

## MA Contemporary History



This programme allows you to benefit from the expertise of a very large number of modern and contemporary historians at Birmingham. It approaches contemporary history as a global phenomenon and offers a wide variety of modules on world history in the twentieth century. You will be able to specialise on many areas of British, American, African, South Asian, Middle East and European History. The MA in Contemporary History also provides ideal preparation for PhD research.

**[Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham was awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx)**  
<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx>

### Course fact file

**Type of Course:** Taught

**Study Options:** Full time, part time

**Duration:** 1 year full-time, 2 years part-time

**Start date:** September

### Related courses

**[History MA by distance learning \(/postgraduate/courses/distance/history/history.aspx\)](/postgraduate/courses/distance/history/history.aspx)**

**[MRes Twentieth Century British History \(/postgraduate/courses/combined/history/C20th-british-history.aspx\)](/postgraduate/courses/combined/history/C20th-british-history.aspx)**

### Contact

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### Details

The programme is designed to provide you with a solid grounding in the major outlines of recent world history, along with a wide choice of specialised modules to suit your own interest. By combining breadth with depth, it provides a framework within which you will be able to develop both your empirical and conceptual knowledge of the recent past.

You will study two core modules which use some of the best recent historical writing to cover the period since 1914:

- Mass Society and Modernity 1914-1945 (Autumn term)
- Globalisation since 1945 (Spring term)

You will also take two 'skills and methods' modules:

- Historical Methods (Autumn term)
- Dissertation Preparation (Spring term)

You will also choose optional modules, one per term, or a double special subject module over two terms. These are chosen from a wide range of modules available both in and beyond the History department.

You will complete the programme with a 15,000-word dissertation.

### Why study this course

This programme will provide you with knowledge and understanding of European and world history in the 20th century. The programme will also equip you with the research skills to read and assess relevant primary sources, the ability to carry out independent research and to write up your research. By the end of the programme you will have acquired the skills and the knowledge to progress to a PhD.



Natalie Hill "Studying for the MA Contemporary History has been one of the most challenging and rewarding years of my life. The course is widespread and varied, and has pushed me to write some of my best work..."



Patrick Longdon "The MA far exceeded my expectations. The selection of modules meant that I could pursue an eclectic mix of disciplines and specialisms in the first two terms, which allowed me to decide upon a fruitful and fascinating dissertation topic for the final term. The body of work I put together over the year could not have prepared me better for my doctoral studies... I am proud to say that the MA in Contemporary History at the University of Birmingham was fundamental in allowing me to pursue my passion for history further"

## Modules

You will study four core modules:

### Mass Society and Modernity, 1914–45

The module examines various aspects of the first half of the twentieth century, focussing particularly—but not only—on Europe and America. It examines the rise of mass society and modernity as social and cultural phenomena; the rise of mass politics in Europe, America, and beyond; the phenomenon of mass statelessness; the main strands of totalitarian ideology and liberal democracy; mass mobilisation in war and politics; economic and military conflict; and the growing ascendancy of the United States.

### Globalisation since 1945

The module examines various aspects of global history in the second half of the 20th century. It takes its cue from a growing literature which sees 'globalisation' as a key feature of global history over the last half century. It will begin by examining the key institutions of a 'new world order' built after the Second World War; in particular, those connected to the United Nations and Bretton Woods. It will then explore the key actors in the processes of globalisation: inter-governmental organisations; nation states (especially, the USA, the USSR and the non-aligned); multinational corporations and non-governmental organisations.

### Historical Methods

This module introduces you to the major developments in historical approaches since the Second World War and to some of the major schools of, or tendencies in, historical research such as the Annales School, the English historians' response to Marxism, cultural history, the linguistic turn, gender, history of science and critical social theory (Geertz and Foucault). The focus is on the application of the ideas to historical practice then and now.

