Preparing for History
Welcome to our ‘Preparing for History’ booklet. Here you’ll find advice from current students and recommendations from our lecturers to help you get ready for your next steps in becoming an undergraduate historian. You can also find insights into some of the historical topics you can explore here at Lancaster.

Our historians have put together their top suggestions for history books, podcasts, films, novels and websites to introduce you to the wide variety of topics we offer at Lancaster. Our modules reach from the ancient world to the present day across Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia, and cover a whole range of historical approaches – from social to political, military, religious, cultural and environmental history.

You’ll also discover some of the key primary sources our historians investigate with their students, from a Roman vessel made near Hadrian’s Wall, to the world’s earliest playing cards (made in the Middle East in the 1400s), to a dissident publication circulated in the Soviet Union, and many more.

These sources come straight from our research to the seminar room. All our modules are created by expert historians and fuelled by our internationally recognised research – this means we can support you to develop strong skills in research and analysis to pursue your interest in history and to equip you for a range of careers.

We pride ourselves on our strong sense of community and our friendly department. You’ll hear in this booklet from some of our current students, who’ll share their experiences, offer advice, and let you know what you can look forward to as an undergraduate historian at Lancaster.

I hope you enjoy preparing for History. Please do contact us if you have any questions – you can email us at historyadmissions@lancaster.ac.uk or find us on Twitter @LancasterHistory.
Daisy Lodge
First-year Student, History with Criminology

My name is Daisy, and I am a first-year student studying history with a minor in criminology. The major/minor system was one of the key factors that influenced me to choose Lancaster University. Being able to study criminology alongside history meant that I could learn about a subject I had never studied before, while also developing skills such as critical reading and analysing data that will help me in the future, and I found that it complemented my history degree quite well.

One of my favourite aspects of the ‘HIST100: From Ancient to Modern: History and Historians’ course was being able to explore areas of history that I had not been taught during school, as I had only ever done modern European history before. In particular, one of my favourite lectures from HIST100 was about the fall of the Aztec Empire, and I even ended up choosing an essay question from this topic. Along with HIST100 and my criminology module, I also chose to take a module called ‘Witches, Warriors and Slavers: Exploring the History of Lancaster’ in my first term, and a module called ‘Reform, Rebellion, and Reason: Britain, 1500–1800’ in my second term. I found both of these modules really interesting, and I particularly enjoyed going on a trip to the castle in Lancaster as part of the first module, as it was great to be able to see some of the things we had been looking at in our lectures.

One of the highlights of my first year was the opportunity to go on a day trip to Wales with the Department of History to visit the castles in Conwy and Caernarfon. It was a really fun day, and it was great having one of the lecturers there with us to answer any questions we had. Overall, all the lecturers are really helpful and will always help you out and answer any questions if you ask. I was quite nervous when writing my first few essays at university, but I got a lot of guidance from my seminar tutors and other staff in the department. The feedback I received afterwards was really detailed as well, so I knew how to improve next time. I have found the support systems at Lancaster to be really useful, as there is always someone to talk to, whether they’re from your academic department, your college, or other services that the university offers. I found the college system in particular really useful when getting to know people during my first week. Overall, my first year at Lancaster University has been even better than I expected, and I am really looking forward to continuing my studies here.
The exact origins of modern playing cards are unclear, but we know from surviving fragments of cards that they were in existence by the 1100s in Egypt, and we can infer from reports that they had been in use for at least a century before that. The cards pictured belong to one of the earliest complete packs to have survived. Made in the Middle East in the 1400s, the pack contains 52 cards divided into four suits (cups, coins, swords, and sticks). Each suit had three ‘court’ cards and 10 ‘pip’ cards of different values. The cards were hand-drawn and painted with their suit using intricate floreated designs. While they were about the same width as a modern playing card, they were over twice as long. The first playing cards in Europe were imported from the Middle East into Spain and southern Italy in the mid-1360s. They also comprised four suits (cups, coins, swords, and sticks), and their use in card games spread rapidly throughout Europe over the next fifty years. We cannot be sure how the earliest card games were played in Europe, but evidence again points to similarities with the Middle East. For example, in Valencia in the 1380s a new game called naipe was banned. The term naipe derives from the Arabic, nā‘īb (‘deputy’), which was the name of one of the court cards in the Middle Eastern version.
Dr Chris Donaldson
Lecturer in Cultural History

Dr Donaldson is principally concerned with 18th- and 19th-century cultural history. He is particularly interested in changing perceptions of the value of landscape and the environment during this period.

