

MA British First World War Studies



This programme is unique in its focus on the Great War. It provides an opportunity to study in depth this most compelling and controversial conflict. It focuses on the challenges posed by the war to the British state, the British Army and British society and on the evolving ways in which these challenges were met – or not met.

The Department of History was ranked first in the country in the Research Excellence Framework 2014.

Course fact file

Type of Course: Taught

Study Options: Part time

Duration: 2 years part-time

Start date: September

Related courses

[Military History MA by distance learning \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/history/military-history.aspx\)](/postgraduate/courses/taught/history/military-history.aspx)

[World War I: Aviation Comes of Age \(/postgraduate/courses/moocs/aviation.aspx\)](/postgraduate/courses/moocs/aviation.aspx)

[MA History of Warfare \(/postgraduate/courses/taught/history/history-of-warfare.aspx\)](/postgraduate/courses/taught/history/history-of-warfare.aspx)

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Details

The First World War, or Great War, has been described as 'the seminal event of the twentieth century.' In Britain the war is often regarded as the worst event in our history. The dominant perception is still captured by A.J.P. Taylor's famous phrase: 'brave, helpless soldiers; blundering, obstinate generals; nothing achieved.'

The purpose, conduct and outcome of the First World War are inevitably compared to its disadvantage with those of the Second World War, what Studs Terkel called 'the good war', the inevitable and heroic struggle against evil and tyranny, a morality tale with a happy ending. At the root of these perceptions are, of course, the scale of the First World War's casualties, which were unprecedented and – happily – remain unique in British history. It is the casualties that make the war so fascinating and appalling. Even before the guns ceased firing, there were attempts to explain how such a human catastrophe came about and why the scale of loss was so great. Popular explanations have often seemed content with blaming the quality of military leadership – especially British military leadership. This MA programme rests on the belief that a tragedy as great as the First World War deserves less superficial analysis.

To gain a masters degree you will need to complete 180 credits. You will study six core modules (descriptions below).

- Brass Hats and Frock Coats: British Strategy in the Great War
- Operational Development in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front, 1914-1918
- Training, Tactics and Technology in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front, 1914-1918
- Bullets and Billets: The British Experience of the First World War
- Research Skills: Methodology and Sources
- Research Skills: Dissertation Preparation

Each module is worth 20 credits and assessed by an essay of not more than 4,000 words. You will also complete a supervised 15,000-word dissertation, worth 60 credits.

If you become unable to complete the full programme, you may be eligible for an interim award: a Postgraduate Certificate (after successful completion of 60 credits); or a Postgraduate Diploma (after successful completion of 120 credits).

Modules

You will study six core modules before completing your dissertation, which will be based on a substantial and sustained investigation of an historical problem – of your choice – relating to the First World War, undertaken in the light of current knowledge and after an analysis of available primary material. You will receive one-to-one advice and supervision from an expert in your chosen field.

The core modules are as follows:

Brass Hats and Frock Coats: British Strategy in the Great War

The module will analyse the determinants of British strategy during the First World War, paying particular attention to historical, political, economic and diplomatic factors. It also explores the evolution of British strategy under the discipline of events, including the divisions that this produced among the political and military high command. It also looks at the conditions and difficulties of coalition warfare and the extent to which British war aims were fulfilled at the Paris peace conference.

Operational Development in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front, 1914-1918

The module will analyse the methods the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front used to plan and execute battles and how these methods changed over time. Particular attention will be given to the evolution of C3I (Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence), weapons systems and doctrine.

Training, Tactics and Technology in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front, 1914-1918

The module will analyse the recruitment, training and tactical development of the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front during the First World War. Particular attention will be paid to the period of voluntary recruitment (August 1914-January 1916) and the introduction of conscription, the British army's pre-war and wartime methods of training and tactical preparation, and the impact of new technologies on training, tactics and weapons systems.

Bullets and Billets: The British Experience of the First World War

This module analyses the war experience of different groups and classes including the combat soldier and his officer, the military commander, the civilian and women. Particular attention will be paid to issues of discipline, morale and dissent, and their management.

Research Skills: Methodology and Sources

This module introduces you to the historiography of the First World War and to a variety of different research methodologies and research sources. A series of case-studies will focus on key research sources (published and unpublished) for the British experience of the First World War, including: the Official History; the diaries, memoirs, letters and autobiographies of contemporary actors; archival sources, especially the National Archives of the United Kingdom: Public Record Office.

Research Skills: Dissertation Preparation

The module introduces you to the techniques necessary for the location of literature and sources relevant to your dissertation research. You will become familiar with the relevant bibliographical aids for the location of secondary and primary sources, and will be introduced to a range of libraries, archives and data sources.

Fees and funding

We charge an annual tuition fee. Fees for 2015/16 are as follows:

- Home/EU: £3,105 part-time

As this is a part-time programme, the above fee is for year one only and tuition fees will also be payable in year two of your programme.

Tuition fees can either be paid in full or by instalments.

Eligibility for Home/EU or Overseas fees can be verified with Admissions. Learn more about [fees for international students \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/finance/fees.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/finance/fees.aspx).

Learn more about [fees and funding \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx).

Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's [Postgraduate Funding Database \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx).

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

Birmingham Masters Scholarship Scheme

For 2015 entry the University has [224 new £10,000 scholarships available for Masters students from under-represented groups \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/funding/Birmingham-Masters-Scholarship-Scheme.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/funding/Birmingham-Masters-Scholarship-Scheme.aspx). These scholarships have been jointly funded by the British Government; the allocation of the awards, which is the fourth highest in the UK, further cements Birmingham's place amongst the very best higher education institutions for postgraduate study. The application deadline is 31 July 2015.

Entry requirements

A good Honours degree in History or an equivalent discipline. Other professional experience or qualifications comparable to degree standard will also be considered. Examples might include law, accountancy, management, or published work in a relevant field. Every submission is considered on its own merits.

Learn more about [entry requirements \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx)

International students

Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our [country pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx>) to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx>)

How to apply

Before you make your application

You may wish to **register your interest with us** (<https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate>) to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx>)

Apply now (<https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CALo63.htm>)

Related news and events

World War 1: Aviation Comes of Age MOOC (</schools/historycultures/departments/history/news/2013/mooc.aspx>)

Birmingham teams up with BBC to offer online WW1 course (</research/activity/warstudies/news/2014/bbc-mooc.aspx>)

'World War One: Aviation Comes of Age' MOOC (</research/activity/warstudies/news/2015/bbc-mooc.aspx>)

Learning and teaching

This programme is delivered through our **Centre for War Studies** (</research/activity/warstudies/index.aspx>), so you'll be taught by academics who are experts in their field.

Each of the taught modules will be delivered through three intense Saturday Schools, held on the University of Birmingham campus between 10am and 6pm. The Saturday Schools will involve lectures, student presentations, student-led discussion and small group workshops. Prior to the start of each module students will receive a Module Handbook, detailing teaching arrangements and providing a full reading list

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx>) which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU)** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/inseasonal/index.aspx>).

Related research

- **Centre for War Studies** (</research/activity/warstudies/index.aspx>)

Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

Historically, over 94% of our History students have been in employment or further study within six months of graduating.

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