

Having, during my three years of undergraduate study at Warwick, developed a desire to forge a career in academia, reading for an MA is an essential step on my future career path. Through studying a wide range of topics at Warwick, I have developed a profound interest in social history which, combined with issues I encountered while writing an extended essay on the reasons behind the British abolition of the slave trade, has naturally led me to my dissertation topic.

Among historians of the British abolition of the slave trade there has been a tendency to focus upon the importance of economic motivations (as in the case of Eric Williams) or upon the importance of middle-class, often religiously based, anti-slavery organisations led by prominent political figures (for example J. R. Oldfield's work). Arguably, these treatments have almost completely neglected, with the obvious exception of Olaudah Equiano, the experiences of the black, British population during abolition; at this time black Britons lived an existence undefined by society or by law.

For my dissertation, therefore, I propose to investigate the experience of black Britons during the era of abolition, between the first presentation of a petition for abolition to parliament in 1783 and the passing of the Slave Trade Act in 1807, with particular emphasis on the following questions; what was the status of black Britons and did it change as abolition gathered popular and parliamentary support? What was the attitude of the white working-class to their black counterparts? Was there a feeling of kinship between these groups? Can working-class involvement in abolition be recovered via their attitude toward black Britons? Questions such as these will, I feel, bring a new perspective to the study of abolitionism.

Taking the MA in History at Warwick allows me the opportunity to explore these ideas in a 20,000 word dissertation. Perhaps most important for me, however, is that the taught element of the course provides the chance to further my knowledge of areas relating to and surrounding my dissertation topic; I hope to take modules on 'Planters and Plantation Societies in British America and the United States, 1607-1865' and 'Politics and Opinion in Hanoverian Britain', both of which will prove invaluable to my further study.

As an institution, Warwick has a rich heritage in the field of social history. The expertise of members of the Centre for Caribbean Studies and the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies will provide the perfect environment for me to learn and continue to grow as a historian. With professors specialising in both the history of slavery and the history of the working-classes the experience of the History Department will help me achieve my ambitions to continue beyond a Masters Degree and expand my dissertation topic in the future.

Having completed an 8,000 word essay for my undergraduate degree, I feel that I am well suited to face the challenges that the Masters will pose. Having utilised numerous primary sources during this essay, the core module I will study at Warwick, 'Theory, Skill and Method', will give me the opportunity to further develop and enhance my research skills, particularly in terms of interpreting biographical accounts which will be essential to my study, and make me a more rounded historian.