HIST225: From Mining to Mountaineering: The History of the English Lake District
HIST273: Sex, Satire and British Society, 1660-1901

I have always enjoyed paintings and visual art, and my modules often draw on artworks as sources.

In ‘From Mining to Mountaineering’, students study historical paintings of the Lake District and consider how these works reveal changes in the landscape and in the way people thought and felt about it. Many of the paintings we study can be explored online via ArtUK and the Tate.

The watercolour you see here can be found in the Paul Mellon Centre’s splendid catalogue of the works of Francis Towne. It shows a view of Grasmere in 1786.

Some interesting online resources to explore are the Smithsonian’s archives and the National Park Service’s website for Gettysburg.

The British Museum’s digital collections are also worth exploring. I have long loved the Egyptian Papyrus of Ani – you can see high-res images of it on the British Museum’s website here. (Click on the Related Objects tab…) And we use their Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires a great deal in my module Sex, Satire and British Society!

See also...

I find it fascinating to explore the reception of different historical stories and legends across different media. Some favourites include pairing Robert Graves’s book I, Claudius (1934) with Jack Pulman’s 1976 BBC adaptation. Similarly, set the Roman author Petronius’ comic novel Satyricon (1st c. AD) against Federico Fellini’s cinematic response Fellini Satyricon (1969), or Chrétien de Troyes’s romances (I like the Penguin edition by Carleton Carroll and William Kibler) against Éric Rohmer’s film version, Perceval le Gallois (1978).

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As a first-year student, when I reflect upon why I chose to study History at Lancaster, numerous reasons come to mind. The highly regarded department, as well as Lancaster being enriched with its own compelling history, drew me towards studying here. Attending a History Summer School during my time at Sixth Form further confirmed that Lancaster was the place I wanted to be.

My first year of studying History at degree-level has been thoroughly interesting and enjoyable; my favourite aspects included studying a different period each week in ‘HIST100: From Ancient to Modern: History in Lancaster’ and exploring the History of Lancaster, as I have a particular interest in the history of the area in which I live, Lancashire. Additionally, the career paths that appeal to me involve studying History at an advanced level.

What’s it like studying history in your second year? How is it different from the first year?

Studying History in your second year allows your individual historical interests to flourish even further, beyond your first year studies. You meaningfully explore what it is to be a historian; engage with a wider range of primary and secondary sources; challenge the ways in which History has been written, as well as begin to develop the ideas and concepts for your third year Dissertation.

What is the biggest challenge involved with studying history? How does it differ from A-level?

The main challenges involved with studying History at degree-level, in contrast to studying History at A-Level, is the greater need for effective time management and organisation, the different style and formatting of essays, as well as the increased amount of independent work.

And what is the most rewarding thing about it?

The most rewarding thing about studying History at Lancaster is the opportunity and encouragement given to you in becoming specialised in periods and topics of History that appeal to you personally, through being able to choose from a wide range of modules.

What advice would you give to somebody who wants to do a history degree? What would it be good to know before you start?

My advice to anyone who is wanting to study History at Lancaster is to come with a broadened, open mind, and allow your opinions and perceptions to be changed by studying topics that you have never come across before. I have personally found that the modules I expected to enjoy the least actually became my favourites!

What would you like to do after you finish your studies? Do you feel like studying history is a good preparation for that?

After I have finished my studies, I would love to work in the Heritage sector. Studying History at Lancaster will most definitely prepare me for such a career, particularly through the opportunity of undertaking a valuable work placement, by applying for the History Work Placement Module, HIST299: From Education to Employment.

What skills have you gained from your degree? How might you use them in the future?

From studying History at degree-level, I have gained a wide range of technological, research, analytical, organisation, communication, presentation, and team-work skills. The History Department, alongside the Careers Service, offer continuous support in helping you realise the skills that you acquire during your undergraduate degree, and how they can each in turn be accounted for within your CV, and transfer to your desired workplace in the future.

What’s been your favourite topic of study so far?

