

American and Canadian Studies and History BA



A Joint Honours degree programme involves the study of two subjects to Honours degree level. If you study a subject in a Joint Honours programme, you work at exactly the same level and to the same academic standard as students taking that subject in a Single Honours programme. Joint Honours students are simply required to choose fewer topics from the range of options available in each half of the programme.

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>

Course fact file

UCAS code: TV71

Duration: 3 Years

Places Available: 8

Applications in 2013: 77

Typical Offer: AAB (**More detailed entry requirements and the international qualifications accepted can be found in the course details (? OpenSection=EntryRequirements)**)

Start date: September

Contact

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School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies (</schools/edacs/index.aspx>)

Department of History (</schools/historycultures/departments/history/index.aspx>)

American and Canadian Studies Centre (</research/activity/acs/index.aspx>)

SATISFACTION*

Details

In this programme, you study half of your modules (60 credits) in American and Canadian Studies (ACS) and half in History (60 credits)

First year

ACS: You take three foundation courses:

- American History to 1890, which includes examination of social, political and cultural themes
- Literature up to 1890, which analyses literary, visual and film texts
- An introduction to Canadian Studies

For more detail on these modules in ACS see **additional information.** (</undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-first.aspx>)

History: The first year is the foundational year in an academic process that will see you progress from being a dependent to an independent learner. You will study modules spanning the early medieval to late modern periods. You can choose either **Discovering the Middle Ages** and **Living in the Middle Ages** or **The Making of the Modern World 1500-1815** and **The Making of the Contemporary World 1815-2000** (20 credits per module). These explore fundamental themes and issues focused on key periods and indicate the kinds of questions historians explore and some of the methods they employ in answering them. You will also study **Practising History (A): Skills in History** (Autumn semester) and **Practising History (B): Approaches to History** (Spring semester), which look more closely at the techniques of the historian and at the nature and evolution of key historical debates.

Second year

ACS: You study history and culture from 1890 to the present and begin to develop your own interests, be these political, sociological, literary or multicultural, by selecting specialist options from a list that includes:

- The African-American Experience
- Musicals
- The CIA and International History
- Film-making practices (which can include some practical training)

For more detail on these modules in ACS see [additional information. \(/undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-final.aspx\)](#)

History: The second year is an intermediate year that builds on the foundations laid in the first year of study. You engage in **Group Research** and extend your historical knowledge through two (20 + 20) subject-specific modules chosen from a wide range of available from **Option A** in the Autumn semester and **Option B** in the Spring.

Third year

ACS: Your final year courses are drawn from a wide range of options including Anti-Americanism, a variety of options exploring cross-cultural themes in American and Canadian History, and including courses in Modern and Contemporary Literature and Film. At the very centre of your studies is a year long project, entitled The Extended Essay, which gives you a chance to develop your own interests in depth. The extended essay differs from other modules and poses a greater challenge, and greater opportunity for personal development and originality. University taught courses provide a syllabus and bibliography, and the assessment generally explores a major theme of the course, sometimes by further recommended reading, or examines comprehensive understanding. The extended essay has quite different objectives. The final year project is the pinnacle of undergraduate education and illustrates skills acquired through years of university study in research conceived and executed independently.

For more detail on these modules in ACS see [additional information. \(/undergraduate/courses/acs/american-canadian-modules-final.aspx\)](#)

History: The third year represents the culmination of undergraduate study and the final stage of your transition to an independent learner. You hone your historical skills in **Advanced Option A** or **Advanced Option B** and you also undertake an in-depth **Special Subject** module, which is chosen from a variety of available subjects. History/Political Science Joint Honours students *only* can choose to substitute the 20+20 credit Special Subject module (Pathway A) with a Joint Honours History Dissertation (20 credits) and a final year History optional module (20 credits) (Pathway B).

For more detail on all History modules see [additional information \(/undergraduate/courses/history/History-modules.aspx\)](#).

