Ways into History:
A Pathway to Further Study

Application Pack 2019-2020

University of Bristol
HOW TO APPLY

What Happens and When

Please complete the online application form by Monday 30 September 2019. If your application is successful, you will be offered a place to start in January 2020. You will be asked to pay the course fee of £350. If you receive benefits you can apply for funding support. Please email for details.

More information and advice

You are advised to read the information in this pack carefully before completing your application form. We are very happy to help or to answer any questions you may have, so don’t hesitate to get in touch.

The course director for Ways into History is Richard Stone. You can email him on Richard.Stone@bristol.ac.uk

How and when to apply

Admission is based on your application form and personal statement. The deadline for applications is Monday 30 September 2019.

Who can apply?

This course is designed primarily for mature students (over the age of 21) from the local area, who wish to return to further study. You do not need to have any previous qualifications to apply and applications from those returning to study after a gap are encouraged. The most important thing is to explain in your personal statement (on the application form) why you would like to study on the course.

Please complete the online application form on the web page

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/study/part-time/
ABOUT THE COURSE

Ways into History is a short course designed primarily to help mature students progress to a degree in the History department or return to study. You do not need to have any prior qualifications to apply. The most important thing is to explain in your personal statement (on the application form) why you would like to study on the course.

What it’s all about?

This course will consider the history of slavery, with a particular focus on the city of Bristol and its role in the slave trade. We will consider what exactly slavery is, and how slavery on the West Indian and American Plantations compares to other historic slave systems. We will also look at the broader impact of the slave trade; how did it benefit England, and to what extent did it damage Africa? Are English country houses tainted with the blood of slaves? We will ask how the slave trade has been remembered in Bristol and elsewhere, thinking about how commemoration has become intertwined with modern day political concerns. Throughout, our aim will be to tackle difficult questions about both the historic realities of slavery and the slave trade, and the ways in which it’s been remembered.

Dates for the course

The course starts on 15 January and ends on 20 May 2020. There are breaks for half term and Easter and there are 15 classes. Classes start at 6pm and end at 8.45pm on Wednesday evenings. Classes take place at the St Pauls Learning Centre, 94 Grosvenor Road, Bristol BS2 8XJ.

The course tutor will be Dr. Richard Stone, an expert in the history of Bristol’s overseas trade. We are very lucky to have two of the leading experts on the history of slavery in Bristol and its legacies, Dr. Madge Dresser (University of the West of England) and Dr. Edson Burton (poet, playwright and historian) as guest lecturers. Professor Mark Horton is also a guest lecturer (University of Bristol, television presenter and expert on historical archaeology, historical landscapes, maritime landscapes, long distance trade and social responses, early spread of Islam and Christianity, archaeology and the media.)
What does the course aim to achieve?

Most of all, we want you to have an enjoyable experience of returning to study. It’s important to realise that this won’t be like school: we want you to have your own thoughts and opinions (and disagree with the tutor sometimes!).

There will be an emphasis on work completed in your own time, with support and advice provided during the class meetings. We hope you will go away from the course feeling excited about history. You should also gain confidence for continuing your studies and a sense of the options that are open to you.

The course will encourage you to develop skills in:

Reading
We’ll be looking at a wide range of historical sources and different types of sources which help shed light on the history of slavery in Bristol and around the world, from merchants’ records of their trade, to the writings of abolitionists and the slaves themselves.

We’ll be thinking about how slavery has been presented in the media, in film, and in literature. We will go out into Bristol itself, looking at how traces of the slave trade still remain in the fabric of the city today.

Discussion
There will be an emphasis on class discussion and debate as well as on critical analysis of the sources. This is a great way to improve confidence and to start thinking about what you are reading. This leads towards…

Essay writing
There will be an emphasis in the opening weeks of the course on planning and writing essays so don’t panic if you haven’t written one before or if you are out of practice!

How is the course marked?

You will be awarded an overall mark for the course based on the mark of one assessed essay. There are NO EXAMS! You need 40% overall to pass the course.
What happens after the course?

There are three routes into further study at Bristol University from this course:

- If you feel confident about starting a degree straight away, you can apply for the BA in History. http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/study/undergraduate/

- If you feel you need a bit more preparation before starting an undergraduate degree, you can apply for the Foundation In Arts and Humanities (Cert HE), a way into university for people without formal qualifications. http://www.bristol.ac.uk/arts/courses/foundation/

- If you already have a degree, and want to return to study, you can apply for the MA in History http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/postgraduate/2014/prog_details/ARTF/503

The course tutor and course director will be happy to advise you on your options. You will be supported on your application to any of these programmes. You can find out more about mature students at Bristol University here: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/mature/

Course fee

The course fee for Ways into History is £350.

