subjects on the menu:

SUBJECT

IV ‘Paper 4’

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

a

Quantification in History

b

Approaches to History

*Please select **ONE** option:*

1

Anthropology and History

5

Gender and History

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

c

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

[NB We are not offering *Historiography: Tacitus to Weber* in this menu this year. If you particularly wanted to study this, get back to me directly.]