I would have to say that in first year, my favourite topic of study was HIST107: ‘Witches’, Warriors and Slavers: Exploring the History of Lancaster, as I found the content fascinating and extremely wide-ranging in terms of looking at Lancaster throughout the course of the centuries. So far in second year, HIST280: The Victorians and Before: Britain, 1783-1901 has been my favourite topic. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about inspiring female figures such as Caroline Norton, alongside engaging with sources that provided clear perspectives from those members of Victorian society who were subordinated in terms of their class, gender or race.
Intellectual freedom in the Soviet Union was extremely limited. The totalitarian communist party put severe restrictions on what could be read, listened to and watched. Those who deviated from the party line were punished severely by the notorious KGB, with the threat of being detained in prison, a labour camp, or even a psychiatric institution against their will. Despite these restrictions, political dissidents still managed to voice their opinions.

Samizdat material (literally ‘self-published’) such as the Chronicle was circulated hand-to-hand throughout the Soviet bloc, passed on by individuals willing to risk their freedom to read freely. This material was laboriously typed by hand by committed individuals on wafer-thin ‘onion-paper’ to be distributed to close friends, and was the mechanism by which Soviet citizens read classics deemed ‘politically unsuitable’ by authors such as George Orwell, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Boris Pasternak.

Dr Mark Hurst

Lecturer in the History of Human Rights

Dr Hurst’s research focuses on human rights organisations and activists during the Cold War, and more broadly on the history of human rights, dissent, and political activism, especially in Russia and the Soviet Union.

Teaching

HIST259: Inventing Human Rights, 1776-2001
HIST357: ‘Dangerous Thoughts’: Soviet Dissidents, Human Rights and the Cold War
The Aztec dominated Mesoamerica for 200 years until the Spanish conquest of 1521. This eight-ton sculpture, carved from basaltic rock, was discovered at the foot of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan, in the heart of Mexico City. It describes a myth central to Aztec culture. Coyolxauhqui led her 400 brothers, gods of the southern stars, in an attack against their mother, goddess of the earth. She intended to avenge the dishonour brought by their mother’s new pregnancy. But on the point of Coyolxauhqui’s triumph her new brother was born. Huitzilopochtli emerged in full warrior gear and killed his sister, throwing her from the top of the sacred mountain. The Aztec believed that this cosmic battle was continually re-played, the daily triumph of the sun over the moon explaining how the day followed the night. To ensure the cycle continued, the Aztec fed the gods with the most precious offerings: life itself and human blood. Such remnants of religious life help historians to trace the patterns of belief and practice that shaped Aztec civilisation.

This monolith depicts Coyolxauhqui, the Aztec goddess of the moon. She lies dismembered, killed by her brother Huitzilopochtli, the god of war and the sun.

Dr Patricia Murrieta-Flores
Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities

Dr Murrieta-Flores is an expert in Early Colonial Mexico and co-director of the Digital Humanities Hub. She directs two major projects: “Digging into Early Colonial Mexico” and “Unlocking the Colonial Archive”. These interdisciplinary projects, collaborating with computer scientists, archaeologists, geographers, and linguists, explore the use of new digital technologies for the study of early colonial Latin America.
Dr Murrieta-Flores recommends:

If you are interested in Mesoamerican or Latin American Colonial History and Archaeology, I would highly recommend:

Barbara Mundy’s *The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City*. This is a fascinating and beautifully illustrated new interpretation of the history of the fall of the Aztec Empire and the continuation of Mesoamerican life during the early colonial period.

Nancy Farriss’ *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise*. This is a classic. Taking an anthropological approach, Nancy Farriss explores the history of colonial Yucatan and the Indigenous Mayan groups, showing the adaptation, contestation and struggle of these societies with the colonial power.

If you like novels, I would highly recommend *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Marquez. This is an iconic Latin American novel, full of magical realism that explores the engaging story of several generations of a single family in a small isolated town.
In the Middle Ages, sugar was a luxury. Today, we each consume thirty-four kilograms of it every single year. Making sugar a staple of western diets was a violent process. In the early sixteenth century, the Spanish transplanted sugar to the Americas and forced enslaved Africans to grow the crop on land seized from Native Americans. A hundred years later, the English pioneered a particularly brutal system of plantation agriculture on Barbados that dramatically increased the output of sugar and made it accessible to ordinary people. By the eighteenth century, hundreds of thousands of enslaved Africans toiled in the Caribbean cane fields to satiate sweet-toothed Britons’ demand for sugar, having been torn from their homes and forcibly transported across the Atlantic by slave traders. Sugar was truly a ‘blood-stained’ crop.

