BA HISTORY AND AMERICAN STUDIES – VT17

Semester 1
AM1001 Freedom Written in Blood: US History 1776-1877
AM1003 Introduction to US Politics
HS1002 The Shock of the Modern

Semester 2
AM1004 American History from 1877
CHOOSE TWO modules from:
HS1013 Great Britain: The State We’re In
HS1012 Global History: 1750 to the present
HS1016 Europe 1861-1991: Emancipation and Subjugation

FIRST YEAR HISTORY MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

Semester 1

HS1000 Making History
This module has been designed to make you a better historian. Studying History at university is a demanding experience, and to succeed you will need to take the knowledge and skills that you acquired at school or college and build on them to develop your powers of judgment, reasoning, and communication. This module asks you to concentrate on the mechanics of scholarship – to think directly about the analytical and communication skills that you must possess to be an effective and informed student of History. It will introduce you to the specific challenges of the historian’s job, considering the nature and significance of historiography and the widely varying ways in which historians approach their work, helping to give you the grounding to become a successful historian yourself. It will help you understand the importance of accurate written English and will build your expertise in oral presentations. We will also deal explicitly with issues such as time-management and independent learning, as well as the importance of self-reliance, peer support, and effective group working. The module is taught in the First Semester of the First Year so that you can put what you have learned into practice for the remainder of your degree.

HS1001 Barbarism and Civilisation: Medieval and Early Modern Europe
In the popular imagination, Medieval and Early Modern Europe is renowned for its barbarism and its civilisation. This was the era of Crusades and universities, of the Black Death and Renaissance art, of Inquisitions and the birth of modern science. This module will introduce students to an enthralling and paradoxical stretch of European history, from Charlemagne to Louis XIV, from the Vikings to the discovery and colonisation of the New World. We will consider how medieval and early modern Europeans sought to construct and maintain civility and how their understandings of ‘barbarism’ and ‘civilisation’ differ markedly from our own. The module will explore these centuries through its social, political, religious, and cultural history, respecting the strangeness of the past while identifying its lasting legacies to modern Europe.
HS1002 The Shock of the Modern
This is a module about how, why and when people became ‘modern’. We have called it ‘the shock of the modern’ because we are studying social, political, cultural, technological and economic changes that led to radically different ways of being human and living together. There are three main themes. The first is about how people became modern. We focus on identity, belief, and how modern people lived and died, as well as the role of disaster in shaping modern people’s sense of well-being. The second looks at living in the modern world. The key topics are the nation state, the modern city, the measurement and management of time, the pace of modern existence, family, friendship and fun. The final theme is about the challenges to being modern. We look at how people resisted different aspects of modern life and tried to find alternatives to it. The time period we concentrate on is the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but for some topics we will be going back to earlier centuries. Finally we ask whether, in the late twentieth century, ideas about who we are and the conditions in which we live have changed so much that we can now describe ourselves as living in a ‘post-modern’ age.

Semester 2

HS1012 Global History: Connections and Cultures in a Changing World, 1750 to the present
This module examines what it means to study history from a global perspective, prioritising non-Eurocentric ways of understanding world history and focusing on various kinds of connections – political, economic, social and cultural – that define global history. As well as considering the methodological and conceptual questions associated with studying global history, the course is organised around four major themes: state, polities and interconnections; economies and material life; environments and cities; cultures. Each thematic topic will be taught through a broad introduction to the issues in global history and lectures focusing on specific case studies. The chronological span will be from c. 1750 to the present, but this may vary according to the approach to each theme and the particular focus of the lecturer. Themes will be examined comparatively and from a non-Eurocentric perspective.

HS1013 Great Britain: The State We’re In
This module will introduce students to the key debates surrounding Britain’s ‘rise and fall’ from its development as the ‘first industrial nation’ and leading world power to its relative industrial decline and post-imperial role: the 'state we’re in' today. We will explore the key changes that have taken place in British life, including social, cultural, economic and political trends and the different ways these have been interpreted by historians. We will also focus upon what impact Britain’s changing role as a world power has had on the domestic life of the British people. Topics may vary from year to year, but will focus on five core themes which have shaped modern Britain: democratisation; industrialisation and deindustrialisation; hard and soft imperialism; social and cultural change; religion, science and modernity. The chronological span will be from c. 1688 to the present, but this may vary according to the topic and the precise focus of different lecturers.

HS1016 Europe 1861-1991: Emancipation and Subjugation
This module will introduce students to the major social, political, cultural and economic trends shaping European societies in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing on the varied waves of emancipation and subjugation that have characterised the region in this period. Topics will vary from year to year, but may include: new nationalism, the end of serfdom, European imperialism, the First and Second World Wars, the rise of fascism, anti-semitism, the Cold War, the fall of the USSR and the Eastern bloc, and the impact of neoliberalism.
AM1004 American History since 1877
This module will survey the history of the United States since 1877, introducing students to key events, issues and themes as a basis for further specialised study in American history. There will be an exploration of several themes in late nineteenth and twentieth century American history: these may vary from year to year, but may include: the tension between the United States’ rural life and values and its urban destiny; the development of the imperial presidency; the relationship of the United States to the world; the position of women and ethnic minorities in the United States; and the role of ideology in American life and politics. The module will also bring together social, cultural, economic and political approaches, through the examination of some famous – and often peculiar - landmarks, artefacts and ideas in modern American history.