Year Abroad

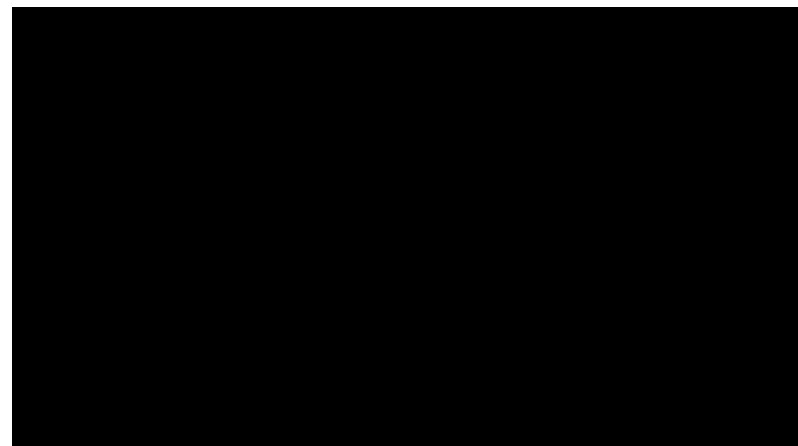
This four year route offers you the additional educational benefit of a year of study in an approved University in Europe or in English speaking countries. Students with grades of 2.1 or above in their first year will be asked to apply for the Year Abroad in the first term of their second year and if successful, will go abroad in their third year. In addition to the tutor support given from the host University, students who choose to take a Year Abroad will be allocated a member of staff from the Department of History who will monitor their progress while overseas through regular contact.

Why study this course

From the analysis of North American film to study of the workings of Washington, from examining the War on Terror to considering slavery and its legacy, from reading modern American literature to exploring the Musical, American and Canadian Studies (ACS) explores the politics and culture of the United States and Canada within the broad context of history, literature and society. At its core, the ACS programme revolves around the study of North American history and literature and then branches out to explore politics, culture and film. These elements combine to give you a rounded understanding of North American life.

- American and Canadian Studies finished in equal second place overall in the last national research assessment exercise.
- American and Canadian Studies was ranked 5th in the UK- Guardian League Tables 2013 and The Complete University Guide 2013.
- There are a wide range of established exchange partners in America and Canada for those spending their third year abroad including University of Alabama, University of British Columbia Vancouver, University of Toronto and University Ottawa.
- We also offer a limited number of student internships (a work placement) through a competitive application process. These give students the opportunity to work with the British American Business Council (the BABC) or a company who have membership of the BABC. Currently, these internships are located in greater Chicago, greater San Francisco, and greater New York City, but, working with the BABC, we hope to broaden this programme out to take in a couple of other US cities in future years.
- Our lecturers have **recommended websites, films and books** for anyone considering choosing American and Canadian studies here

American and Canadian Studies open day talk



History is not a plain narrative of events but an attempt to discover how and why our own world emerged. Our Joint Honours History programmes concentrate on medieval and modern Britain and Europe but they also provide scope to range beyond European boundaries. You have the chance to investigate unfamiliar territory and to question some of the prevailing myths, preconceptions and prejudices that surround history from the Middle Ages to the present day. Joint Honours History is taught within the **Department of History** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/history>), which has an outstanding international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. The size and

quality of the department enables us to offer students a wide range of options across the medieval and modern periods.

- The Department is one of the largest and most diverse in Britain. Its teaching was ranked as excellent in the last official survey and it also has the high official research ranking of '5'. Whatever your interests - whether cultural, social, political, economic or religious history - there is someone in the Department doing your kind of history. Moreover, historians in other departments in the University expand the range of courses on offer, notably in the fields of Byzantine and African history.
- At Birmingham, you will benefit from an intellectually challenging and stimulating environment for your undergraduate studies, focused on ensuring you're a fully supported and active learner. Our unique degrees are designed to provide both academic excellence and vocational development; a balance that's highly sought after by employers in the workplace. The modules are also very flexible, allowing you to specialise more and more as you progress, culminating in a final-year dissertation that allows you to carry out in-depth, individually supervised research into topics of your choice.
- One of the largest departments in the country with 30+ full time academic staff operating on an international level.
- A wide variety of options available including British, European and Global Modules.
- Access to a wide variety of resources from the University's Main Library (which is situated next to the History department) and the Hilton and Styles Libraries in the Arts Building itself.
- The University Special Collections houses some 60,000 rare and early printed books and upwards of 2 million manuscript and archive items.

Joint honours open day talk

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

Dr Craig Blunt delivers an undergraduate open day talk about studying Joint Honours at the university.

Fees and funding

Standard fees (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/courses/fees/standard>) apply

Learn more about **fees and funding** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate/loans.aspx>).

