

# Jesus College, Oxford



## Subject Notes: MODERN LANGUAGES

### *Academic Staff*

#### Fellows

**Professor Katrin Kohl** is a Fellow and Tutor in German. She teaches German literature from 1750. Her research focuses on poetry and poetics, and on the theory and practice of metaphor. Currently she is on research leave, leading an interdisciplinary research project on Creative Multilingualism for the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages.

**Professor Caroline Warman**, Fellow and Tutor in French. She teaches and researches eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French literature and thought, and has translated novels and essays from French. She has just finished a book about Enlightenment philosopher Diderot and co-organised a congress on the Enlightenment for 1500 people from all over the world. She teaches French literature and thought and also translation to all years.

#### Lecturers

**Dr Julie Curtis**, a Fellow in Russian at Wolfson College, is a Lecturer for Jesus. Her research interests lie in twentieth-century Russian literature, especially Mikhail Bulgakov and Evgenii Zamiatin. She has also published on the literature of the Gorbachov era.

**Dr Kirstin Gwyer** is a Departmental Lecturer in German at Jesus. She teaches German literature from the eighteenth century to the present, with a special interest in twentieth- and twenty-first-century prose fiction, and translation into and out of German. Her research interests are in the first-generation Holocaust novel, contemporary German-Jewish and American-Jewish literature, German memory writing since 1945, and postmodernism and post-postmodernism.

**Dr Elena Lombardi**, a Fellow of Balliol College, is a Lecturer in Italian for Jesus College. Her teaching interests focus on Dante, early Italian poetry, and Medieval Studies.

**Dr Daniela Omlor**, Fellow in Spanish at Lincoln College, also looks after Jesus students. Her research focuses on contemporary Spanish literature, with a particular emphasis on memory, trauma and exile. Her first book examined the role of memory and self-representation in the works of Jorge Semprún. Currently, she is exploring the interaction between memory and fiction in recent novels by Javier Cercas, Javier Marías and Antonio Muñoz Molina and others, in order to investigate how the recovery of historical memory in Spanish novels increasingly extends beyond the Spanish Civil War.

### *About the Course*

The study of Modern Languages provides both practical linguistic training in the written and spoken language and an extensive introduction to many areas of European literature and thought. You will develop oral proficiency in the language(s) you study by regular contact with native speakers employed by the University and by colleges. You can also study various kinds of linguistics, film studies and advanced translation (in French and German).

Oxford's Modern Languages Faculty is one of the largest in the country, with a total intake of 310 students a year (including joint degrees). We enjoy the advantages of a central building - the Taylor Institution -

as the focus for our work. This building houses the Taylor Institution Library, which is the biggest research library in Britain devoted to modern languages, and also an undergraduate lending library for modern languages. The University's modern and excellently equipped Language Centre received special praise in the last Teaching Quality Assessment. It has a library of taped, self-instructional courses in all major European languages and a large collection of reference works, listening comprehension and video materials, some of which are specifically tailored to the needs of Modern Languages students. It is also equipped with satellite TV and computer-assisted language learning facilities.

Jesus College accepts students for all the languages taught at Oxford, and has Fellows in French and German, Lecturers in Italian, Russian and Spanish, and Lecturers in French and German. We also accept students for all the Joint Honour Schools, combining one language with Classics, English, History, Linguistics, Philosophy, or a Middle Eastern language. Each subject is studied to the same level, i.e. there are no subsidiary subjects. The focus of the Modern Languages course is on language, literature and (optionally) linguistics.

The course consists of two parts. The first year leads up to the Preliminary Examination, and at this stage the elements of the course are compulsory, while the remainder of the course offers a wide range of options and prepares undergraduates for the Final Examination. Teaching takes the form of tutorials (involving two or more students) and classes, which will usually be organised and taken by Fellows and Lecturers of the College, although those pursuing some of the more specialised options may receive tutorials from an outside tutor, and in smaller languages and in linguistics some of the teaching is organised on a departmental basis. Students will normally have one tutorial a week for which they produce an essay (in English) on a given topic, and language classes for each language. In addition, a wide range of lectures will be on offer: these are organised by the University and given by tutors from a variety of colleges. They cover the syllabus but are not compulsory (except for those in the first year). Tutors will advise undergraduates concerning which lectures are likely to prove most beneficial.

### *The first year*

The first-year course is intended to consolidate and develop language skills learnt at school and to awaken an interest in areas which may be new. Language work will include intensive study of grammar and vocabulary to lay a firm foundation for the remainder of the course and there will be particular emphasis on developing reading and writing skills. Tutorial work and lectures will introduce students to literature and train the skills of critical analysis. The examination for any one language consists of two 'papers' (i.e. exams) testing language skills and two papers on literature. It is taken at the end of the first year. The course leading up to the Preliminary Examination usually consists of two parts: two languages, or one language and a Joint-School subject, or one language and linguistics. It is also possible to do French or German 'sole'.

### *The second and final years*

This offers a wide range of options, from which students can design a course to suit their interests. Oxford is one of the few British universities at which it is possible to explore foreign literature right back to medieval times; on the other hand students are also able to concentrate on modern literature. Undergraduates studying one language on its own are required to include some medieval or early modern languages and the literature period in their course. Options in linguistics permit students to treat the language from an academic angle as an object of study, complementing the development of practical language skills. The language work is intended to foster an accurate and sophisticated use of the language both orally and in writing, and good reading skills.