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Ireland was subject to the English crown but not tightly governed, and the English barons who held land there could also rule with little regard for their overlord—until King John decided to stamp royal authority on all those regions that had so far escaped it. The most effective way of signalling his intent was to mint a new coin. A penny was the daily wage of an unskilled labourer, so almost everyone would handle coinage regularly. This made it a potent tool of mass communication. On the coin, John looms out of his triangular frame (representing Ireland), wearing his crown and wielding his sceptre, surrounded by his name written in governmental Latin: rex Johannes. Coins like this were used to pay heavy royal taxes and the fines proffered by barons to access royal justice, take possession of their inheritances, and choose their own marriage partners. John's drive to impose royal authority across his lands and raise vast sums of money helped to foment discontent—discontent that was to lead, in 1215, to rebellion and Magna Carta.
Dr Ambler’s Recommendations...

BBC Radio 4’s In Our Time provides many riveting, expert discussions on historical topics – one of my favourites is the episode on Melisende, Queen of Jerusalem. The discussion explores not only the society, culture and architecture of the crusader states in the twelfth century, but also how a female ruler could exercise her power. Find it here.

Melisende probably commissioned the Melisende Psalter. Both the bindings and illuminations are stunning.

Robert Bartlett’s The Hanged Man (2006) is a seminal introduction to medieval history. It explores the case of a Welsh rebel, William Cragh, who was hanged by an English lord, pronounced dead, but ultimately survived to tell his tale. Bartlett explores the testimonies of those caught up in this event – a workman, a noblewoman, a bishop, and others, including Cragh himself – using these to explore what life was like in the Middle Ages, and how people comprehended this apparently miraculous event.

A Knight’s Tale (2001) starring Heath Ledger and Paul Bettany, is a rare example of a film about the Middle Ages loved by medievalists! It is inspired by the real-life story of the twelfth-century tournament champion William Marshal, but is set in the age of the Hundred Years War. Telling the story of a servant who becomes a knightly hero, it puts aside strict accuracy to convey the party atmosphere of the medieval tournament, and the brutal excitement of the joust.

Christine de Pizan’s Book of the City of Ladies
A common misconception of the Middle Ages is that women generally played little public role in society – this is blown out of the water by Christine de Pizan’s Book of the City of Ladies. Christine was one of the greatest writers, theorists and commentators of her day, and earned a living from her work. In the early 1400s, she struck out against the misogyny of her day by imagining in this book a city populated only by women. She describes here all the many heroic and virtuous women from history, legend, the Bible, and her own times who should be held as an example to all.

There are various manuscripts of Christine’s book – my favourites image is Christine writing, next to Minerva (above) – you can explore this image and more on the British Library website.
President of the Ivory Coast, Félix Houphouët-Boigny (right), and First Lady of the Ivory Coast, Marie-Thérèse Houphouët-Boigny (center), arrive at the White House for a dinner in their honor; President John F. Kennedy walks up stairs at left. Photograph: Abbie Rowe. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.

The Centre for War and Diplomacy provides the historical context and strategic analysis to inform understanding of today’s geopolitical challenges. Based in the Department of History at Lancaster University, the CWD brings together colleagues from across the Arts and Social Sciences, including History, Digital Humanities, Politics, Philosophy and Religion, and English Literature and Creative Writing, and welcomes non-resident and visiting fellows from across the world. The CWD supports the MA in International and Military History at Lancaster, as well as a flourishing community of doctoral students. It also hosts a programme of conferences and seminars, and the War & Diplomacy Podcast.
For reading, Dr Wyss recommends *The Quiet American* by Graham Greene. The novel follows a British journalist in Vietnam at the fall of French colonial rule, just as America becomes involved. Greene draws on his own experience as a war correspondent for *The Times* in Indochina. His predictions on American policy, voiced through the character of Alden Pyle, are particularly prescient.

He also recommends the *The War and Diplomacy* podcasts:

https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/centre-for-war-and-diplomacy/news/
Made of bronze, it is decorated with swirling colours of enamel that echo local British artistic traditions, while inscribed along its rim are the names of forts that stand on Hadrian’s Wall. Amongst the bronze vessels that survive from Roman Britain, this is one of only a few that bear the names of these forts – and the only so far discovered to be decorated in a ‘Celtic’ way. This blending of styles speaks of the vibrant, hybrid culture of Roman Britain and of the Roman Empire more broadly.

But what was the purpose of these objects? Did soldiers collect them as souvenirs of service on Hadrian’s Wall? Or did they hold a deeper significance? Several of these vessels have been found in religious settings. Why might soldiers give these pans to their gods? Asking these questions helps historians to understand the nature of life for soldiers on the far borders of the Roman Empire, almost two thousand years ago.

