# **Summer Reading Suggestions for Incoming History Students**

To give you a flavour of some of the material that you are likely to encounter when you start as a History student at Royal Holloway, we have collected a few suggestions from the reading lists of our first-year modules in the department.

**This is just a list of suggestions and we do not expect you to have done this preparatory reading before you begin your degree!** We hope that this list might give you somewhere to start if you want to pursue and explore your historical interests before you begin your studies at university, but **all of our first-year modules are designed to be accessible to all new students** in the department, whatever they have read or studied before. In fact, we will encourage you to do something completely new!

Please also do not go spending huge amounts on this reading matter – see if you can find second-hand copies online or check out local libraries. What is most important is that you read as much as you can of the history that interests you, whether or not it appears on a list of suggestions like this one.

And remember: there are many other ways beyond these books to explore your historical interests, from films to podcasts – please see our [summer resources](https://royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/history/external-engagement/resources-for-students-and-offer-holders/) page and [applicant activity hub](https://royalholloway.ac.uk/research-and-teaching/departments-and-schools/history/external-engagement/history-applicant-activity-hub/) for some of our staff and students’ recommendations this year.

Disclaimer: The appearance of modules on this list does not guarantee that they are offered every year, and the Department reserves the right to change and amend these modules without prior notification.

## **Foundation Module:** **History in the Making**

All of our students in the department take this module, which explores the themes, sources and questions that have animated the work of historians from antiquity to the present day. How have historians discussed themes like Renaissance, Revolution or Gender? What kinds of sources have they used? How do such ideas influence our understanding of historical change? How has this shaped public debate and the public view of history?

Below are some books which scratch the surface of just some of the themes that you will explore in this module:

* John Tosh. *Why History Matters* (2008)
* Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present* (1999)
* Claire Breay and Julian Harrison, *Magna Carta: law, liberty, legacy* (2015)
* Gregory Claeys, *Marx and Marxism* (2018)
* C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (2004)
* Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (2001)
* John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: How Empires Rise and Fall* (2008)

## **Gateway Modules**

Gateway Modules are taught over two terms in the first year of your degree. They introduce you to a broad period of the past and help you figure out what you are most interested in.

Please note that assignment to Gateway modules takes place at the beginning of the Autumn Term. If you are a single honours History student, you will take three of them; if you are studying History as part of a joint honours degree, you will choose one.

## **Gods, Men and Power: An Introduction to the Ancient World, from Homer to Mohammed**

This course looks at how power was exercised in the ancient Mediterranean world - in politics, in religion, and in culture. It covers a long and dramatically changing period, from early Greece (the time of the Homeric epics) to the rise of Christianity and then the rise of Islam. A variety of areas of life are investigated through both primary sources (in translation) and a selection of the latest secondary works.

* R. Lane Fox, *The Classical World: An Epic History of Greece and Rome* (2005)
* P. Cartledge, *Ancient Greece: A Very Short Introduction* (2011)
* D.M. Gwynn, *The Roman Republic: A Very Short Introduction* (2012)
* C. Kelly, *The Roman Empire: A Very Short Introduction* (2006)

## **Rome to Renaissance: An Introduction to the Middle Ages**

The terms 'Middle Ages' and 'Medieval' are often used to evoke a dark and bigoted world, wracked by war, pestilence and superstition and oppressed by tyrannical kings and prelates. The image is not entirely false as all those things can be found in medieval history but it is by no means the full picture. The period from c.400 to c.1500 saw Western Europe transform itself from the poorer part of the retreating Roman empire to a wealthy and dynamic society that was starting to explore the world far beyond its borders. This course explores some of the changes that took place along the way and answers some of the questions that you may always have wanted to ask: What was 'feudalism'? How were castles and Gothic cathedrals built? Why did the Pope become so powerful? What were the Crusades? And does any of this have any relevance whatsoever to the modern world?

* M.C. Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe, 1050-1320*, 2nd edition (2004)
* R.H.C. Davis and R. I. Moore, *A History of Medieval Europe from Constantine to St Louis*, 3rd edition (2005)
* D. Waley and P. Denly, *Later Medieval Europe from St Louis to Luther*, 3rd edition (2001)
* Av. Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395-600* (1993)

## **Republics, Kings and People: The Foundations of European Political Thought from Plato to Rousseau**

This course investigates the origins of our ideas about human rights and duties, revolution and democracy, consent and liberty, etc. A number of key writings are studied: ranging from Plato and Aristotle in the ancient world to Machiavelli, More, Hobbes, Locke and the Enlightenment in the transition from the early modern to the modern world. Analysis of the development of fundamental ideas about politics and society through these examples sharpens the mind and throws light upon the present in the perspective of the past.

* John Dunn, *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (2005)
* Online edition of [Augustine’s *City of God*](https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/schaff-a-%20select-library-of-the-nicene-and-post-nicene-fathers-of-the-christian-church-vol-%202#lf1330-02_head_003) (426)
* A.J. Fromherz, *Ibn Khaldun - Life and Times* (2010)
* Online edition of [Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-%20h/1232-h.htm) (1532)

## **Renaissance to Revolutions: Europe and the World, 1500-1800**

The early modern period is an age of change. It has been seen by many as the beginning of modernity, for it witnesses the consolidation of both national monarchies and the central state, the split of Christianity with the emergence of the Reformation, the spread of Islam to the Balkans, European expansion into the ‘new world,’ the introduction of print, and significant changes in patterns of consumption. This course will assess the impact that these processes had on the lives of ordinary early modern Europeans and on their ways of making sense of the changes in the world around them. Throughout, the emphasis will be on the experience of ordinary people.

* Beat Kümin (ed.), *The European World 1500–1800* (2018)
* Henry Kamen, *Early Modern European Society* (2000)
* Charles H. Parker, *Global interactions in the early modern age, 1400-1800* (2010)
* Brian P. Levack, *The witch-hunt in early modern Europe* (2006)

## **Conflict and Identity in Modern Europe, c.1770 to 2000**

This course highlights a range of major themes in (predominantly) European history from the French Revolution to the Fall of the Berlin Wall. In studying specific events and developments students will also be introduced to more general concepts like revolution, constitutionalism, liberalism, nationalism, industrialisation, socialism, communism, fascism, parliamentary democracy and welfare state. Exposure to different historical methods and conflicting interpretations will help students to hone their own analytical skills.

* Lynn Hunt and Jack Censer, *The French Revolution and Napoleon: Crucible of the Modern World* (2017)
* Kevin Passmore, *Fascism. A Very Short Introduction*,2nd edition, (2014)
* Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe’s Twentieth Century* (1998)
* Dan Stone, *Goodbye to all that? The Story of Europe since 1945* (2014)

## **Mao to Bin Laden: Twentieth-Century Leaders of the Non-Western World**

The course establishes a framework for the discussion of the politics of extra-European societies as represented by their leaders in the twentieth century. The leaders are studied both in terms of what their lives represent, and as individuals. It assesses their role in the development of nationalism, and of the wars and revolutions which arose from resistance to the West, especially imperialism. It discusses their ideological vision, interpreting its origins and aims. Finally, it looks at the seeming clash between Islam and the West, and relates it to resources, particularly oil.

* Anne Alexander, *Nasser: Life and Times* (2005)
* David Arnold, *Gandhi: Profiles in Power* (2001)
* Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (2004)
* Tom Lodge, *Mandela: a Critical Life* (2006)