Students on low incomes are welcome to apply for funding support.

For more information on this support, or to find out how to finance a degree, you are advised to speak to Richard Stone. You can email him on Richard.Stone@bristol.ac.uk

Please note that students on Pathways to History must arrange payment before beginning the course.
Frequently asked questions

We have put the answers to some frequently asked questions below. If you have a question that is not covered here, then please get in touch. We will be happy to help, or to discuss any concerns you have.

What happens after I apply?
We will send you an acknowledgement of your application form within 21 days of receiving it.

I don’t have A-Levels (or) I don’t have GCSE History (or) I didn’t do well at school… can I apply?
Yes! You do not need to have any previous qualifications to apply for the course, as long as you can demonstrate that you are motivated and enthusiastic, that you enjoy history, and that you are committed to the idea of studying at a higher level.

How do you decide who gets a place on the course?
Admission to the course is not based on previous achievements or qualifications. We are looking for students who are motivated, enthusiastic and committed; who have strong reasons for wanting to return to studying; and who can demonstrate that they will be able to manage the demands of study at this level. We hope to accommodate as many students as we can on the course, though it may not be possible to give a place to everyone who applies.

What if I am not offered a place?
Anyone who is not offered a place will be encouraged to talk through other options with the Course Director.

Will I automatically be offered a place on a degree afterwards?
No, you will need to apply for a place. You will be given lots of information on the options for continuing your studies as part of the course.

What if I’m not sure I want to continue at the end?
The Ways Into History course should be useful and enjoyable in itself. If you decide not to apply for a degree at the end, we hope you will have gained important skills and confidence. Often evidence of further study at this level can be useful in career progression or in taking on work in the community.

How can I fit my studies around work and/or family?
The course itself is taught one evening per week, on fifteen evenings over six months. This format is designed to make it accessible to a wide range of students. On top of this, we would normally expect you to complete 7-10 hours of work in your own time per week. There will be advice during the course on managing your studies, and you will be with a group of mature students who are faced with similar pressures on their time – the group atmosphere can be useful in adjusting to the academic demands of the course.

How many past students have gone on to a degree?
The University runs a range of pathway courses including Reading English Literature which has run since 2007. 25 Reading English Literature students have gone on to degree-level study; 22 at Bristol, and 3 at Bath Spa, Exeter or the Open University.
MATURE STUDENTS’ STORIES

Deborah’s Story

Deborah Wheeler lives in Easton with four of her five children. She used to be a nurse but now she is a mature student on the BA in History at the University of Bristol. She was one of the first students to take the Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities programme in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol, and is now in the third year of a degree in History at Bristol.

“I came across the Foundation Year by accident,” she explains. A single mum on benefits looking after her children by herself for the last 14 years, Deb has suffered from anxiety and depression. However, a couple of years ago, she joined the Single Parent Action Network (SPAN), a community-based organisation providing support, help and training for single parents in Bristol.

“I found myself doing all sorts of courses which kept me busy until I had done them all!” she said. “Then I found out about a six-week programme on women in history run by staff from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bristol, with SPAN as a community partner. I was hooked.”

The Foundation Year is a new one-year programme that provides a new route to an Arts degree for students who don’t have the usual qualifications or who have been out of education for a while.

“When the tutor mentioned the Foundation Year at Bristol University, I thought I’d apply, even though I thought I was never going to be good enough,” she added. “I’ve been out of education for 34 years.”

Deb not only got an interview, she was offered a place, and just a few months later, became part of the first cohort of Foundation Year students at the University.

“When I heard that I’d got a place, I really couldn’t believe that I was going to be a real student at the University of Bristol,” she said. “When I tell my neighbours and friends, they’re always very surprised when I tell them that I’m a student at Bristol University!”

From day one, Deb’s sense of self-worth has grown and grown. “At the end of the first day, I felt like I was floating three feet above the ground as it was made clear that we had each earned our place here,” she explained. “We all feel part of student life at the University; not left looking in from the outside.”

Deb was one of Foundation Year students, whose ages range from 19 to 70. All brought different life experiences to the debates in lecture halls and seminar rooms.

