

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA Contemporary History and Politics (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip, PG Cert
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home school/other teaching departments	School of Historical Studies (home) School of Social Sciences
Location of delivery	Central London, online
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September, January
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	<i>October start:</i> TMACOHIP_C (on-campus study) TMACOHMX (flexible study) TMACOHON (online study) <i>January start:</i> TMAHI_PJ_C (on-campus study)
HECoS Code	100310 100491
Start date of programme	Autumn 2000
Date of programme approval	Summer 2000
Date of last programme amendment approval	May 2023
Valid for academic entry year	2024-25
Date of last revision to document	31/05/2023

Admissions requirements

We welcome applicants with a wide range of previous experience and qualifications. A second class honours degree (2.2 or above) in a Humanities or Social Science subject satisfies the standard requirement, but we do base decisions on our own assessment of qualifications, knowledge and previous work experience. We may request writing samples or further interview to gauge academic potential in instances where non-traditional education and experience may merit the waiving of formal entry requirements.

Course aims

Our Contemporary History and Politics MA programme offers you an exceptional opportunity to deepen your understanding of the complex interplay between national, international and global political, social and historical forces that have produced the world of today. Specialist option modules taught by staff with world-leading expertise emphasise critical analysis of the recent past, giving you focused and comparative knowledge of regions and themes of global significance. You will develop your skills in the approaches and techniques of the professional historian and will have also the option of exploring methodologies characteristic of the field of Politics.

Indicative options (note: not all options are available in any year)

- POSO002S7 American Foreign Policy
- HICL193S7 Arab-Israeli Question
- SSHC554S7 Archives and Memory
- SSHC549S7 Capitalism: Ideas, Systems, Practices
- HICL255S7 Contested Past, Troubled Present: Britain and Ireland since 1800 - Religion in Society and Politics
- HICL002S7 Crescent of Crisis: The Middle East and the Balkans from the Ottomans to Today
- SSHC543S7 Cultures of Hate and Oppression: Connecting the Conversations about Antisemitism, Holocaust, Gender, Colonialism
- SSHC528S7 Decolonising History/Histories of Decolonisation
- SSPO120S7 Emerging Powers in World Politics
- HICL035S7 Healing, Health and Modernity in African History
- HICL022S7 The Historian's Craft
- POSO044S7 Nationalism and Ethno-religious Conflict
- SSHC009S7 Out of Ashes: Europe, 1945 to the 1960s
- HICL097S7 Politics and Islam
- SSHC389S7 Public Histories in Practice
- HICL097S7 The Modern Mediterranean: From Colonial Sea to Environmental Crisis?
- HICL175S7 The Nazi Capture of Power
- SSHC389S7 The Politics of the Past: Heritage in a Changing World
- SSHC360S7 The Radical Sixties
- SSHC477S7 The Silk Road: Imagining Global Cultures from the Middle Ages to UNESCO and BRI
- SSHC351S7 The Two Irelands, 1911-1998 (Hyflex module)

Note: options for those choosing to follow the fully online route will be limited to those running with an online seminar or in hyflex format (synchronised in-person and online seminars) in the year of study.

Course structure

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year (October start)					
7	SSHC247S7	Mastering Historical Research: Birkbeck Approaches	30	Compulsory	T1
7	SSHC386Z7	Research Skills for Historians	0	Compulsory	T2
7		Option 1 (History)	30	Option	T1, 2 or 3
7		Option 2 (History/Politics)	30	Option	T1, 2 or 3
7		Option 3 (History/Politics)	30	Option	T1, 2 or 3
7	SSHC027D7	Research Dissertation	60	Core	T1-3
Part-time – 2 year (October start)					
Year 1					
7	SSHC247S7	Mastering Historical Research: Birkbeck Approaches	30	Compulsory	T1
7	SSHC386Z7	Research Skills for Historians	0	Compulsory	T2
7		Option 1 (History)	30	Option	T 2 or 3
7		Option 2 (History/Politics)	30	Option	T 2 or 3
Year 2					
7		Option 3 (History/Politics)	30	Option	T1, 2 or 3
7	SSHC027D7	Research Dissertation	60	Core	T1-3

For list of indicative options, which may vary each year, please see above. Options for the **online route** are limited.

Note: the modules for the January start are the same as shown above, but Mastering Historical Research is taken in the Spring term, and the dissertation submission is early January, instead of September.

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student

Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)

Option: Student can choose to take this module

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, you are expected to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules, which may be taught in-person, online, or Hyflex (with combined in-person and online participation) mode. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

Your learning for this course will be organised around the activities outlined below.

Teaching on this course includes lectures but is predominantly structured as seminars, or discussion-focused group sessions. In the introductory module 'Mastering Historical Research: Birkbeck Approaches', lectures from our internationally-recognised staff will introduce you to critical ideas, debates and figures of the past, while seminars in this and subsequent modules will train you in the construction of collaborative knowledge alongside the diverse community of your fellow students. You will also deepen your subject knowledge and sharpen your critical skills through extensive reading and other forms of independent learning. Modules across the programme include the analysis of primary and secondary text sources, as well as of images, material culture, music and film.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through the following types of assessment.

History modules normally incorporate diverse forms of assessment, including shorter, mid-term written exercises such as source analyses or literature reviews; oral presentations; and end-of-module research essays. Assignments grow in complexity across the term, offering the reassurance of guided progression towards the research essay, and tailored writing support is available within the department and at college level for students who might benefit from additional advice. Politics option modules similarly assess through written work but may also include an end-of-module exam. To complete the degree, you will design, research, and write a dissertation.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Critically analyse narratives about the past and its role in the present across a range of contexts
- demonstrate understanding of and ability to interrogate primary sources (from the past) and secondary sources (about the past) in discussion and writing
- Read and use historical scholarship at a high academic level
- Discuss texts, objects and diverse media with a group of your peers
- Present your own research and arguments orally
- Design your own research questions and programme of research
- Navigate archives, collections, oral history sources, and libraries
- Carry out research and writing at multiple scales: response essay, research essay, dissertation
- Engage with communities of historians, from academic workshops and conferences to public historians to your local community
- Demonstrate skills suited to design and create disseminations of your research in multiple forms, from article to podcast to public lecture

Careers and further study

The MA Contemporary History and Politics prepares you for any role which benefits from skills in research, communication and engagement. Graduates of our programme work across

professions and disciplines, from education to business to the arts, from museums and galleries to the heritage sector, from journalism to government, from social work to non-governmental and charitable organisations. Graduates interested in further study have gone on to complete research degree (MPhil/PhD) programmes.

Birkbeck's MA Contemporary History and Politics graduates will complete with a set of valuable attributes, for example:

- The ability to work as part of a team
- High-level oral and written communication skills in English
- Research skills
- Skills in evaluating and assessing types of information
- The ability to present yourself and an argument

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including whom to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services](#). This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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