

ACADEMIC SESSION 2018-2019

HI4516 UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION IN HISTORY

30 CREDITS : 11 WEEKS

**PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:**

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen Organisation page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

**You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.**

**COURSE CO-ORDINATOR**

Dr Heidi Mehrkens

Office hours: Tuesday (4-5pm) and Friday (10-11 am)

Crombie Annexe

Room 111

01224 272466

[heidi.mehrkens@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:heidi.mehrkens@abdn.ac.uk)

**Discipline Administration**

Mrs Barbara McGillivray

50-52 College Bounds

Room CB001

01224 272199

[history-ug@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:history-ug@abdn.ac.uk)

## TIMETABLE

For time and place of classes, please see [MyAberdeen](#)

*Students can view their university timetable at*

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will undertake their independent research under the supervision of a member of History staff. Most of the work will be done independently, as students focus on their individual projects. There will be a preliminary lecture to introduce students to the task, arranged for early October. The dissertation is a single piece of work: 10,000-12,000 words in length, worth 100% of the course grade. It will be submitted after the spring break in April.

## INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will develop their ability to:

- Frame an original and significant research question and address it;
- Identify relevant primary and secondary research materials and make appropriate use of them;
- Criticise and evaluate such primary and secondary materials;
- Identify and present key issues raised by their research;
- Offer a clear argument with coherent organisation and presentation of relevant facts with development of ideas.

## LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME

- Two-hour preliminary lecture to introduce students to the course, scheduled for early **October 2018**.
- Two-hour general meeting for revision, scheduled for **January 2019**.

## SUGGESTED TEXTS ON WRITING A DISSERTATION

- Derek Swetnam and Ruth Swetnam, *Writing your Dissertation: The bestselling guide to planning, preparing and presenting first class work* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Oxford, 2009)
- Bryan Greetham, *How to write your Undergraduate Dissertation* (London, 2009)
- Carrie Winstanley, *Writing a Dissertation for Dummies* (Chichester, 2009)

## RESEARCH ETHICS

There are well established rules and guidelines within the university which students must abide by when conducting research for a dissertation. In certain situations you will need to gain **ethical approval from the College Research Ethics Committee**. This is particularly important in the following circumstances:

1. The dissertation project involves human subjects / interviewees (or human remains).
2. It addresses potential conflicts of interest; the use of artefacts; environmental impact; financial inducements for subjects / interviewees or dealing with highly sensitive material (e.g. Northern Ireland Troubles).
3. Any research activity that might involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the period of consent granted by the subjects.

If you are in any doubt as to whether this policy will apply to your research please consult the course co-ordinator and your supervisor in the first instance and definitely before you undertake your research.

## THE ROLE OF THE COURSE COORDINATOR

Any queries about the dissertation process? Please contact Dr Heidi Mehrkens (heidi.mehrkens@abdn.ac.uk). The course coordinator's role is to advise and help. Students who are experiencing difficulty with their work for whatever reason, or who require help or information should consult the course co-ordinator without delay. Contact and office hours are on the department's

Staff Pages and on MyAberdeen, or just make an appointment. Any feedback or enquiries about the course should also be addressed to the course coordinator.

### **THE ROLE OF THE SUPERVISOR**

1. To offer meetings to discuss the topic
2. To help you choose and refine a title
3. To give bibliographical advice
4. To discuss research methods
5. To discuss your draft introduction
6. To discuss your developing arguments
7. To help you create your timetable and encourage you to keep it

Please note: Not all members of staff might be available for supervision (due to research leave, scholarships etc.). It is a good idea to get in touch with a prospective supervisor at the beginning of the AY and to establish whether you can work together on your project. We hence cannot guarantee that you are going to work with a particular supervisor. The course coordinator is happy to help should you need help identifying a supervisor for your topic. There is a list of staff research interests at the end of this course guide which you might find useful; it features the members of staff not on research leave.

### **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Identify a suitable supervisor and set up the initial appointment
2. Meet regularly and/or keep in contact with your supervisor
3. Submit the required paperwork (forms) on time
4. Hand in a project outline in January
5. Engage with feedback provided by your supervisor
6. Check your university e-mail account regularly for messages
7. Plan your work to allow submission before the deadline in April

### **WHAT IS A DISSERTATION?**

A dissertation is not just a long essay. It is a focused piece of primary research which addresses and seeks to offer fresh and potentially original insights on a

historical subject. These insights should be placed within the broader context of historiographical debate and scholarship.

### WHAT MAKES A GOOD DISSERTATION TOPIC?

- A good topic addresses a broader historical issue or debate, usually with an **original approach**.
- It can be treated in a thorough manner in 10,000 to 12,000 words.
- It draws to a significant extent on **primary sources**.
- As a **case study**, it might shed light on a broader question, or look at a well-researched topic from a different angle.

### PREPARING YOUR DISSERTATION

Your dissertation topic should be chosen after consultation with a potential supervisor. If you require additional information please contact the co-ordinator. It is important to choose topics that are viable within the word limits given below, can be completed by the due date, can be supported by the resources available and with adequate supervision. While it is normal for topics to evolve during the research and writing processes, **no substantial change in topic is permitted without the knowledge and agreement of the supervisor(s)**.

