

A LEVEL HISTORY

2025-26



THE
PORTSMOUTH
GRAMMAR
SCHOOL



Course Outline

The PGS History course is based on modules offered by OCR. All examinations are taken at the end of Year 13. The A Level History course comprises a range of topics. All sets will study at least two topics of Late Modern History, including coursework on the Vietnam War. Given the current subject interests and specialisms of the members of the History Department, the topics that could feature on the course include:

Late Modern: aspects of Britain 1900 – 1951, Russian history from 1855 – 1964, the Vietnam War and the US War of Independence.

You will have two teachers throughout the A Level course.

A Level External Assessment

There will be a coursework element to the course involving an independently researched project, based around a taught topic, normally the Vietnam War, of around 3000–4000 words which will account for 20% of the final mark.

This will be excellent preparation for university style research and will be marked internally by teachers and moderated by the exam board. The course is also examined by three external examinations with the US paper accounting for 15% of the final work. The British paper accounts for 25% and the thematic Russian paper makes up the remaining 40%.

Entry Requirements

At least a Grade 6 in GCSE/IGCSE History, or equivalent, is required, or a similar grade in GCSE English if History has not been studied before. Between 25 and 30 pupils normally study History to A Level each year, and several in recent years have read History at Oxbridge and other top flight universities such as Durham.

Skills Required and Developed

You need to be interested in the past and to see value in studying it, whether in terms of how it explains the present, or for its own sake. You must also be prepared to read a lot, and to learn from and digest what you have read. History is a literary subject, so there is also a need for you to be able to write literate and logical essays which analyse and explain. It also helps if you enjoy arguing and debating. Historians should have naturally inquiring minds, so a sense of curiosity is helpful.

Beyond the Classroom

The Senior History Society has talks on a wide range of topics by outside guest speakers. The annual dinner is always well attended and enjoyable. We organise an annual overseas trip and have recently visited Vietnam, the USA, Budapest and Vienna.

University Courses and Professions that require the Subject

The skills required for History are much prized by both universities and future employers. Careers for which History is a good grounding include the legal professions, journalism and the Civil Service. Business and industry also value the skills of an historian; the comedians Sacha Baron-Cohen and Al Murray are History graduates and so too are a fair number of our politicians! Some may even want to teach.



More Information

Contact our Head of History & Politics, Mrs N Neil:

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You can also find more information on the exam board's website: www.ocr.org.uk