Dear Student,

We write to congratulate you on your recent examination results which secure your place to read History at St Peter’s. We hope that you enjoy the remainder of the summer and much look forward to meeting you again in the autumn, but there is one important thing we must do before then, which is to make your arrangements for the first year. We are therefore writing to explain how the year works, and the choices you need to make now.

The First Public Examination is known as the Preliminary Examination (PRELIMS for short). It is taken at the end of the first year and your performance is not graded into classes, though distinctions are awarded. This examination comprises four papers, about which you have to make choices. More information about those choices can be found at https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/ba-history.

1. A period of History of the British Isles will be studied in your first term (the Michaelmas Term). You need to select one of the following:
   - I c.300-1100
   - II 1000-1330
   - III 1330-1550
   - IV 1500-1700
   - V 1688-1848
   - VI 1830-1951.

2. A period of European and World History will be studied in your second term (the Hilary Term). This must fall in a different time band from your History of the British Isles period (see below). You need to select one of the following:
   - I 370-900: The Transformation of the Ancient World
   - II 1000-1300: Medieval Christendom and its Neighbours
   - III 1400-1650: Renaissance, Recovery, and Reform
   - IV 1815-1914: Society, Nation, and Empire.

Some observations on 1 and 2: most of you will not have studied medieval or early modern history at advanced level at school. Your tutors consider it important that you establish foundations in these areas early in your course. To give breadth to your historical education you are required by the faculty’s regulations to complete over your three years’ undergraduate work at least one outline paper in the History of the British Isles or European and World History before 1330, one between 1330 and c.1700, and one after c.1700 (detailed lists of which papers count in which section are available at each stage of the course). In the first
your European and World History course must fall in a different band from your History of the British Isles course to help meet this requirement. There are also regulations designed to ensure breadth of geographical coverage in your studies, but you do not need to think about those now.

Your tutors therefore strongly recommend that you choose History of the British Isles I (c.300-1100) or II (1000-1330) for PRELIMS unless you have studied those periods at school. There are intellectual merits in studying the periods consecutively and if you choose HBI I or II now, it remains possible to continue through one of the later periods for the Finals work in the second year. It makes sense, too, that as many first-year history undergraduates as possible at St Peter’s take one paper in common, as you will benefit from being taught in College during your first term, and from being able to talk about common historical problems with each other. If you choose HBI I or II now, it remains possible to continue through one of the later periods for the Finals work in the second year.

It makes sense, too, that as many first-year history undergraduates as possible at St Peter’s take one paper in common, as you will benefit from being taught in College during your first term, and from being able to talk about common historical problems with each other. If you choose HBI I or II now, it remains possible to continue through one of the later periods for the Finals work in the second year.

3. Either a Foreign Text
   or Approaches to History
   or Historiography
   or Quantification.

Where you have an adequate language (preferably at A level or equivalent), it is strongly advised that you take a foreign text. Texts are available in Greek or Latin or French or German or Italian or Russian or Spanish. For the languages the set texts are as follows:


(v) Italian: Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*, Bk. 1.

(vi) Russian: Leon Trotsky, *1905*, pp. 1-9, 17-245. (This option is suspended in some years, so if you choose it please also indicate a second choice).

(vii) Spanish: Juan Diaz del Moral, *Historia de las agitaciones campesinas andaluzas*. (This option is suspended in some years, so if you choose it please also indicate a second choice).

The Approaches to History paper is concerned with the ways in which the writing of history has been influenced by other disciplines, methods and techniques. Candidates will be required to show knowledge of at least two different ‘approaches’ out of the six set out below. The sub-headings give guidance to areas in which questions will be set:

(i) Anthropology and History: Family and Kinship; Authority and Power; Religion, Magic and Popular Culture; The Construction of History.
In the past, students at St Peter’s have tended to take the Gender and Sociology strands, since these can be taught in College; but if you have a strong preference for another strand, arrangements can be made to accommodate this.

Formally speaking, you could do another paper on Historiography (‘Historiography: Tacitus to Weber’) instead of Approaches to History, but this is not taught at St Peter’s.

Quantification in History aims to introduce historians to the statistical exploration of historical problems. It imparts statistical skills which enable students to read and understand quantitative economic and social history research, and also to undertake elementary quantitative work on their own. Plainly, some numerical facility (preferably an A-level or equivalent in Mathematics or Statistics) is essential for those who are attracted to this option.

It is important that you make your choice between these three options – Foreign Text / Approaches / Historiography / Quantification – now, because this third paper has to be studied concurrently with your British and European and World History papers across the Michaelmas and Hilary terms. If you choose Approaches to History, it is also necessary to specify which of the two ‘approaches’ you would like to take.

More detailed information on these papers can be found at https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/historical-methods.

4. Optional Subject: any one of the papers specified below (some may not be available in any given year). Primary texts are specified for study in each Optional Subject.

2. The Age of Bede c.660-c.740.
3. Early Gothic France c.1100-c.1150.
5. English Chivalry and the French Wars c.1330-c.1400.
11. Revolution and Empire in France 1789-1815.
12. Women, Gender and the Nation: Britain, 1789-1825.
13. The Romance of the People: The Folk Revival from 1760 to 1914.
14. Haiti and Louisiana: The Problem of Revolution in the Age of Slavery
15. New Women in Britain and Ireland, c. 1880-1920.
17. 1919: Remaking the World.
19. The World of Homer and Hesiod, as specified for Preliminary Examination in Ancient and Modern History.
20. Augustan Rome, as specified for Preliminary Examination in Ancient and Modern History.
21. Industrialization in Britain and France 1750-1870, as specified for Preliminary Examination in History and Economics.

All sources in all optional subjects are in English (sometimes in translations). This paper will be studied in the third term (the Trinity term). A decision about your choice of optional subject should be left until after you have arrived in Oxford and had time to explore possibilities and discuss them with your tutors.

To summarize: it would be helpful if you would now select three of your four papers - the period of History of the British Isles, the period of European and World History, and the choice between a Foreign Text (specifying in which language) or Approaches (specifying two ‘approaches’) or Quantification. We would be grateful if you could respond by email as soon as possible, and by 31 August at the latest. When you let us know we will send you introductory reading lists for the summer and start to arrange teaching. If you are in doubt, please do not hesitate to contact us by email for further advice.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Baxter
Clarendon Associate Professor and Barron Fellow in Medieval History
stephen.baxter@spc.ox.ac.uk

Stephen Tuffnell
Associate Professor in the History of the United States
stephen.tuffnell@spc.ox.ac.uk