**Please note that it is not permitted to replicate a summative essay you have submitted in another course.**

Supervisors may give specific guidance relating to sources and general argument. However, as the dissertation is an original piece of work, supervisors cannot be expected to engage in detailed analysis and criticism of specific aspects of the dissertation prior to its submission.

Students will submit **a formative piece of work** related to the preparation of their dissertations (by the end of January). They will receive formative feedback from their supervisor: The work will not be marked but will serve as the basis for guidance and discussion of the dissertation process and progress. If the supervisor decides the work is of an unsatisfactory nature, the student may be required to re-submit.

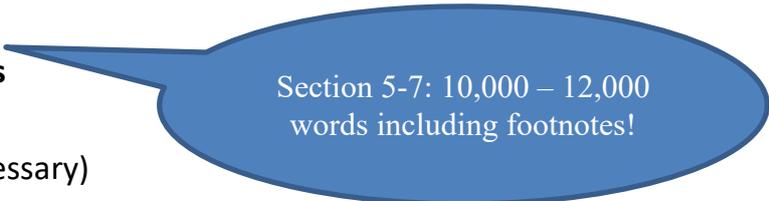
## FORMATTING YOUR DISSERTATION: GENERAL POINTS

- Insert **page numbers**: Pagination should run consecutively from beginning to end and include any appendices and the bibliography. Cross references should also include page numbers.
- **Serious deviation** from departmental formatting style in end/footnotes or bibliography (see below) will have a negative impact on the mark given to the dissertation.
- **Evidence of inadequate proofreading** (such as repeated typographical errors, incomplete sentences, the use of contractions) will have a negative impact on the mark.
- **End/footnotes** should be used not only for direct quotations but also to show where specific bits of information (not widely known) have originated as well as ideas, analysis and ways of considering an issue unique to a given author (when you are paraphrasing someone else's thoughts and ideas). Failure to make adequate use of end/footnotes will have a negative impact on the mark.
- The dissertation should also be **clearly typed** and **double-spaced** on A4 sized paper.

## FORMATTING YOUR DISSERTATION: CONTENTS

The presentation of your dissertation will vary according to individual subjects. It **might** contain the following elements, which should be arranged in this order:

1. Title page (with **only title, student ID and number of words**)
2. Table of contents
3. List of maps, plans, tables and illustrations (if you have used any)
4. Note on abbreviations (if necessary)
5. **Introduction**
6. **Individual chapters**
7. **Conclusion**
8. Appendices (if necessary)
9. Bibliography



Section 5-7: 10,000 – 12,000 words including footnotes!

## **TITLE PAGE**

The title page shows only **the title of the work, the student ID and the accurate word count** (word count including footnotes and appendices but excluding the bibliography). **Sections 5-7 (introduction, individual chapters and conclusion)** count towards the length of your dissertation. In total they should have between 10,000 and 12,000 words (including footnotes). Please note: One mark on the CGS scale will be deducted for every 1,000 words (or part thereof) above or below this range.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

The table of contents needs to be complete and contain accurate page numbers. If any of the chapters are subdivided, please list all titles.

## **LIST OF MAPS, ETC.**

If you have loads of these, they should be consecutively numbered and the pages on which they appear should be given.

## **NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS**

Here you can list standard abbreviations for sources or publications with lengthy titles frequently referred to. If there are just a few cases where abbreviations need to be introduced, this can be done in the first footnote where they occur.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A good introduction will

- outline the subject of the dissertation,
- critically analyse the historiography / literature on the subject,
- introduce the sources you will be using,
- introduce the methods you will be adopting.
- It might also give a brief indication of your conclusions.

## **INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS**

The main part of the dissertation should be divided into manageable chapters. If chapters are lengthy, the reader might lose track of the argument. If they are very short, there might be insufficient space for a fully developed

argument or example. Each chapter should have a clear descriptive title and start on a separate page. It might help to break down the chapters in subsections.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion should relate the body of the text to the problem in the introduction and show how new insights have emerged from the research undertaken.

## **APPENDICES**

It may be more convenient to place statistical tables, maps, illustrations, cartoons or a document to which repeated references are made in the appendices.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FOOTNOTES**

[Improving your Writing](#) has been designed to support your progress in University of Aberdeen courses. Here you find techniques to develop your writing skills and present your written work.

**Please use the departmental referencing guide (provided on MyAberdeen) when formatting your footnotes and bibliography.** Failure to observe the stipulations (or any agreement made with your supervisor on referencing) may lead to a deduction of up to two grade points in the Common Grading Scale.

If you are in any doubt on how to footnote your dissertation, please consult your supervisor.

## **FORMATTING: STYLE GUIDE**

### **QUOTATIONS**

Quotations from prose should run on in the text if they do not exceed two or three lines. Longer quotations should be indented. Inverted commas are not required when the quotation is indented. Quotations

should keep the spelling used in original documents and not be modernised.

