

KICKSTARTER

THRIVING IN AND BEYOND THE SEMINAR ROOM

Who are we?

Dr Charlie Hall – Senior Lecturer in Modern European History

Dr Mario Draper – Senior Lecturer in Military History

Members of the student History Society

What are we doing here?

- **Stepping up**
 - *What does History at university “look” like and what is my role*
- **Top Tips**
 - *A few pointers to help you make the most of your time at Kent*
- **Community and wellbeing**
 - *Services and support to help you thrive during your degree, and beyond*
- **History Society**
 - *How to get involved with the best society on campus*

Stepping Up

A guide to studying at university level

School

- Usually all led by one teacher, a generalist
- All classroom-based, typically groups 10-30
- Lots of learning based around curriculum questions and topics
- Things marked in scores of up to 9 or A / B / C etc.



University

- Multiple lecturers/teachers, all specialists
- Varied format – groups from 1 to 100 – different locations and aims or styles
- Lots of learning based around arguments and sources and connections or comparisons = bodies of knowledge
- Things marked by traditional criteria: “percentage” with 70+ excellent, 60-70 very good, 50-60 good, 40-50 pass.



Lectures

- Usually one hour, once or twice a week, per module.
- All students on a module attend; can be 100+
- Led by a lecturer (often the module convenor)



Seminars

- Length and frequency depend on the module.
- No more than 25 students; usually closer to 20.
- Led by a seminar leader; may be the same as the lecturer, may be different.



What to expect from lectures

■ What it *is*:

- *An introduction*
- *A framework for further study*
- *A map of the contours of a topic*
- *Thought- and question-provoking*
- *A guide to the historiography*
- *A whistle-stop tour of the topic's key themes, changes and challenges.*

■ What it *isn't*:

- *The last word*
- *The definitive picture*
- *The only thing you need to know*



Approaches to lectures

- Turn up!
- Do a bit of background reading beforehand
- Take notes
 - *more on this shortly*
- Think!
- Engage/ask questions



Techniques for learning in lectures

- There is no need to write down everything the lecturer says.
 - *This will be impossible!*
 - *And it will be a distraction.*
- Lectures are recorded and the slides will be available on Moodle.
- However:
 - *Notes are a great way to keep focused on the content.*
 - *They will help with preparation for the seminar.*
 - *They are also handy for essays and exam revision.*



Top tips for note-taking

- Good notes should:

- *Provide short, clear summaries*
- *Be structured effectively*
- *‘Capture’ the key points of the lecture*
- *Set out any areas for further reading*
- *Pose questions (for you to ask, or for you to find out the answers to)*
- *Feature your own abbreviations, symbols and code*
- *Make sense to you – days, weeks or months after the lecture itself!*



notes

Different note-taking systems



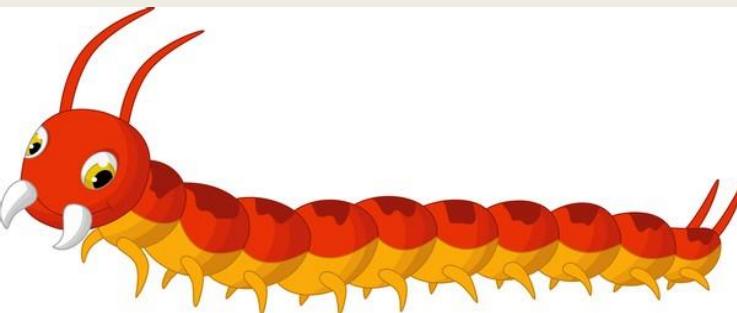
■ The Snake

- *A long list*
- *Starts at the head, ends at the tail*
- *a.k.a. Standard Notes*



■ The Spider

- *A body in the middle with leg ideas coming out*
- *a.k.a. Pattern Notes*



■ The Centipede

- *A series of connected segments*
- *a.k.a. split-page or Cornell system*

What to expect from seminars

- Key aspects:

- *Smaller groups*
- *Focused topics*
- *More in-depth discussions*
- *Interactive format*

- They can involve:

