Student views

Carla Aloè - PhD Italian Studies 2011-2014

I have just started my 2nd year as a PhD student at the University of Birmingham and I am enjoying my time here even more. There is a vibrant research community in Italian Studies, which organizes plenty of conferences and events that I am very happy to participate in. The libraries have good Italian literature sections (Main Library, Barber Institute of Fine Art and Art Library) and my supervisors are very helpful. This year I have had the opportunity to improve my teaching skills as a teaching assistant and the university also gave me the possibility to develop my research outside the Uk through a Universitas 21 scholarship in Canada. Thanks to the PGMSA (Postgraduate and Mature Students Association) on campus, I am in contact with PG students working in different departments and schools, and can share my experiences and make new friendships in a convivial atmosphere.

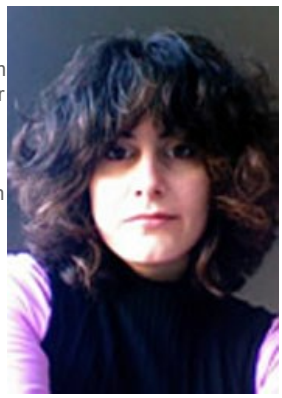
Silvio Carta - PhD Italian Studies 2007-2012

I would absolutely recommend a postgraduate degree at Birmingham University, as studying Italian Studies here was a tremendous experience. During my doctoral studies I took part in several postgraduate seminars, conferences and workshops. I have learned to give presentations, developed good research skills, and gained experience in teaching and tutoring. As small group teacher, I have taught undergraduate students, and have very much enjoyed this experience, including the preparation work and delivery. I have worked with Dr Clodagh Brook on Italian Cinema, especially ethnographic and documentary film, and both my thesis advisor and the support staff have helped me along the way, both in my research and in overcoming difficulties such as studying in a foreign country and language. It turned out to be a very positive and rewarding experience, a challenging professional development for a future career in academia, and I have spent much of my time enjoying what I like to do.

Dr Alex Standen - PhD in Italian Studies 2008-2011

My thesis examined contemporary author Dacia Maraini's political commitment through her engagement with the issue of gender violence. The four years of my PhD were amongst the most stimulating, challenging and enjoyable that I have known. Being part of a large and active postgraduate community was one of the key factors in my experience: family and friends warned me before I began that researching would be a solitary existence, but I found it quite the contrary. Birmingham offers a huge number of opportunities for its doctoral researchers, including teaching, training in research skills, joining reading groups, acting as postgraduate representatives and organising and attending conferences. I was also part of a group of students who helped design the new Research Skills module, where I felt that my opinions were really valued. I am now working as a teaching fellow at the University of Auckland, New Zealand; I am in no doubt that my time as a doctoral researcher at Birmingham both influenced my choice to continue working in academia and prepared me extremely well for all the challenges of my new role.

Mariarita Martino - MA Italian Studies: Culture and Communication 2005-2006



I feel privileged to be one of the alumni of the Warwick-Birmingham MA in Italian Studies: Culture and Communication. After studying at the University of Warwick as a Socrates/Erasmus student, I returned to my home university (Siena) to graduate and intending to come back to the UK for a postgraduate programme. I decided to continue my education in the UK, and to go for the joint Warwick - Birmingham MA. The course has an excellent reputation and resources, and both universities are rewarding places to study. As a postgraduate Master student, the Ph.D. was my next objective, and the MA (2005-2006) was an extremely good opportunity to develop intellectual depth in the fields of my current doctorate research. The course is challenging and inspiring, and is guided by a multi-disciplinary team of academic experts who played a significant role for enhancing my career. The intellectual support I have received from the academic staff has been outstanding. The core staff also helped me to manage my time, and organize my research project that is based on different areas of Italian Studies (Film, Literature, Gender and Psychoanalysis). As a prospective teacher (and lecturer) of Italian Studies, I also received an excellent training that allowed me to contribute to the department's teaching community in both universities. The teaching skills I acquired during the MA were crucial in defining my career path as a current postgraduate teaching assistant in the Department of Italian at the University of Warwick. I believe being enrolled in the programme is a unique experience also because I had full access to services and facilities, and I was involved in the academic and extra-academic activities of both universities. I strongly recommend the Warwick-Birmingham MA to all those who want to have a superb graduate experience!

Annunziata Videtta - MA Italian Studies: Culture and Communication 2003-2004

One of the things I enjoyed most about being a student on the Birmingham-Warwick MA was being a full-time member of both universities. This was a real privilege as it meant that I had access to facilities at both institutions - having access to two libraries made a substantial difference when preparing for seminars and writing assignments as it improved the quality of research I was able to undertake. Being a student on a joint MA also had the advantage of being taught by double the number of teaching staff. Each member of staff teaches his/her specialism which not only ensures high-quality teaching, but also provides a broad range of subject areas from Dante to nineteenth-century women's writing. In my view, one of the best things about the education I received on the MA was the sheer breadth of material covered. Whilst the compulsory modules provided me with the opportunity to sample a range of topics and build a solid foundation of knowledge, the more specialised modules, for example teaching Italian as a foreign language, enabled me to focus my studies on particular areas of interest.

The Birmingham-Warwick MA has most definitely influenced my career path. After completing the module Emigrants, Migrants, Immigrants, I went on to write my dissertation on Italian American Women Writers. During my research, I noticed a distinct lack of critical appraisal on the writings of Italian migrants in Britain and upon completing my MA decided to undertake doctoral study in this area.

The MA was a truly inspirational course which proved to be life-changing at the end of the year as my dissertation served as a springboard for my PhD.

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