### Dissertation Preparation

This module covers what the dissertation project will entail. You will be expected to produce a short dissertation proposal for submission and you will be allocated a tutor who will supervise your dissertation preparation work. You will have one-to-one meetings with your supervisor, but you will also attend available generic sessions on skills run on the Research Skills module and available across the University.

You will then take two optional modules, one per term, or a double special subject module over two terms.

Special subject modules include:

- Activism, Affluence, and Apathy: Citizenship, Politics and Democracy in Post-War Britain
- Britain and Home Front in the Second World War
- British Army on the Western Front
- Building Nations in the 'Bloodlands': A History of Conflict, Occupation, and Independence in East Central Europe ca. 1880-1953
- Facing the Fuhrer and the Duce: British Foreign and Defence Policies Towards the European Dictators 1935-40
- Homelessness in Modern Britain, 1900 to the Present
- Imperialism and the Global Environment: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World
- Mass Media and the Making of Modern Britain
- Of Rice and Men: NGOs and Humanitarianism since 1945
- Planes, Trains, Boats, and Autos: Transporting People (and other things) in Twentieth-Century Britain
- The History of Grand Strategy
- The Russian Revolution
- Where There is Discord: Making Thatcher's Britain

Optional modules available include:

- Blood for Oil? Energy and History in the Global Twentieth-Century
- Britain's Wars of Colonisation and Decolonisation, 1815-1960
- Conflict in the Modern Middle East
- Everyday Life and Survival under Nazi and Soviet Occupation, 1939-1953
- Jewish Religious Responses to the Holocaust
- Hard Rain's Gonna Fall: Culture, Politics, and Society in the Nuclear Age
- Sex and Sexualities in the Modern British World, 1880-1970
- Speaking to the People: Political Communication in Twentieth-Century Britain
- The Costs of War
- The United States and World War II
- Twentieth-Century China in Images and Ideas

You may also choose from modules within the **Department of African Studies and Anthropology** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/taught/cwas/african-modules.aspx>)

## Fees and funding

### 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.

## Entry requirements

You will need an Honours degree in a relevant subject, such as History, Politics, Cultural Studies, normally of an upper second-class standard.

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 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx\)](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 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx\)](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 \(https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate\)](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 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx)

[Apply now \(https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CALo65.htm\)](https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CALo65.htm)

## Learning and teaching

The Contemporary History MA is taught by members of the [Birmingham Centre for Modern and Contemporary History \(/research/activity/moderncontemporary/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/moderncontemporary/index.aspx) (BCMCH), which provides an intellectual forum for academic staff and postgraduates working within the field, and provides a base for research both for its members and in collaboration with other institutions.

BCMCH draws together the expertise of the [School of History and Cultures \(/schools/historycultures/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/index.aspx), the Modern Languages Department, American and Canadian Studies and the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) meaning that you'll be able to gain insight from a range of academics and peers from across the University. It also supports a research seminar series of invited speakers throughout the academic year as well as an annual lecture series and various informal reading groups.

Learning and teaching takes on this course place via seminars, tutorials, reading texts on theory and methods and your own research on primary sources.

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 \(AWAS\) \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx\)](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 \(EISU\) \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/inseasonal/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/inseasonal/index.aspx).

## Related research

- [Centre for Modern and Contemporary History \(/research/activity/moderncontemporary/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/moderncontemporary/index.aspx)

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.

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)

Birmingham's History graduates develop a broad range of transferable skills that are highly valued by a range of employers. These skills include: familiarity with research methods; the ability to manage large quantities of information from diverse sources; the ability to organise information in a logical and coherent manner; the expertise to write clearly and concisely and to tight deadlines; critical and analytical ability; the capacity for argument, debate and speculation; and the ability to base conclusions on statistical research.

Over the past five years, over 92% of History postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation. Some of our History postgraduates go on to use their studies directly, for example in heritage, museum or archivist work. Others use their transferable skills in a range of occupations from finance to civil service to fundraising. Employers that graduates have gone on to work for include: Alcester Heritage Network; HSBC; KPMG; Ministry of Defence; and the National Trust.