The examinations consist of five papers in literature/linguistics (three in one language and two in the other) and five papers in practical language skills (three in one language and two in the other), plus an oral examination in each language consisting of an oral discourse, conversation and a listening

comprehension exercise. In addition, students may pursue a special interest in an optional subject or extended essay.

### *The year abroad*

All Modern Languages courses and Joint Schools with Modern Languages last for four years, including a year abroad after the second year.

A common pattern is for students to spend their year abroad as Assistants, working in a school in the country of their choice. This offers experience of working in the country, and it is organised through a scheme run by the British Council. Students may also spend the year at a university abroad; this is discussed thoroughly with the tutors in Modern Languages, and students are responsible for making arrangements themselves. Students normally stay in one country throughout the year, but if they are studying two languages, they are advised to spend periods in the country of their other language during vacations.

The College has an exchange scheme with the University of Trier, which accommodates one student a year. All undergraduate members of the College are eligible to apply for this exchange.

### *Starting a language from scratch*

This is possible in the case of Italian, German, Portuguese, Russian and a Middle Eastern Language. Candidates must combine study of the new language with a language which they have taken to A2 level or equivalent, and they will be expected to have achieved a high level of proficiency in the grammar of the language studied to A2. In the case of Italian, an accepted candidate will be expected to complete a programme of work in the vacation before coming up to Oxford, since they will be examined at the end of their first year on a par with students who commenced their university course with A2 level Italian.

### *Joint Schools*

Modern Languages may be studied in combination as below:

- Classics and Modern Languages
- English and Modern Languages
- European and Middle Eastern Languages
- History and Modern Languages
- Modern Languages and Linguistics
- Philosophy and Modern Languages

### *Admissions*

In a total College entry of about 100 undergraduates, 9-10 are offered places in a typical year to read Modern Languages and related joint schools. Candidates are selected on the basis of academic record (e.g. GCSEs) and potential, as shown by their UCAS reference, submitted written work, and performance in written tests and in interviews if shortlisted.

**Academic requirements:** Offers made to candidates will be conditional upon A-level results (AAA, with an A in each of the languages the candidate is applying to study to degree level) or equivalent qualifications.

**Written test:** All candidates must take the **Modern Languages Admissions Test (MLAT)** in schools on **4 November 2020**. Please note that separate registration is required and the deadline for doing this is **15 October 2020**. Each language-specific test is taken only if the candidate is currently

studying the language to A2 level or equivalent. The tests consist of a monolingual exercise and a number of non-consecutive sentences for translation from and into the language, and are primarily intended to test knowledge of grammar rather than vocabulary. For further details, see: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/tests/mlat>

**Written work:** Candidates are required to submit marked pieces of recent school or college work: one piece in each of the languages they are currently studying, plus one piece written in English (perhaps on literature, or history, or some other subject you are studying at school or college) to show how you construct an argument and express your ideas in English. The deadline to submit written work is **10 November 2020**. Further information can be viewed here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/written-work>

**Interviews:** All shortlisted candidates will have an interview lasting approximately 30 minutes with our Modern Languages tutors, with additional interviews with lecturers in the other language(s) applied for as appropriate. Interviews will be mainly in English, but will include a brief conversation in the languages offered if they are being studied to A2 level. We aim to encourage candidates to do themselves justice at interview, and we will ask them about their course rather than expect them to have done a certain type of course. We expect candidates to be motivated to do a course with a focus on literature, but do not assume that they will have studied literature formally.

**Deferred Entry:** Applications for deferred entry to Jesus College are accepted. You must apply for deferred entry at the time of application to Oxford: you cannot change your mind after an offer has been made. Please refer to departmental web sites for subject-specific advice. You should be aware that applicants who are offered places for deferred entry will generally be among the strongest of the cohort for their subject. We would not usually offer more than one deferred place per subject in order not to disadvantage the following year's candidates. In some cases, an applicant for deferred entry may be offered a place for non-deferred entry instead. If you require further advice, please contact the Admissions Officer via [admissions.officer@jesus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:admissions.officer@jesus.ox.ac.uk)

### *Postgraduate Studies and Careers*

Oxford has a large, varied, and active teaching and research community in Modern Languages. There are over ninety members of the Faculty, with research interests spread across the full chronological range of the languages and into most areas of linguistics and literary study. The College welcomes applicants for the following postgraduate degrees:

- MSt or MPhil Modern Languages
- DPhil Medieval and Modern Languages
- MSt Women's Studies

The undergraduate course in Modern Languages at Oxford is intended to transmit an awareness of one or more foreign cultures in relation to students' native culture and to equip students with a sophisticated command of the language or languages they study. Beyond these subject-specific aims, the course trains students' critical faculties and gives them a wide range of other 'transferable skills'. Students learn to organise their time and cope with working under pressure, and the course provides intensive training in communication skills: weekly essays demand quick assimilation of material and foster writing skills, while discussion in tutorials and classes develops confidence in presenting an independent view clearly and comprehensibly. Recent studies indicate that an increasing number of British employers are realising the value of recruiting trained linguists, and Oxford Modern Languages graduates regularly go into highly competitive areas such as law, management consultancy, accountancy, international press agencies, the media, advertising, the Foreign Office and the performing arts.

## *Preliminary Reading and Further Information*

Further information about reading Modern Languages at Oxford can be found on the faculty website: [www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)

Information about Admissions is available at: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/modern-languages>

## *Contact details*

If you have any questions about our entrance requirements, or about applying to study at Jesus College, please contact the Admissions Officer:

Tel: 01865 279721  
Email: [admissions.officer@jesus.ox.ac.uk](mailto:admissions.officer@jesus.ox.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/study-here](http://www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/study-here)

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