### **UNDERLINING AND ITALICS**

Underlining or *italics* should be used in the main text for a) titles of books, plays and periodicals, b) technical terms or phrases in language other than English (but not for quotations or complete sentences).

### **CAPITALS**

Capitals should be used for institutions and corporate bodies when the name is the official title or part of an official title. For the titles pertaining to individuals, only use capitals if followed by the person's name. E.g. Archibald Campbell, Marquis of Argyll, but 'the marquis'.

### **DATES**

Dates should be given in the form 30 January 1649.

## **BINDING YOUR DISSERTATION**

As the dissertation has to be bound, please work with generous margins, especially on the left hand side of the text. The UoA Print Shop provides information on how to prepare your work for binding:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/uniprint/binding/preparing-your-thesis/>

You do not have to spend a lot of money to get your dissertations "book bound". It is much more affordable to get them **ring bound**. Please ensure though that all pages are correctly placed in their proper order as the print shop won't check or change your pages once work has commenced.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

The Dissertation (10,000 – 12,000 words) (100%)

## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

**Project outline (about 1000 words):** The outline will introduce the subject of the dissertation and provide a critical analysis of the historiography on the subject. It will introduce the sources used for research and the methods adopted. It comes with a **bibliography (not included in the word count)** which should list at least 20 sources, a good mix of primary material, monographs, journal articles, and essays from edited volumes, according to the History referencing guide.

Please note that any student failing to submit a satisfactory version of this formative piece of work risks losing their class certificate (see the School Handbook on class certificates).

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to **MyAberdeen- Organisations- Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates**. The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.

**PLEASE NOTE: In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.**

If you submit your work on time, you can expect that feedback will **normally be provided within three working weeks** (excluding vacation periods) of the submission deadline.

## ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

- The project outline (formative assessment) is due **Monday, 28 January 2019, 3 pm.**
- The submission date for the dissertation is **Wednesday, 24 April 2019, 3pm.**

## SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

**Please submit by the deadline TWO paper copies (cover sheet required) PLUS, ONE official electronic copy (no cover sheet required) as follows:**

**Hard Copies:** Two hard copies typed and double spaced, together with an **assessment cover sheet** – this should have your ID number **CLEARLY** written on the cover sheet, with **NO** name and **NO** signature but **EVERYTHING ELSE** filled in – and should be delivered to the History Admin Office **[Drop-off boxes located in CB008, 50-52 College Bounds]**.

**Electronic Copy:** One copy submitted through Turnitin via [MyAberdeen](https://myabern.ac.uk). (For instructions please see <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/eLearning/turnitinuk/students/>) Students are asked to retain the Turnitin receipt so they are able to provide proof of submission at a later date if required.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student ID number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 HI4516 Essay 1.

When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. 59999999 HI4516 Essay 1.

Both copies to be submitted by 3pm on the due date.

***Please note: Failure to submit both an electronic copy to Turnitin and a hard copy to the school office, by the stated deadline, will result in a zero mark. N.B Turnitin doesn't accept Mac documents in Pages. If using a Mac please go to File and export work as a Word document.***

#### **A QUICK GUIDE TO STAFF RESEARCH INTERESTS**

**NB: Please note that not all members of staff might be available this AY to supervise dissertation topics.**

**Dr Jackson Armstrong:** Late medieval and early modern history, in England, Scotland and the British Isles; frontiers, conflict, chivalry and law

**Dr Alex Campsie:** Modern British and Scottish history; social and political movements in the twentieth century

**Prof Michael Brown:** Scottish and Irish enlightenment, political identity and the development of nationalism

**Dr Alessandra Cecolin:** History of the Middle East; history of Islam; Israeli-Palestinian relations

**Dr Andrew Dilley:** British Empire, late nineteenth and twentieth century, especially the economics and culture of empire, relations with dominions

**Prof David Dumville:** Early medieval history of England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland

**Dr Marie-Luise Ehrenschtner:** Latter medieval history, especially religious history and the history of women

**Prof Marjory Harper:** Emigration within and beyond the British Empire since the 18th century; modern Scottish history; oral history

**Prof Anthony Heywood:** Modern Russian/Soviet History; Russia's participation in the First World War; transport history

**Dr Alastair Macdonald:** Medieval Warfare; Anglo-Scottish relations; general medieval topics; Sport history

**Dr Elizabeth Macknight:** Nineteenth- and twentieth-century French History and Gender History

**Dr Ben Marsden:** History of Science; Cultural History

**Dr Heidi Mehrkens:** History of European monarchies, warfare, the media and political cultures in the long nineteenth century

**Prof William Naphy:** The Reformation, especially in Geneva; plague and plague regulations in early modern Europe, early modern crime

**Prof Ralph O'Connor:** Early medieval Scandinavian and Celtic literature; history of science in the 19th century

**Dr Frederik Pedersen:** Medieval social and religious history; the Hanseatic League and Scandinavian history

**Prof Thomas Weber:** 20th-century European, international and global political history; Jewish/non-Jewish relations; historical methodology

**See also the departmental website for current staff profiles:**

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sdhp/history>