

Dr Benjamin Thompson
Fellow & Tutor in Medieval History
Benjamin.Thompson@Some.ox.ac.uk
Direct Line: 01865 270682

Somerville College
OXFORD OX2 6HD
Tel. 01865 270600
Fax. 01865 270620

To Prospective Somerville History & Modern Languages Students

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 and Modern Languages 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.

I am writing from the point of view of History. (The Modern Languages tutors will write separately.) **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. **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. I will act as your Personal Tutor, organizing your studies and reviewing your progress, as well as being a point of contact for questions and problems

The **History and Modern Languages School** at Oxford divides your work roughly half-and-half between history and your modern language. You will do Prelims on both sides at the end of the first year. Thereafter you will study for Finals, in which you will be examined in the fourth and final year, after a year abroad in your third year. Most History papers are taught through lectures, possibly classes, and, primarily, a weekly or fortnightly tutorial with your tutor (in pairs or singly) for which you will have written an essay, based on reading given to you at the previous tutorial as well as any lectures which you have attended.

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.

We need to ask you to choose your two history papers now, because the pattern of your work over the first three terms depends on your choices. You must choose a paper in **European and World History**, and another paper from a range of other menus, **History of the British Isles**, an **Optional Subject**, or a **Historiographical** option.

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.

16 August 2017

1 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*

2 The other paper is chosen from a range of the other options, i.e. a specific option within one of the menus

a History of the British Isles: any one of 6 periods:

This year we ask you to choose from only three of these options which are taught in college. You will have a chance to take another period later in the course.

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

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

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

b 'Optional' subjects: any one of the c.20 options

These are more narrowly defined than the HBI & EWH papers, and are based on the study of a specified selection of primary texts.

c A Historiographical option:

- i a *Foreign text*: this might make good sense in your language;
- ii *Approaches to History*: you will study two sections, over two terms: for next term, please choose *either Gender or Anthropology*. You will be able to choose one of the other sections in the second term.

In choosing your courses, beyond the criteria mentioned above, we would encourage you to choose whatever appeals to you. ***But we do urge you very strongly to choose, initially, periods you have NOT done before.*** 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.

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 History & Modern Languages, 2017-18

NAME _____

PERIODS & AREAS STUDIED in the last 2-3 years: _____

Please select options by underlining, ticking, highlighting — or anything that makes it clear.

I 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

II Please choose ONE of a, b or c, and an option within the chosen menu:

a History of the British Isles *Any ONE of the following periods:*

- 2 1042-1330
- 3 1330-1550
- 6 1830-1950

b Optional Subject *Any ONE of those listed:*

SUBJECT: _____

c ‘Paper 4’ Historiographical Options *From any ONE of the following menus:*

i Foreign Texts Any ONE language:

- i Greek: Herodotus
- ii Latin: Einhard and Asser
- iii French: Tocqueville
- iv German: Meinecke & Kehr
- v Italian: Machiavelli
- vi Spanish: Juan Diaz del Moral

ii Approaches to History Please select ONE of the following:

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.)