History A Level

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Jennifer Smyth

EXAM BOARD

OCR

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A level History at GCH covers a broad range of study, encompassing the history of England, South Africa and Russia and including study of social, political, economic and cultural history. It takes students through momentous changes in England in the medieval and early modern periods, through the impact of colonialism in South Africa, right up to the global impact on the modern world of the events and consequences of the Russian Revolution. A full overview of the content and assessment of the course is provided overleaf. If you enjoy studying the past and debating issues, then you will very much enjoy this course. In comparison with GCSE History, it offers far greater depth of study and development of student expertise in the areas of study.

SKILLS REQUIRED

- Ability to write fluently and persuasively.
- Critical thinking and close reading of written information.
- Ability to see things from different points of view.
- Analysis of the causes of major events and the changes brought about by them.
- Evaluation of source material and historians' interpretations.
- Ability to undertake independent research.
- Participation in discussions and debates, and delivering of presentations.
- Ability to identify important evidence, see the bigger picture and make connections.

PROGRAMME OF STUDY

British period study and enquiry:
England 1445–1509: Lancastrians, Yorkists and Henry VII

25% of total A Level

Exam paper
1 hour 30 minutes

Non-British period study:
Apartheid and Reconciliation: South African Politics 1948–1999

15% of total A Level

Exam paper
1 hour

Thematic study and historical interpretations:
Russia and its Rulers 1855–1964

40% of total A Level

Exam paper
2 hours 30 minutes

Topic based essay:
Elizabeth I

3000–4000 word coursework essay

20% of total A Level

Greycoat Place
Westminster
London SW1P 2DY
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EXAMINATION RESULTS

History A Level exam results at The Grey Coat Hospital are outstanding. In 2026, 54% of GCH students achieved A*–A grades, 79% achieved A*–B and 92% achieved A*–C. These figures are far above national averages, particularly at the higher end: our students are over twice as likely to attain A*-A grades as their peers nationally.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

We run a range of History-related visits and activities. Trips to support the curriculum are organised to the National Gallery, to Parliament, and to the National Archives, and there is an opportunity to attend a conference on Russia and its Rulers with talks by eminent historians. Sixth form students support younger students by helping with KS3 History Club and mentoring GCSE students. We also have an active Senior History Society. Members explore topics outside of the curriculum, present on their own areas of interest, plan our Black History Month programme, invite external speakers, and run the school History Magazine.

FUTURE CAREERS

There is a great deal of support for students who might want to study history at university at GCH. We regularly advertise and promote a range of university taster days, lectures, open days and summer schools. We provide reading lists and help with writing personal statements. We take students interested in studying history at university on a trip to Oxford University to visit two colleges and attend seminars run by history tutors. We also run specific Oxbridge preparation sessions and mock interviews. Over the last seven years, ten of our students have taken up places to study history at either Oxford or Cambridge.

The Guardian newspaper recently reported on the fact that “History graduates are found in disproportionate numbers on the boards of the UK’s top 100 companies.” The report found that “the most frequently mentioned advantages history graduates displayed were the ability to read quickly and effectively and process large amounts of information, think deeply about a subject, develop cogent arguments and communicate clearly.” Studying History at A Level opens doors to a huge range of future courses and careers.