This is the Staffordshire Moorlands Pan. It was created in the second century AD, when Britain was part of the Roman Empire.

Made of bronze, it is decorated with swirling colours of enamel that echo local British artistic traditions, while inscribed along its rim are the names of forts that stand on Hadrian’s Wall. Amongst the bronze vessels that survive from Roman Britain, this is one of only a few that bear the names of these forts – and the only so far discovered to be decorated in a ‘Celtic’ way. This blending of styles speaks of the vibrant, hybrid culture of Roman Britain and of the Roman Empire more broadly. But what was the purpose of these objects? Did soldiers collect them as souvenirs of service on Hadrian’s Wall? Or did they hold a deeper significance? Several of these vessels have been found in religious settings. Why might soldiers give these pans to their gods? Asking these questions helps historians to understand the nature of life for soldiers on the far borders of the Roman Empire, almost two thousand years ago.
The Ruskin

The Ruskin: Library, Museum and Research Centre

Home to the leading collection of works by the epoch-defining writer, artist and social thinker John Ruskin (1819–1900) and his circle.

Based on Lancaster University’s campus, The Ruskin holds the most extensive collection of Ruskin’s works in the world, containing thousands of paintings and drawings, books and manuscripts, and prints and photographs. Through research, interpretation and preservation, working with visitors and specialists across the world, The Ruskin inspires creativity and promotes debate across the arts and sciences on culture, heritage, landscape and the environment.

Explore the collection online: https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/the-ruskin/
Dr Deborah Sutton

Senior Lecturer in Modern South Asian History

Dr Sutton's research work explores the extraordinary capacity of digital technologies to rethink the resonances and meanings of the past in the present. She co-created a dedicated software platform, safarnama, that allows complex heritage to be mapped out across Indian urban space and explored using a mobile phone (the safarnama app is available from the Google Play Store). She has recently begun an AHRC-funded project that will use a digitised corpus of texts and cartographic materials to explore water scarcity in Coimbatore in South India.

Teaching

HIST105: Histories of Violence: How Imperialism Made the Modern World
HIST279: Gandhi and the End of Empire in India, 1885-1948
HIST370: 'These Beastly Obscenities': Monuments, Images and Antiquities in Imperial India

Dr Sutton recommends:

The Imperial and Global Forum is very good and has some excellent opinion pieces.
https://imperialglobalexeter.com/

One of my favourite authors is Nadeem Aslam. He has written a number of wonderful novels about Pakistan (Season of the Rainbirds and The Blind Gardener), the UK (Maps for Lost Lovers) and Afghanistan (The Wasted Vigil). Aslam’s novels are written with an extraordinary sense of culture and history.

Can you tell us a bit about your background and interests?

I have started my undergraduate journey a little later than most at the age of 23. I received offers for history of art degree programmes when I initially applied to university during sixth form, but I chose to gain professional experience in roles centred around accounts and finance. I decided to return to academia and pursue my love for history last year in order to further my academic capabilities. So far I have found the course challenging yet stimulating; I am really enjoying my time as a student at Lancaster.

How did you end up deciding to study history at university?

History was an easy choice for me. I studied arts subjects at sixth form, and also actively participated within my school history department as the editor of the history society magazine.

What is the biggest surprise involved with studying history at degree level? How does it differ from A-level?

Undergraduate study is undoubtedly a step up from A-level. I often felt that during my A-levels studies I was being taken through the history as a ‘story’. The lectures at undergraduate level, however, tend to focus more on historical themes and debates, leaving it up to you to understand the historiography. In this sense, degree-level demands more independent study and self-motivation to complete the work that is expected and to fully understand the content. There is an abundance of support available across the university to assist in this transition to ensure that you are feeling reassured and encouraged as a valued member of the history department, such as your academic tutor and the course administrator among many others. As I had been out of academia for a while when I started my undergraduate course, I was able to get in touch with the Learning Developer for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Joanne was able to discuss any reservations that I was feeling in an informal manner, and provided me with some strategies to guarantee that I got the most out of my first year.

And what is the most rewarding thing about it?

The most rewarding aspect of undergraduate study is undoubtedly the freedom which comes with it. You are able to manage your own time and you are completely in charge of when and how you want to study. I have also found the first year module content is incredibly stimulating and varied. Your first year offers the opportunity to explore historical periods which you may not have had the chance to study before. For me, the initial topics centred around the rise and fall of the Ancient Roman Empire were incredibly insightful given that I was completely new to ancient history, and knew very little of the period prior to starting the course.