- *Discussions of core readings*
- *Analysis of primary sources (text and visual)*
- *Conversations about historiography and key debates*
- *Group work*
- *Presentations*



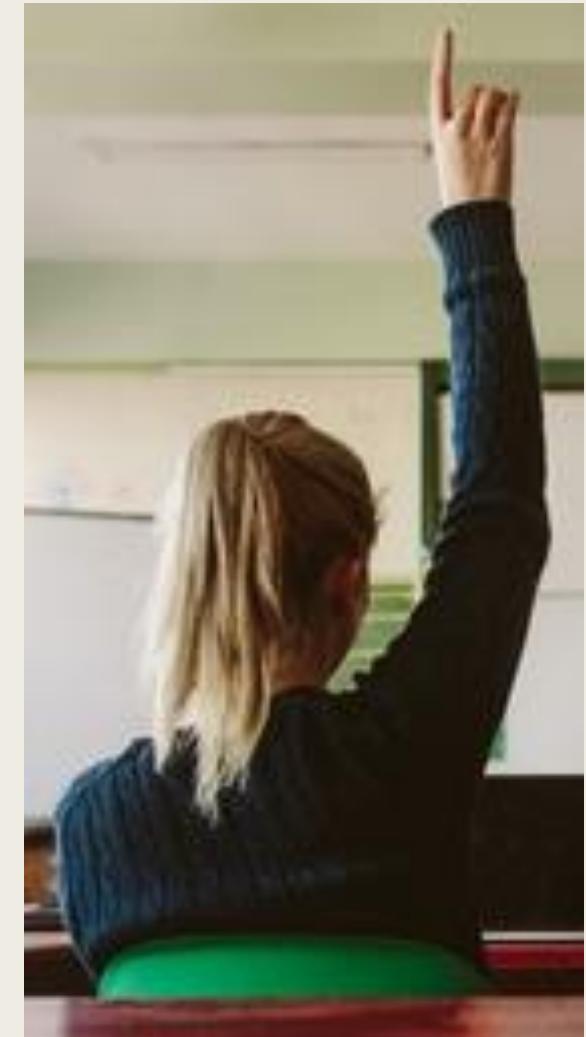
Approaches to seminars

- Turn up!
- Be prepared!
 - *Check the Moodle page*
 - *Know the tasks*
 - *Do the reading*
- Speak!
 - *More on this shortly*
- Listen!



Speaking in seminars

- Your seminar leader wants you to talk.
 - *They are here to facilitate discussion, not to do all the talking.*
- The best seminars are those which involve lively discussions.
 - *The more people put in, the more you will all get out.*
- So how do you do it?
 - *Make an agreement with yourself to say ‘something’*
 - *Go in with some points prepared*
 - *Speak early on – overcome the awkwardness barrier*
 - *Don’t worry about being wrong*
 - *Try to be concise*
 - *Listen to others, and be prepared to respond*
- *The seminar should be a comfortable and respectful space for all*



Assessments

- University-level assessments can take lots of formats. These can include:
 - *Essays*
 - *Essay plans*
 - *Source analysis exercises (sometimes called 'gobbets')*
 - *Literature reviews*
 - *Timed assignments*
 - *Presentations (group or individual)*
- Most modules will have 2 or 3 assessments per term.
- By the end of the first week of term, you should have a good sense of what is expected for your assignments – **including deadlines** – for the term ahead.



Top Tips

A few pointers to help you make the most of your time at Kent.

Time management

One of the big differences between school and university is how much less structured your time will be here.

You will likely have around eight hours of contact time per week (four hours per module).

But for every hour of contact time, you should be spending two hours reading and preparing.

You will also want to spend time on your assignments.

Deadlines for two modules might fall at the same time (especially at the end of term) so make sure you plan ahead and start assignments early.

Deadline extensions are available, but are only to be used when unforeseen circumstances (e.g. illness) prevent you from submitting your work on time.



