

MA Renaissance, Reformation and Early Modern Studies



This programme combines the approaches of religious, social, cultural and political historians to take a fresh look at early modern history. It is taught by leading scholars whose expertise covers the cultural and religious landscape of the late-medieval world, the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, new world discoveries and the political and cultural worlds of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and Europe. This gives you a rich variety of options, and a wide range of possibilities for your dissertation topic. The programme also offers comprehensive research training opportunities, providing the ideal grounding for going on to undertake a PhD in this area.

[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

[MRes Early Modern History \(/postgraduate/courses/combined/history/early-modern-history.aspx\)](/postgraduate/courses/combined/history/early-modern-history.aspx)

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Details

This programme is run out of the **[Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies \(/research/activity/crems/index.aspx\)](/research/activity/crems/index.aspx)**, one of the most dynamic concentrations of early modern historians in the country. We have more than half a dozen full-time academic staff with expertise in the period c.1500-1800 in History alone, with geographical coverage including local (West Midlands) history, Germany, Italy, and the wider world. CREMS also has excellent links with staff in English, the Shakespeare Institute, History of Art, and elsewhere.

This MA is designed to give you a firm grounding in current themes and debates in early modern history, with a focus on the religious and cultural history of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain and Europe. A wide range of options allow you to specialise in an area of your choice, and comprehensive training opportunities will help to prepare you to embark upon a significant research project. In recent years, scholars have moved beyond a traditional, narrow concern with elite religion and high politics to explore the cultural, material and social histories of the early modern period, including the Renaissance and the Reformation.

The whole subject has becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, with researchers drawing on the insights of anthropology, sociology, cultural and literary studies, art history, and musicology, as well as history. Topics such as violence, clothing, gender, exploration, art, drama, music and material culture have come to be seen as crucial to an understanding of the transformations that were taking place. These new approaches are integral to the teaching and research training provided on this course. There is also an annual field trip, designed to explore key themes and issues outside of the classroom, in the context of key buildings, documents and historical artefacts.

You will study two core modules (full descriptions available below):

- Religious Reformations in Early Modern Britain and Europe
- Research Methods and Skills

You will also choose an optional special subject module and complete a 15,000-word dissertation on an agreed topic which relates to the history of any of the areas covered by the course.

Why study this course

Birmingham's **Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies** ([/research/activity/crems/index.aspx](http://research/activity/crems/index.aspx)) (CREMS) makes it the ideal place to study early modern history. There is a thriving and active community of postgraduates, a lively research seminar programme, and excellent connections to early modern expertise in other schools and departments. The West Midlands and Birmingham are rich in associations with the history of the early modern period. The regional cathedrals (Lichfield, Gloucester and Worcester) and parish churches still reflect many of the religious changes of the period; the country houses and castles (such as Kenilworth and Warwick) offer fascinating insights into its material culture; and nearby Warwick and Stratford Upon Avon contain wonderful examples of early modern domestic and religious architecture.

Birmingham has excellent resources for this programme. The library is particularly strong in early modern history, religious history and local history materials, and the university's Special Collections contain a wide range of early printed books, especially sixteenth and seventeenth century sermon material. CREMS also provides students with access to cutting edge electronic resources, including Early English Books Online, all four parts of State Papers Online, and the Cecil Papers. The microfilm resources include a large collection of early Reformation 'flugschriften'. Students also have use of the Shakespeare Institute's excellent research library in Stratford-upon-Avon, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust library and Record Office, and the on-campus resources of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. Birmingham is also centrally located in the UK, within easy reach of archives in London, Oxford, and elsewhere.

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[Transcript \(/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/history/crems.aspx\)](http://accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/history/crems.aspx)

Modules

You will study two core modules:

Religious Reformations in Early Modern Britain and Europe

In the first semester (20 credits) this module offers a broad introduction to key early modern religious and political developments, followed in the second semester (20 credits) by a focus on the social and cultural impact of the Reformations. You will have the opportunity to explore the ferment of religious ideas and the ways in which these shaped many areas of early modern life, ranging from community relations and the persecution of witches, to popular and unpopular religion, art and piety, and rites of passage.

Research Methods and Skills

This provides training in research skills relating to studying sixteenth- and seventeenth-century history. Training is available in historical method, research, languages, IT, palaeography (reading early modern handwriting) and the use of a wide variety of types of early modern document relating to English local history. Some of these sessions will be provided at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office in Stratford-upon-Avon, and you will have the chance to work with the original documents.

You will also choose one optional special subject from a selection, subject to availability. The following are examples of Special Subjects (please note that not all are available every year):

Protestants, Papists and Puritans: Religious Change under Elizabeth I and James I

This offers the opportunity to study in detail the processes of religious change in 'Jacobethan' England, as well as the impact of change on religious identities and the lived experience of religion.

Histories of Hate: Fear and Loathing in Early Modern Europe

This looks at the ways in which the religious changes of the early modern period may or may not have contributed to the ferocious persecution and prosecution of a number of social groups and behaviours.

A History of the Tudors in 100 Objects

This examines a rich body of surviving objects from the Tudor period to explore how key themes in the study of early modern history were experienced by people in everyday life.

The English Civil War and Local Society

This explores political and religious changes in early Stuart England and the effects these had on local societies during and after the English Civil War.

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

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 \(https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CAL069.htm\)](https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CAL069.htm)

Learning and teaching

The [Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies \(/research/activity/crems/index.aspx\)](/research/activity/crems/index.aspx) (CREMS) provides a focus for research in this area at Birmingham. Its leading members have a high international research profile, making this one of Britain's largest clusters of expertise in this area. The Centre also has a regular seminar series, which will support and inform your learning. This includes an annual lecture (past speakers have included Diarmaid MacCulloch, Peter Lake, Mark Greengrass, Andrew Pettegree, Ulinka Rublack and Susan Brigden) and an ongoing programme of conferences.

CREMS also has particularly close links with the [Shakespeare Institute \(/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx\)](/schools/edacs/departments/shakespeare/index.aspx) in Stratford-upon-Avon which provides a focus for a full range of seminars, conferences and research activities related to the study of the literary history of Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

During your course, you will receive thorough training in research methods relating to the history of this period, including instruction in palaeography to enable you to read original manuscripts, training in various languages as required, and a regular seminar that explores interdisciplinary approaches to the theory and practice of research.

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 Reformation and Early Modern Studies \(/research/activity/crems/index.aspx\)](/research/activity/crems/index.aspx)

Related staff

[Dr Elaine Fulton \(/staff/profiles/history/fulton-elaine.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/history/fulton-elaine.aspx)

[Professor George Lukowski \(/staff/profiles/history/lukowski-george.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/history/lukowski-george.aspx)

[Dr Margaret Small \(/staff/profiles/history/small-marga.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/history/small-marga.aspx)

[Professor Richard Cust \(/staff/profiles/history/cust-richard.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/history/cust-richard.aspx)

[Dr Tara Hamling \(/staff/profiles/history/hamling-tara.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/history/hamling-tara.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.

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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.

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