“The course is fantastic,” she said. “I was worried that I wouldn’t be able to take on any more information, as I’m so busy with the children, but I’ve proved to myself that I can! And also, the more I do, the more I want to do.”

One of the things that Deb found surprising about the course was how the seemingly unconnected list of subjects on the course are joined together by Foundation Year’s theme ‘What is it to be human?’.

“The course is so diverse, but each lecture is put in context,” she said. “You find connections wherever you look to help you make sense of things; even through analysing the songs of Bob Dylan, one of the more surprising subjects covered by the Foundation Year!”
As part of the course, Deborah wrote essays on subjects like public art and the sexuality of Christ. “I do find writing a challenge, but I’m getting a lot of support from the University and the course tutors”, she said.

“My kids think I have become the most boring person on the planet as I have to spout on about everything”, she adds, laughing. “But they are also seeing some changes as I’m helping them to think about providing evidence to back up statements in their homework! I think they’re really proud of me. I’m going to encourage my daughter to apply!”

The Foundation Year is a flexible course, with scope to follow your own interests from all that is on offer, and Deb developed a passion for modern history, particularly women’s history.

“I enjoy having discussions on a different level now. I was even able to exchange views confidently with another student and our tutor after viewing a film at the Watershed recently. I’d never have thought I could do that.”

“This has been truly life changing. Now I know I can do a degree.”

Judith’s Story

I grew up in Knowle West. I wasn’t encouraged to do well at school. I used to write really badly, I couldn’t even read my own writing. I only had one teacher who realised I was having difficulties and tried to help me make my writing legible.

I wanted to be a nurse but was told by a careers advisor that I couldn’t because of my qualifications – so why didn’t I do catering? I left school at 16 and went to college and I was put on a Certificate of PreVocational Education for young people who hadn’t done well at school. That was the first time I found out that I hadn’t done well and that everything I had worked so hard for didn’t amount to much.

I didn’t have lots of confidence. One of the tasters we did was childcare. I really liked it and they put me on to the second year to study family and community care. But it didn’t qualify me as a nursery nurse and I didn’t know that until it finished. I left college a little bit disillusioned. My mum was a single parent, so I got a job full time in catering and planned to stay there. Only later did I train as a nursery nurse, which was hard work. But I got a job and then I fell into youth work, which I love. I work with young people aged 9 to 16. I work and live in St Pauls. I love the people and the community spirit. Only people living here know what it’s like. There’s nowhere as wonderful and diverse as this area.

Last year I found out, through my work, that I am dyslexic. I always avoided paperwork because I found it hard. It didn’t make sense. When I did ask for help in college and school I was treated as if I was stupid. So only this year, at nearly 40, did I get help – but that’s partly about undoing the last 30 odd years. I’m a slow burner.

I found out about a Bristol University course called ‘Second Skins’ in the Black Development Agency newsletter. It was free to people without a degree, which appealed to me as it wasn’t too much of a risk. I thought: I’d love to find out more about myself, read with other people and open my mind. I wanted to learn more who I am as an individual and as part of a community. I felt I could take a chance on it, and try to find out about something new.
I liked that somebody black was teaching it and that she’d done well in the educational system. I didn’t know anybody could be passionate about literature or why they would be, but she was. I didn’t always understand the words but you could ask questions, it didn’t matter how silly they were.

I loved a book we read called *Black Teacher* by Beryl Gilroy, who was Britain’s first black head teacher. I empathised with what she had suffered but also how she used it to empower her and others.

Our tutor told us about the Reading English Literature course and I saw it as a stepping stone. I was nervous about applying for it and spending money on it when I wasn’t sure whether I’d like it. But that became a motivating factor too, because I didn’t want to waste my money. We were in a beautiful room at the University, full of books and the smell of books! We had another tutor, with even more of a passion for literature.

I loved the short stories we read and *Frankenstein*. It was very hard to read Shakespeare, just trying to get into the mindset and language. I would say *King Lear* and I are friends now, but I wouldn’t say we were best friends! But his creativity is amazing, I don’t know if any other writer compares to him. There are so many hidden meanings in it. He attacks society without drawing blood, which in that time was a dangerous thing to do. I never thought I’d be inspired by Shakespeare partly because he’s a white writer. So that was a pleasant surprise. He was a man beyond his time. He wrote 400 years ago but he’s still being read. There were times when I thought I had nothing to say about it, because everyone has said what I think. He was kind of a rebel. He wasn’t rich, but he did very well. He didn’t go to university like other writers, he did it in his own way. That gave me something to empathise with.