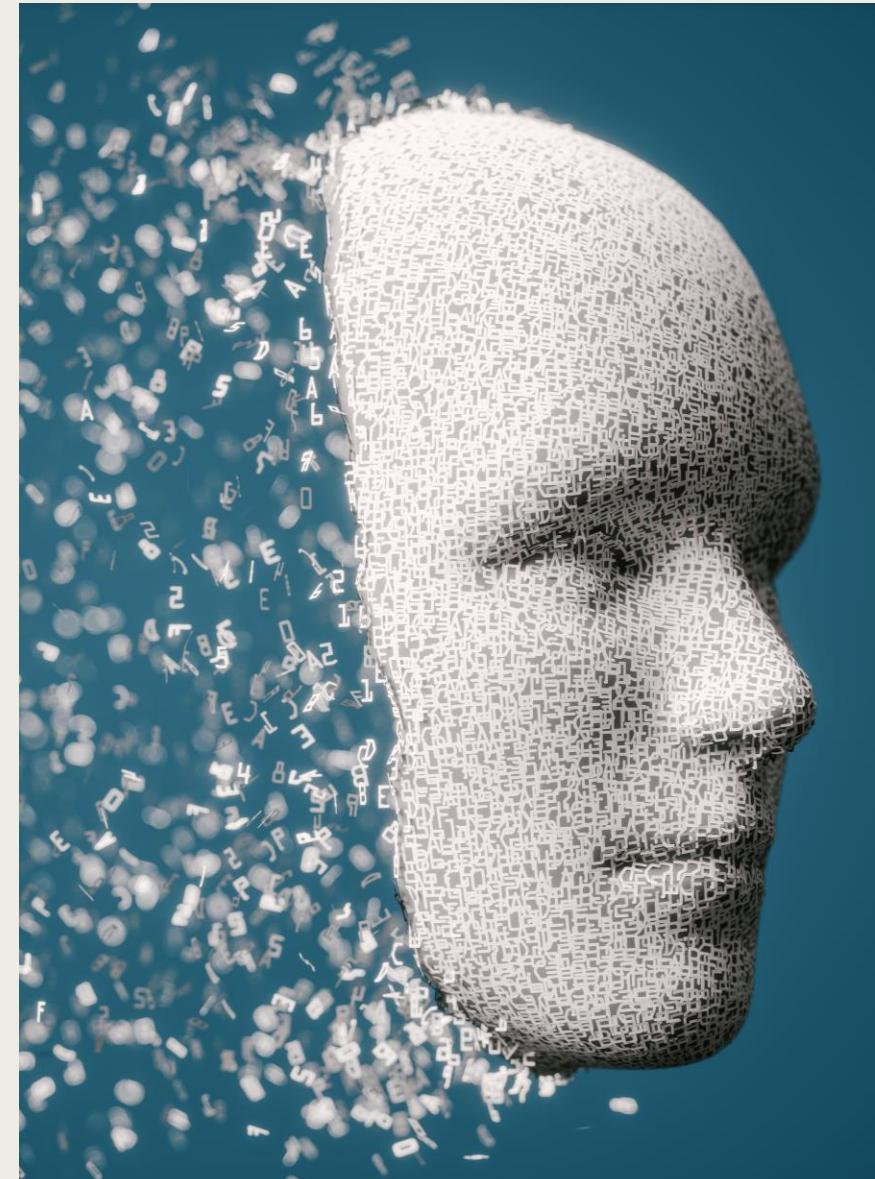
A.I.

One of the most important skills you will learn as a humanities scholar is how to navigate the use of AI.

It can be a really helpful tool, especially as an enhanced search engine, or to help synthesise or boil down complex topics into more manageable summaries.

HOWEVER, there are some golden rules when using AI in your studies:

- 1. NEVER** submit an assignment ‘written’ by generative AI software, such as ChatGPT. This is very easy to detect and you can face heavy penalties.
- 2. ALWAYS** double check the results provided by AI search engines. There are still plenty of errors and omissions, especially with literature searches.
- 3. DON’T** come to rely on it too heavily. It is a tool which can make certain tasks easier, but it is not a replacement for attending lectures, wider reading, or independent and critical thinking.