Scholarships

Learn more about our **scholarships and awards** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/undergraduate/funding/index.aspx>).

Entry requirements

Number of A levels required: 3

Typical offer: AAB

Required subjects and grades: A Level History, Medieval History or Ancient History at grade A

Additional information: Other qualifications are considered - learn more about **entry requirements** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/requirements>).

International students:

We welcome applications from international students and invite you to join our vibrant community of over 4500 international students who represent 150 different countries. We accept a range of qualifications, our **country pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx>) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

Depending on your chosen course of study, you may also be interested in the Birmingham Foundation Academy, a specially structured programme for international students whose qualifications are not accepted for direct entry to UK universities. Further details can be found on the **foundation academy web pages** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/foundation-academy/Pathways/index.aspx>).

How to apply

Apply through UCAS at **www.ucas.com** (<http://www.ucas.com/>)

Learn more about **applying** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/ug/courses/apply>).

Key Information Set (KIS)

Key Information Sets (KIS) are comparable sets of information about full- or part-time undergraduate courses and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students.

All KIS information has been published on the Unistats website and can also be accessed via the small advert, or 'widget', below. On the [Unistats website \(http://unistats.direct.gov.uk\)](http://unistats.direct.gov.uk) you are able to compare all the KIS data for each course with data for other courses.

The development of Key Information Sets (KIS) formed part of HEFCE's work to enhance the information that is available about higher education. They give you access to reliable and comparable information in order to help you make informed decisions about what and where to study.

The KIS contains information which prospective students have identified as useful, such as student satisfaction, graduate outcomes, learning and teaching activities, assessment methods, tuition fees and student finance, accommodation and professional accreditation.

Learning and teaching

As a Birmingham student you are part of an academic elite and will learn from world-leading experts. At Birmingham we advocate an enquiry based learning approach, from the outset you will be encouraged to become an independent and self-motivated learner, qualities that are highly sought after by employers. We want you to be challenged and will encourage you to think for yourself.

Your learning will take place in a range of different settings, from scheduled teaching in lectures and small group tutorials, to self-study and peer group learning (for example preparing and delivering presentations with your classmates).

Support

To begin with you may find this way of working challenging, but rest assured that we will enable you to make this transition. You will have access to a comprehensive support system that will assist and encourage you, including personal tutors and welfare tutors who can help with both academic and welfare issues, and a formal transition review during your first year to check on your progress and offer you help for any particular areas where you need support.

Our **Academic Skills Centre** also offers you support with your learning. The centre is a place where you can develop your mathematical, academic writing and general academic skills. It is the centre's aim to help you to become a more effective and independent learner through the use of a range of high-quality and appropriate learning support services. These range from drop-in sessions to workshops on a range of topics including note taking, reading, writing and presentation skills.

From the outset, you will be assigned your own **Personal Tutor** who will get to know you as you progress through your studies, providing academic and welfare advice, encouraging you and offering assistance in any areas you may feel you need extra support to make the most of your potential and your time here at Birmingham.

The **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** will provide you with individual support from an academic writing advisor and postgraduate subject-specialist writing tutors. You will receive guidance on writing essays and dissertations at University-level which can be quite different from your previous experiences of writing. Support is given in a variety of ways, such as small-group workshops, online activities, feedback through email and tutorials.

Student experience

Supporting you throughout your transition to University, offering research opportunities and study skills support and helping you develop and prepare for your post-University careers - our **Arts and Law Student Experience Team** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/index.aspx>) strive to help you get the most out of your academic experience.

Central to Learning and Teaching in the School of History and Cultures at the University of Birmingham is **critical enquiry, debate and self-motivation**, summed up by the term Enquiry Based Learning.

What does this mean for you?

Enquiry-based learning describes an environment in which learning is driven by the shared enquiry of students and tutors. Depending upon the level and the discipline, it can encompass problem-based learning, evidence-based learning, small scale investigations, field work, projects and research.

Enquiry-based learning places you at the centre of your own learning process so that you learn through involvement and ownership and not simply by being a passive recipient of information thrown at you. You will spend time developing comprehension and note-taking skills. History is a subtle and complex subject and the literature you need to master can be demanding and complex. To 'get' it, you need plenty of thinking time. Reading, thinking and analysing for yourself are the most important parts of your degree experience. This approach will enable you to take control of your own learning as you progress through your degree. Moreover, it will encourage you to acquire essential skills that are highly valued by employers: creativity, independence, team-working, goal-setting and problem-solving.