Waste advice would you give somebody who wants to do a history degree? What would it be good to know before you start?

I would recommend spending some time honing in on the period(s) which interest you the most prior to university. This will help you to choose the modules that you will really engage with – after all you will spend quite a lot of time reading about it! The core history module, From Ancient to Modern: History and Historians, is fantastic if you’re still unsure as it does exactly what it says on the tin: it takes you right through from ancient and medieval history, to the early modern period, and right through to modern topics. If a topic sparks your interest you have the chance to explore it further through the optional modules available in your second and third years.

What’s been your favourite topic of study so far?

My historical interests rest firmly within the early modern period, so the module on Reform, Rebellion, and Reason: Britain, 1500-1800 has been my favourite so far. The module started out looking at The English Reformation and the numerous changes in the religious landscape which I found hugely enjoyable. Being able to explore the period through a variety of written and artefactual primary and secondary sources was very compelling, and motivated me to carry out some further research around the period to utilise in my coursework. I am really looking forward to specialising even more in the early modern period in my second year.
Dr Corinna Peniston-Bird
Senior Lecturer in Gender and Cultural History

You will have the opportunity to learn how to work with a wide range of primary sources from coins to print to film. In this still from *Went the Day Well?* (1942), two Land Girls are shown firing at the enemy in a scene all the more striking given the adamant official opposition to women bearing arms.

Recommendations...

“Not history” but provocative, in a good way, on gender study: Criado-Perez, C. (2019). *Invisible women: Exposing data bias in a world designed for men*

This is another really good read on gender: Douglas, S. (1994). *Where the girls are: Growing up female with the mass media*

Dr Peniston-Bird’s research focuses on femininities and masculinities at war. Her work on oral testimonies is centred on the relationship between memories and cultural representations. She is currently working on gendered commemoration, with a particular focus on British war memorials.

Teaching

HIST348: Gender Identities in the People’s War: Experiences, Representations, Memories
Modern History

It comes from the recent past, but encapsulates what is perhaps the central narrative of United States History. It is a picture of a strong, confident, friendly African-American woman, welcoming viewers into her home as equals on the presumption that they will return her respect. But images like this should not be taken for granted. A closer look reveals that the portrait hanging behind her is of Thomas Jefferson, third President and author of the US Declaration of Independence (1776), where he wrote that ‘all men are created equal.’ Jefferson, however, was a slaveholder who may have fathered several children with Sally Hemings, one of his slaves. The photo thus invites several questions. What exactly did Jefferson mean when he used the word ‘men’? Did he mean only wealthy, white men? Did he include women? Answering those questions has been a central preoccupation of Americans ever since Jefferson’s Declaration.

Dr Tim Hickman
Senior Lecturer in Cultural History

Dr Hickman is a cultural historian whose research is in the literary and visual culture of the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Teaching

HIST270: The History of the United States, 1789–1865
HIST271: The History of the United States, 1865-1989

This is Joyce N. Boghosian’s official portrait of Michelle Obama as ‘First Lady’ (2009)

Photograph by Joyce N. Boghosian (2009)
I chose Lancaster because I got a feeling on the open day that it would be the right place for me. Walking around campus, and the students themselves, gave me the impression that I would love to study here. Combine this with the strong academic standing for my subject and high student satisfaction and I was persuaded.

My favourite part of the year so far was the last week of Michaelmas term. Despite having essays and exams due, we were all able to celebrate the end of first term with a fun football social, the college winter ball and a fun night on the last Friday.

HIST100 this year has been really useful; studying such a variety of history has made me consider studying periods of history I had never thought about before and has definitely sparked new interests which I will be able to explore next year. The module has also given all first year students a whistlestop tour of the department's staff and so is valuable in helping us with which modules we want to pick for second year. Most of the help I have received this year has been through my seminar tutor for HIST100 - she has really helped me improve this year. The Part I coordinator is also very helpful for general advice.

Another crucial service that I and all other history students rely on is the library. This stocks the vast majority of books we need for our courses and if there is a book that they don't have, it is really easy to get them to order it, or get you an online copy. The fact that many of the resources are digitised has been really helpful for me as I much prefer reading books online than having a hard copy.

Sam Barker
First-year Student, History Department