

History at Bristol

Visit days

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bristol.ac.uk/ug20-history

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Why History at Bristol?

- Be part of a community of scholars, engaged in research-led teaching. All staff are involved in research and scholarship and many are recognized international experts in their field. All bring cutting-edge historical research into the classroom.
- Do research for yourself right from the start of your degree. We build student research into the curriculum in all years of study.
- Work with supportive and enthusiastic staff to develop your knowledge and skills. Teaching aims not just to convey facts but to give you the skills you need to do independent research
- Benefit from an average of ten contact hours per week (approx. 12 in year one, 10 in year two, 8 in final year).
- Participate in weekly small-group teaching on every unit. This is in addition to lectures, workshops and tutorial support and is designed to ensure you can discuss your own ideas and tell lecturers and students what you think about the subject.

Your dissertation at Bristol

- Our final-year students write fascinating, original dissertations on a wide range of topics.
- We publish the best dissertations every year on the department's [website](#)
- Topics from previous years have included the history of the earthworm (2014), the history of radioactive sheep (2016), and the reception of Islam in Elizabethan England (2017).
- We don't insist you write about something our staff know about – we will provide training and advice to allow you to succeed in your project.
- Funding is available to allow students to undertake work outside Bristol to complete their dissertation research. A practice-based dissertation option is also available. For example this might involve producing an online exhibition as well as a shorter written dissertation.

First year units

- Approaching The Past – a compulsory unit aimed at supporting your transition to university study.
- Three compulsory units exploring the medieval, early modern and modern worlds, moving beyond Europe and encountering new periods, places, ideas and approaches.
- A research-led optional unit selected by you from a range of choices, with an independent project.
- An open unit from beyond the Department of History, providing a core skill from another discipline, allowing you to follow a particular area of interest or introducing you to interdisciplinary ways of thinking about some big issues.

Second year units

- Rethinking History – a compulsory unit digging deeper into historical practice and discussing writers, concepts and debates that all historians should know something about.
- Global History – a compulsory unit exploring global histories and connections from a non-European perspective.
- History in Public – a compulsory unit drawing on our strength in public history; how should history be understood and communicated to a wider public outside the world of universities?
- Your choice of two optional units from a wide-ranging menu allowing you to engage with the major topics, places and periods that interest you the most.
- Your choice of a research-intensive Special Field unit, picked from a wide-ranging menu, allowing you to pursue a specialist topic with a leading expert in the field.

Final year units

- The dissertation is the capstone of your degree and the key mark of your achievement as an historian and a researcher. Throughout the year you will work on a substantial piece of original research on a topic of your choice (including the option of a practice-based dissertation), with extensive guidance and support.
- Your choice from a wide-ranging menu of a special subject, taught exclusively in small groups with a strong focus on working with primary source material.
- Your choice of three Advanced Options units each to be chosen from a different panel comprising units focusing on different places and periods. Currently we plan that the three panels will be themed as follows (subject to confirmation)...

Final year (cont.)

- Voices of the Past
units in this panel focus on research methods
- History at Work
units in this panel focus on employability
- Big Ideas
units in this panel focus on major themes and concepts



Teaching and learning creatively

Members of the department teach in a wide range of creative and engaging ways. Here are some examples of past practice:

- The Witchcraft and History Outside the Box units hosted a visit from the Circle of Spears theatre group, who came to perform their play WITCH. Students considered the nature of the performance and the history it represented.
- Enterprise Culture in Contemporary Britain and America used a [twitter account](#) to help students to identify and interact with experts and historians outside of the department.
- In Filming the Past students designed and produced a concept for a historical film and then produced a trailer. This helped them engage with the key theoretical element of the unit.

Teaching and learning creatively (cont.)

- For Forensic Medicine in Britain 1800-1939 students produced blogs for each other and developed a public-facing blog.
- History in Public – second-year history student Tayo Lewin-Turner, researched and wrote [this article](#) in collaboration with Dr Madge Dresser and Sue Giles (Bristol museums) on Bristol and slavery.
- Tayo also led a walking tour of relevant sites for Black History Month 2018.

Resources for your research in Bristol

In your different units and in your research projects you may draw on some excellent local resources (many students are also supported to use national and international source material):

- Electronic Resources – excellent online subscriptions to academic journals, digital newspaper archives and research databases.
- University of Bristol Library Special Collections - an incredible archive in house with [significant and unique strengths](#), including the Feminist Archive South, the Brunel collection, the Penguin Books Archive, the Pinney Papers, and the National Liberal Club Archive.
- [Bristol Archives](#) – including unique collections relating to the history of Bristol and its global role, and wider collections of international importance, including the British Empire and Commonwealth Collection.

Projects and internships

A number of our students are involved in extra-curricular projects and internships in history.

- [Research film](#) by Lena Ferriday and Emily Meredith into the history of the new University campus site at Temple Quarter, including the Cattle Market.
- Aidan Shilson-Thomas' [blog](#) on the site's links with the British Empire.



Alumni stories

- James Heale (completed 2018) took units on the Rise of Political Lying and Enterprise Culture and wrote his dissertation on the origins of Thatcherism. He is now parliamentary lobby correspondent in Edinburgh for the *Daily Mail*.
- Caitlin Lambert (completed 2017) a Decade of Discord Special Field project used the Black Cultural Archives to study BME women's liberation groups in the 1970s. Her dissertation re-examined the gender and racial politics of the Grunwick strike of 1976 and her MPhil looked at the controversial prescription and licensing of Depo Provera contraception. She then secured a permanent post at the think tank Demos.

Alumni stories

- Sarah Newey (completed 2017) wrote an excellent dissertation on housing associations, mixing oral histories with local and national archives. She has gone on to use these research skills as a journalist working for national news organisations. She is now the Global Health Security correspondent for *The Telegraph* and one of the Google News Institute's prestigious Fellows.
- Nicholas Fairclough (completed 2016) after taking the Decade of Discord Special Field, Nicholas wrote his dissertation on housing policy. He used this experience to secure a post within the Greater Manchester Public Service Reform Division.