The overall approach we adopt is one of more heavily weighted contact hours in Year 1, but tapering off over years 2 and 3, as you begin to acquire greater confidence in discussion and writing. We are strongly committed to small-group seminar teaching, particularly in the final two years of your degree: you will find that most of your teaching happens not in large, anonymous lectures but in smaller groups of students where you can actively participate in discussion and have the benefit of personal contact with academic staff. In your final year, you will also have individual tuition to help you work on your dissertation. As you progress through the syllabus, you are offered an increasingly wide range of particular subject choices.

Year 1 is highly directed – much of it lies in helping you to acquire a general overview of the medieval, early modern and near contemporary past. The 'Practising History' module introduces you to the key skills needed to study History at degree level and enables you to study select historical episodes. All this will help you make more informed decisions about subject choices in Years 2 and 3. These topics are increasingly specialised and enable you to get to grips with them in real depth. During your first year you will undergo a formal 'transition' review to see how you are getting on and offer you help for any particular areas where you need support.

In **Year 2**, in each term, you have a choice of around 15 Options to study. You will start doing preparatory work for your final-year dissertation, selecting a topic, assessing its feasibility and engaging in preliminary discussions with potential supervisors. The module History in Theory and Practice provides an overview of the evolution of history writing and an introduction to key issues confronting historians today: you will find this helps you reflect on your own historical research. A notable feature of Year 2 is Group Research: about a dozen specialised historical topics for you to research, not, however, as individuals, but on a collective basis. You are divided into groups of 5-6 students, to work as a team, and to produce both individual essays and a group presentation on what you have researched. The capacity to work as part of a team, to know what it is like to have to accommodate yourself to the way others work, is a valuable asset for future employment.

In **Year 3**, there are some 20 Special Subjects for you to choose from, ranging from the early medieval period almost up to the present day, and covering a wide range of British, European and non-European areas. You approach the particular subject not only through reading but also by intensive study of original documents. In addition, there are around a further 14 Final Year Options to choose from in each of the autumn and spring terms. The real centre-piece of the Final Year, however, for most students is their dissertation – a piece of extended writing on a subject of your choice and which requires significant use of archival and other primary source materials. You will have done extensive preparatory work for this in Year 2. In Year 3, you will have a calibrated set of one-to-one consultation sessions with an academic supervisor, who will comment and advise on your drafts. This will be real academic writing and the results are often impressive.

Assessment methods

Studying at degree-level is likely to be very different from your previous experience of learning and teaching. You will be expected to think, discuss and engage critically with the subject and find things out for yourself. We will enable you to make this transition to a new style of learning, and the way that you are assessed during your studies will help you develop the essential skills you need to make a success of your time at Birmingham.

You will be assessed in a variety of ways, and these may be different with each module that you take. You will be assessed through coursework which may take the form of essays, group and individual presentations and formal exams (depending on your chosen degree).

During your first year you will undergo a formal 'transition' review to see how you are getting on and if there are particular areas where you need support. This is in addition to the personal tutor who is based in your school or department and can help with any academic issues you encounter.

At the beginning of each module, you will be given information on how and when you will be assessed for that particular programme of study. You will receive feedback on each assessment within four weeks, so that you can learn from and build on what you have done. You will be given feedback on any exams that you take; if you should fail an exam we will ensure that particularly detailed feedback is made available to enable you to learn for the future.

Employability

American and Canadian Studies

As a student of American and Canadian Studies you will have an excellent opportunity to develop skills that are highly prized by employers, as well as benefiting from the diversity offered by this multidisciplinary degree. Our graduates understand complex information, write clearly and effectively, can build a case for a particular view, strategy or course of action, respect the views of others even if they disagree with them, and generally think for themselves. Your year abroad will be an asset to you when you apply for jobs. Talking about your experiences abroad will help you stand out in job interviews and help to demonstrate your confidence and maturity to employers.

Over 50% of job vacancies advertised for new and recent graduates do not specify a degree subject, so as a graduate of American and Canadian Studies you have a vast potential to enter a wide range of careers, including government, the media, law, accountancy, advertising, human resources and retail management, teaching, research and many other types of employment that offer graduate entry schemes. About 25% of our graduates choose postgraduate study to extend their knowledge of this and similar disciplines, or to prepare for careers such as law and teaching.

