



University  
of Exeter

## History at Exeter: Pre-arrival reading suggestions

### Welcome from Eve Worth (Admissions Officer)

This document is designed to provide you with some suggestions for material to explore before you arrive at university, as a way of helping you in your transition between school and higher education. It is primarily aimed at new students about to start a course involving History at the University of Exeter's Streatham campus, although we hope that many other groups (including Year 12 students considering applying to study History at university) will find it useful.

For incoming Exeter students, we'd like to emphasise that no single piece of reading on this list is mandatory; indeed, we'd strongly encourage you to take a break (however possible) over at least part of the summer, to ensure that you're well-rested and ready to engage fully with the programme here in Exeter come September. Nevertheless, the resources below (many of which are available for free online) are a good way to keep yourself engaged over summer.

If you have any questions about this reading, or would like further advice, please feel free to contact us at [history-admissions-exeter@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:history-admissions-exeter@exeter.ac.uk).

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### **'Becoming a Historian': Recommended pre-reading**

In readiness for the start of academic work at Exeter, you should read some works relating to the core 'Becoming a Historian' module. You should read any two of the following books:

- Peter Claus and John Marriott, *History: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice* (Pearson, 2012)
- Ulinka Rublack ed., *A Concise Companion to History* (Oxford University Press, 2011)
- Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice* (Arnold, revised 2nd ed., 2006)
- John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (Longman, revised 3rd ed., 2002)

## The transition from school to university

### Thinking about school and university

Dr Laura Sangha, a Senior Lecturer in our department, has written an excellent [blogpost](#) on how prospective History students can prepare for their future studies, including her 'top 5' summer reads. The Historical Association (a charity supporting History teaching and research in the UK) has a series of articles and videos on the topic of the '[Transition to University](#)', from which we'd particularly recommend Alice Borman's piece on '[what to expect](#)'.

### The past and the present

We'd also recommend reading newspapers regularly and thinking about the relevance/use of the past in modern-day society and the media. Podcasts can be a great way to access the past in a new way:

- [History Extra](#) and [In Our Time](#) are long-running podcasts from the BBC.
- [A History of the World in 100 Objects](#) was a BBC Radio 4 programme (now available as a podcast) that did ... well, exactly what it sounds like. Each 15-minute programme explored a different 'object', and the series as a whole offers a useful introduction to material history.
- Today in Focus (e.g., [on 50 years of Pride in the UK](#))
- The Irish Passport ([link](#))
- [History Workshop](#) is a journal and website focused on social history, and played an integral role in founding the so-called 'history from below' movement.
- [The Conversation](#), while not a history publication in and of itself, frequently publishes pieces written by historians. Pieces by Exeter historians have tackled topics ranging from [archival preservation](#) and the [partition](#) of India and Pakistan to [beards](#) and [witches](#).

## History at Exeter

### Decolonising the curriculum

Please read the department's [statement](#) on how we're working to 'decolonise' the way we teach, research and work with one another. Do also follow the link to our [Imperial and Global History blog](#), where you'll find various posts relating to decolonising history, including recent debates over failing statues, the Covid health crisis, etc. You can also learn more about the British Empire and the controversies of imperialism via Exeter's free [online course](#).

### Chronological surveys

Here's a small selection of texts we recommend as general/background reading for our two first-year survey modules, covering Medieval & Early Modern History (up to 1750) and Modern History. You don't need to read all of them, in depth, but they ought to provide you with a good introduction to some of the general themes for these (very long) periods of history:

- B. H. Rosenwein, *A Short History of the Middle Ages 300-1500*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough, ON, 2004)

- V. Hansen, *The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World – and Globalization Began* (London, 2020)
- S. Subrahmanyam, *Empires between Islam and Christianity, 1500-1800* (New York, 2019)
- C. Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (London, 2009)
- F.-X. Fauvelle, *The Golden Rhinoceros: Histories of the African Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 2018)
- P. Beaujard, *The Worlds of the Indian Ocean: A Global History, Volume 2: From the Seventh Century to the Fifteenth Century CE* (Cambridge, 2019)
- M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe, 1450–1789* (Cambridge, 2006)
- TB. Kumin, ed., *The European World 1500–1800: An Introduction to Early Modern History* (London, 2009)
- C. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford, 2004)
- C. Bayly, *Remaking the Modern World 1900–2015: Global Connections and Comparisons* (2018)

### **Historiography and methodology; academic skills**

Another way you can prepare for our History programmes is to read up on the wider discipline and key concepts/approaches used by historians today, as well as to develop your skills in critical reading, note-taking, etc. The following is a small selection of the texts we recommend, some of which feature in our first-year skills-based modules:

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2000)
- Mary Deane, *Academic Research, Writing & Referencing* (Harlow, 2010)
- John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2015)
- Tracy Loughran (ed.), *A Practical Guide to Studying History: Skills and Approaches* (Bloomsbury, 2017)
- Mark Donnelly and Claire Norton, *Doing History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Routledge, 2021)

### **Specialist history topics**

If you'd like to learn more about the specialist courses we offer on more specific periods and themes, consider getting in touch with the academic running the module that interests you. See History BA '[Course Content](#)', and our internal [module pages](#). (The first-year modules are not yet fully listed; you'll have time to browse the full list and make your choices once you arrive at Exeter.) Staff profiles and contact details are also available on the Department [website](#). Summer can be a busy period for colleagues, due to exams and marking as well as academic research projects, so colleagues may be a little slower than usual replying to your emails; we will, though, get back to you as soon as possible. We are always happy to talk about our specialisms!