Etiquette and managing relationships

You'll probably start receiving a lot more emails than you are used to.

Try to develop a good system for figuring out what is worth reading and what can be discarded.

Lots of important information from the School of Humanities and from your lecturers will be sent by email, so do keep an eye out.

Make sure you turn up to everything you can – both teaching events and one-to-one sessions (with seminar leaders, academic advisors, etc.). If you can't make it, let the relevant person know, with as much notice as possible.

When sending emails to staff, always aim for politeness:

- Open with 'Dear Dr Bowman...' or 'Dear Professor Bombi...'
- Check academic titles on the staff webpages
- Always sign off with 'Best wishes' or 'Kind regards', and your name.



How your degree works

	Autumn Term (10 weeks)	Spring Term (10 weeks)	Summer Term (10 weeks)
First year (Stage 1)	Two compulsory modules (20 credits each)	Two modules (20 credits each)	Two modules (20 credits each)
Second year (Stage 2)	Two modules (20 credits each)	Two modules (20 credits each)	One module plus dissertation workshops (20 credits each)
Third year (Stage 3)	Dissertation (40 credits)	One module (20 credits)	Special Subject (40 credits)

This is a rough approximation and subject to change.

Choosing modules

You will choose your Stage 2 modules in the summer of your first year.

You will choose your Stage 3 modules in the summer of your second year.

Stage 3 Special Subjects are capped at around 18 students and so can be more competitive. Make sure you have a couple of back-up options.

You will choose your dissertation topic and supervisor in the spring of your second year.

There are lots of factors to consider when choosing your modules for subsequent years:

Subject matter.

Assessment patterns.

Staff and teaching styles.

Balance and range.



Community and Wellbeing

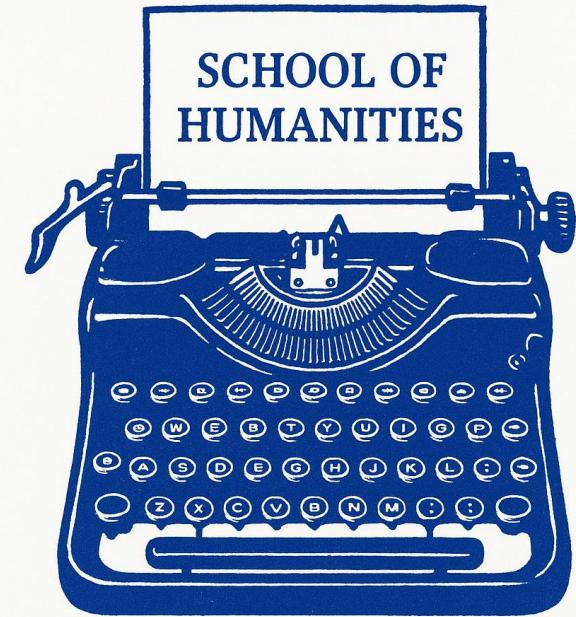
Services and support to help you thrive during your degree, and beyond.

Looking after yourself

- Your studies are just one part of your time at university. It is really important to make the most of everything else that is on offer here and to look after yourself too.
- There can be a great sense of community, but you need to join in to make it work. Join a society (**at the very minimum, the History Society**), go to events, take part, contribute ideas – all of these will enhance your experience and make the university a better place to live and study.
- There are lots of services to help you enhance your time at the University of Kent:
 - *Academic advisors*
 - *Student Engagement Support team*
 - *Skills for Academic Success (SAS)*
 - *Kent Students' Union*
 - *Student Support and Wellbeing*
 - *Careers and Employability Service*

What is The Bureau?

- A new initiative (January 2025)
- History in action
- Research projects undertaken alongside your studies
- Develop practical skills
- Employability points
- New projects every year



**THE
BUREAU**
University of Kent

Finchcocks300

- Finchcocks is a Georgian mansion
- Undertaking the history of a stately home
- Oral history
- Archival research – the house, its history, the gardens and the local area
- Interviews
- Making a documentary film



Opportunities 2025/6

- Podcasts
- Special Projects
- Social Media/
Promoting History

****Training available****