I found it hard to write essays while working full-time and having been out of education. I had to get used to the different standards that were expected, in getting up to university level. It was hard, but it was brilliant watching myself improve with each essay. The tutor showed you what you needed to do. When you’d made a good point, he’d let you know; and when you hadn’t, he’d say ‘What about this?’

I’m thinking of doing the English Literature and Community Engagement degree or maybe studying youth work. I’d like to do more taster courses too and learn more about other writers. I’ve got a long list of books to read now, recommended by the tutor and other students. I want to read *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, D.H. Lawrence, Dickens, Toni Morrison…

I took a chance with the Second Skins course and it took me to a better place…

**Damien’s Story**

I went to school in rural Ireland and was taught by the Marist Brothers. I left when I was 12 with no qualifications and was living in London by the time I was 15.

I didn’t become immersed in reading until I was 22. I spent a lot of time in and out of jail between the ages of 16 and 25 down to a heroin and alcohol addiction. While I was there I came across a magazine called *rebel inc*, which had modern writers like Irvine Welsh and extracts from publications that had been banned in earlier periods, like *Hunger* and *Lolita*. I found about ten copies and it spoke to me, I could identify with the literature because it was quite rebellious.

I started reading a lot of Yeats, Burroughs, Faulkner and Hermann Hesse. There is a certain amount of shame when you’re outside of society. These books said that I was OK, that everyone has a good and bad side and their own struggles, that I was a part of society.
I got into reading initially out of boredom and escapism. Then I found myself reading stuff I wouldn’t have expected to enjoy, like Jeanette Winterson: I love her stuff. The novels I read often contained information that I would have previously known nothing about, this spurred me on to find out more about a variety of subjects. Initially I read people I could identify with, then I started to develop empathy for others, for different cultures and experiences, to ask: ‘What’s it like for you?’ I particularly have a fondness for Latin American literature.

I worked for about 15 years on building sites and labouring, as a sort of jack of all trades. I did a BTEC in dance movement and the therapeutic process. All of the students and tutors were women. I was interested in what life is like for other people. Through that I came into contact with people with learning difficulties and those with brain damage from accidents. I was moved deeply by this course. I’ve learnt that so much communication isn’t verbal, that there’s so much else going on. I now work in mental health services for an organization called Supported Independence Ltd. I got the opportunity to do a N.V.Q 3 in health and social care while there.

I had always regretted that although I am well read I am not well educated. I’d always secretly wished I could be and looked to see what was out there, not really believing I could get in to university. When I saw the Reading English Literature course I thought I could do it. It wasn’t a huge commitment, and then I would know where I stand. I had doubts about whether I would fit in with the other students. Had I read the right stuff? Had I read enough? I was worried that the way I think and speak are two different things. How would I write an essay?

But the students on the course were fantastic, a wide variety of people with a common interest in literature. It wasn’t how I’d imagined school being, it was very open. We were encouraged to give our opinions. I felt I was giving as well as getting from the tutor. I liked being told what to read and being given the tools to allow a closer inquiry. Now I’m getting more out of what I read.

We went to see King Lear in Stratford as part of the course. That was a big deal for me. It was very moving and it opened up doors, to realize that this is mine as well as belonging to other people. I’d read the play 4 or 5 times before we went and had drafted my essay. But seeing it, the language just fell into place; the tragedy and darkness, the love and hope of it. I got 67% for my essay, which was fantastic for my confidence: I didn’t believe that mark, I had to re-read it.

I’ve read obsessively for the last 10 years but now it’s gone off the radar, I have 5 books on the go at a time. I’m 39 and there’s a new excitement in my life, I’m moving into the complete unknown.

When I tell people what I’m up to, they’re amazed that Bristol University would have me, that it has something like the Reading English Literature course and allows so many people from different backgrounds to come into the University.

I’ve now been offered a place on the English Literature and Community Engagement degree. The community engagement aspect of the course relates to my experience. I wouldn’t be in the position I’m in now if I hadn’t read. I believe I would not have found the desire to recover from drug addiction had I not read the literature I found. A lot of people are stuck – you don’t know what you don’t know. You don’t think there’s a world outside your little world. I have an interesting healthy life, which I enjoy, and a great partner. All of that, and how I relate to people, is down to reading. Without it, I would have been stuck in self. I read to escape out of myself, into the world.