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### **Incoming Somerville History First Years**

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. Now that your place has been confirmed, I am writing to ask you to make the initial choices for your first-year courses.

**History at Somerville** is run by a team of three Tutors – a medievalist, Dr. Pippa Byrne, who works on medieval thought and the island of Sicily; myself as the early modernist, working on religion, dynasty and monarchy in Renaissance Central Europe; and a modernist, Dr. Faridah Zaman, who works on early-twentieth Indian and imperial politics and thought. (Dr. Benjamin Thompson, who may have interviewed you, is on leave for 2-3 years, working in an administrative role in the Humanities Division). I will act as your Personal Tutor in your first year, organizing your studies and reviewing your progress, as well as being a point of contact for questions and problems.

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 up to twelve tutorials in each of the first two eight-week terms.

Your **four Prelims courses** will be as follows:

1. A History of the British Isles (BIP), taught in Michaelmas/autumn term.
2. A Historical Methods paper, in Michaelmas and Hilary/spring term.
3. A European & World History (EWP), in Hilary/spring term.
4. An in-depth Optional Subject (OS), in Trinity/summer term.

I would like you to choose now which papers you would like to study in all 4 slots, fill in the attached form (separate document), and return it to me *as soon as possible*, and by 10<sup>th</sup> September at the latest. Email it to [Natalia.nowakowska@some.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Natalia.nowakowska@some.ox.ac.uk).

#### How to choose your papers:

You can find the full list of menu options for all 4 courses on the Faculty website: <https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/ba-history>.

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 require you not to choose your first-year papers from periods which you have already studied at A-level, IB or equivalent.**

There is also one Faculty rule to be taken account of - your first-year BIP & EWP papers must come from two of three different period-boxes. The three periods are broadly:

- Early, to c.1300
- Middle, c.1300–c.1700;
- Late, after c.1700.

Regarding the Historical Methods course/choice, it is also worth knowing:

- **We encourage you to choose a Foreign Text if you have the relevant language skills.** 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/approaches. Please specify which ones you'd like to cover. We'll hope to give you your first two choices: but please choose four approaches in ranked order, to give us a bit of flexibility as to how the teaching will work.
- ***Quantification*** is probably only for those with a serious interest in number-crunching!

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 / initial reading lists when you have made your choices. For the Foreign Texts, you will need to acquire and start reading the text.

We very much look forward to seeing you in the autumn.

With best wishes,

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