Our students start careers with employers including the BBC, Freud Communications, Maverick TV and the National Youth Theatre, in roles as diverse as Business Development Executive, Events Co-ordinator, Financial Analyst, Marketing Executive, Production Assistant, Research Assistant and Youth Mentor.

Whether you have a clear idea of where your future aspirations lie or want to consider the broad range of opportunities available once you have a Birmingham degree, our Careers Network can help you achieve your goal. This is a unique careers guidance service tailored to your academic subject area, offering a specialised team who can give you expert advice. This includes individual careers advice and events to give you insight into the professions and employers of interest to arts graduates. Our Creative careers series is always popular with our students, and features events with employers and professionals from areas such as advertising, PR and communications, careers in journalism and writing, and careers in the theatre.

We also hold events covering careers in teaching, event management, marketing and working with charities; our internship officer develops links with local arts organisations to create some amazing opportunities for students; and you can even apply for our Global Challenge to work overseas on an expenses paid placement during your summer vacation.

History

As a History student you will have an excellent opportunity to develop skills that are attractive to employers, including self management and the abilities to research and analyse complex information, work independently and as part of a team, and communicate judgments and arguments articulately.

Over 50% of job vacancies advertised for new and recent graduates do not specify a degree subject, and our graduates have gone on to careers in accountancy, charity work, housing, human resources, international development, law, marketing, media, publishing, politics, retail management and teaching. Central and local government and the public services also attract History graduates, notably the civil service, NHS management, the police and armed services. About 23% of our graduates pursue postgraduate study to specialise in an area of history and cultures of interest to them, or to prepare for careers such as law and teaching.

Whether you have a clear idea of where your future aspirations lie or want to consider the broad range of opportunities available once you have a Birmingham degree, our **Careers Network** can help you achieve your goal. This is a unique careers guidance service tailored to your academic subject area, offering a specialised team who can give you expert advice.

Last year around 200 employers visited the University, enabling students to meet them and to learn about skills through employer-led workshops. Throughout the academic year we also hold a number of alumni events, careers talks and other initiatives that are designed to answer our students' careers questions and help them forge useful contacts outside the university.

History alumni profiles



There was so much opportunity to explore and become the person that you want to be!



Jennifer Gardner
BA History 2011



Extra-curricular activities

To enhance your career prospects even further, you will need to think about engaging in some extra-curricular activities while you're at university to broaden your skills and your network of contacts. This can include the many societies at the Guild of Students and also the many voluntary opportunities offered with local arts organisations. Our employer-endorsed award-winning **Personal Skills Award** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/careers/psa.aspx>) (PSA) recognises your extra-curricular activities, and provides an accredited employability programme designed to improve your career prospects.

Our College of Arts and Law **undergraduate research scholarship scheme**

(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/studentexperience/urs/index.aspx>) enables interested students to work on a current academic research project being run by one of the College's academic researchers. Undergraduate research scholars gain work experience over the summer after their first or second year and have the chance to develop skills in both collaborative and independent research.



Cultural Internships

Our innovative **Cultural Internships** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/culture/volunteering/regionally.aspx>) offer graduates the opportunity for a six month paid internship at a leading cultural institution in the West Midlands. These internships are a unique opportunity to learn fundamental, transferable business and interpersonal skills, through experience of real work in an established cultural institution. Our current partners include Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham REP, Birmingham Royal Ballet, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust and the Library of Birmingham. We have plans to expand the scheme to include our own major cultural assets, such as Winterbourne House, the Lapworth Museum, and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. This scheme will give you professional experience to set you apart in a competitive graduate market.

We also offer voluntary work which complements your studies by helping you gain practical experiences in occupational settings while contributing back to society. This can bring new skills that will be useful throughout your future and can make a positive impact on your learning whilst at university. Volunteering enables you to develop skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, self-confidence and self-discipline all of which can be transferred into your studies.

Your Birmingham degree is evidence of your ability to succeed in a demanding academic environment. Employers target Birmingham students for their drive, diversity, communication and problem-solving skills, their team-working abilities and cultural awareness, and our graduate employment statistics have continued to climb at a rate well above national trends. If you make the most of the wide range of services you will be able to develop your career from the moment you arrive.

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See the full details at
UNISTATS.