

Liberal Arts at Warwick University

1. Why did you decide to study a Liberal Arts degree?

I like a variety of subjects spreading across the arts and sciences and wanted to choose a degree that was modern, and job focused. The degree is interdisciplinary allowing me to follow my interests in a unique way and complete a broad range of modules, providing me with a holistic view of how the world is created and developed through different disciplines. Ultimately, I wanted to fuse together the arts and the sciences while completing core modules which provide me with skills and challenge the way I think.

The main aim of the degree is to develop the student through problem-based learning and group work both which I have strengths in. I think this course is particularly interesting as we are encouraged to challenge and explore our ways of thinking and learning.

2. What universities did you consider ?

I looked at:

- Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Birmingham
- Psychology with innovation at the university of Bristol
- Liberal Art and Sciences at University College London
- Liberal Arts at the University of Nottingham

3. What made you choose Warwick?

I liked the fact that there was a lot of core modules, which are skills based and focus on learning through problem solving and group work, which I enjoy and provide a grounding to tie everything together. The core modules are also taught in the form of workshops, provided with additional film screenings. The core modules do not take the form of lectures, meaning that you are encouraged to debate and discuss your ideas in an engaging manner, rather than just sitting in a room with hundreds of student listening to a lecture. The modules on offer from other department are also high level and engaging.

On the open day the staff and students in the department were also very friendly and approachable and genuinely cared. The cohort is also small, approximately 30 in my year, so you get to build rapport with the lectures and connect with the department as a whole.

The Liberal arts degree at Warwick is also fairly new meaning that they have looked at other courses and learnt from them.

The university also has a safe campus.

4. What modules have you studied in your first year?

Each year is worth 120 CATs, the core modules account for 75 CATs and the optional modules account for 45 CATs

Core modules:

- Qualitative Methods for Undergraduate Research
 - Studied how to conduct an interview, then carried one out, learning how to complete the ethical forms
 - Completed archival research
 - Learnt about plagiarism
 - Studied letters, newspapers, books, music and how they can be analysed
 - Assessed through an online test, essay and portfolio
 - One 2-hour workshop per week during term 1
 - 15 CATS

- Art and Revolution
 - Learnt about the French, Russian, Chinese and Aboriginal revolutions using different forms of creative media to aid our research and understanding such as; paintings, films, archival pieces, plays, music, posters
 - Each week we would work together with people who had read different source materials and create and perform group presentations
 - Assessed through 4 essays and a group presentation and summer exam
 - One 2-hour workshop per week and additional film screenings during term 1 and 2
 - 30 CATS

- Science, society and the media
 - Each week we focused on a different topic looking at the divide between the humanities and the sciences, discussing the ways society views science as well as looking at the role of the media.
 - Looked at the history of science, particularly focusing on the scientific method
 - Assessed through an in-class test, essay, film and summer exam
 - One 2-hour workshop per week and additional film screenings during term 1 and 2

- Liberal arts: Principles and praxis (no CATS)
 - Discussed ways of learning and learnt about the ancient origins of a liberal arts education and what it means to be a liberal artist.

- No assessment
- 1-hour a week term 1

Optional Modules:

- Quantitative Methods for Undergraduate Research
 - Weekly lectures of 2 hours and computer workshops of 2 hour during term 2
 - 15 CATs
 - Studied different ways of displaying data and learnt how to analyse data using excel. We were supposed to be learning about other computer programmes however this was affected by strikes.
 - Assessed through an individual report, a group report, group presentation and computer exam

- Introduction to art history: The Natural World and Arts of Modernity
 - Two 1-hour lectures and a 2-hour seminar per week during term 1
 - Taught me about the different movements in art throughout the ages, focussing on who did them, why, how and their impacts
 - Assessed through an essay, slide test and exam
 - 30 CATs

- Art History Study Skills
 - Completed with my history of art module to provide me with the skills to complete a history of art module
 - 1-and-a-half-hour seminar per week during term 1
 - Assessed through a small essay

- Certificate of digital Literacy which was an optional certificate which we could complete
 - 1 hour seminar per week during term 1
 - Completed discussions about how to be safe online and what employers want as well as learning coding
 - Assessed through turning up every week, contributing and creating a group presentation on a website/ social media page that needed to be improved and how we would improve it

5. What are you enjoying most about your Liberal Arts degree?

I enjoy the fact that the modules are very varied and interesting, with a range of teaching styles so you never get bored. The cohort is small and there is a lot of group work, so it means you get to know people better on the course compared to larger courses. The people on the course are very likeminded as they are all multi-talented, creative and progressive in their ideas and attitudes. As well as this, you get to choose modules that interest you so the course suits your skill set and passions.

6. What surprised you most about your degree course?

How hard it is to produce high quality group work when you are working with people who have different timetables, skill sets and expectations. How approachable the lectures are compared to other departments, and how departments differ throughout the university. I was surprised with how quickly I got to know people in my department, I ended up bumping into them all over campus. As well as this, liberal arts students get to know lots of people across the different departments in the university, meaning that most likely you meet someone who knows someone on the course.

7. What skills, developed at A-level, have helped you in your university studies?

The skills that have helped me the most are

- Use and understanding of Research methods
- self-motivation and passion
- Independent learning
- Essay writing
- Problem solving
- Time management
- Revision techniques
- Teamwork
- Presentations

8. What is the most challenging aspect of a Liberal Arts degree?

Everyone has different timetables as people are studying different things so the cohort can become very spread out, so you need to put effort in to make time to see people on your course, as you may not have any lectures together. As you take a variety of classes, with different people, it can be challenging at the start as you work with different departments. However, once you have gone to a few classes you fit in with everyone else, as everyone is new to that module. The difference in timetables can make the group work more difficult however it is easy enough to sort out.

It can be hard completing a module when everyone else is taught the core and you are expected to be at the same level, however if you talk to people studying that course and the lectures they will provide you with the information that you need.

There is also a lot of reading preparation involved, as the core modules are workshop based rather than lectures, which means you are required to complete work before the class, this could involve research, group work, presentations and set readings. Also, as the core module take the form of workshops and not lectures there is a lot of group work involved and discussion, meaning that they require full focus and commitment and can sometimes be quite demanding but ultimately, they are worth it.

9. What advice would you give A-level students interested in studying Liberal Arts at university?

You are the only person following your pathway as the course allows you to tailor your modules to suit you. This can be challenging, but also very rewarding if you have the confidence to approach departments and ask to complete certain modules. It does mean you will come into contact with a variety of people, but this means you are more likely to find people like you who you can make friends with. It's also helpful knowing a lot of people as you get to know what is happening throughout the university.

This degree is not for you if you have no idea as to what you want to do, but it is good if you are still developing your ideas as to what pathway you want to take. If you know exactly what you want to take then you can tailor the modules to get the best possible combination, or you might see a module that inspires you and gives you a new perspective or inspires you to take a different path.

You can end up with a large workload, so be careful which modules you take so that you can get a balance, as the timetable can vary as you join different departments together, which would normally work on their own, so you can get multiple deadlines all at once.

When looking at universities look at the departments in the university that interest you and see what they have to offer, as available modules which you could choose from, as different universities specialise in different things.

Look to see what style you want your degree to be, as every university does it differently. Some universities have no core modules and allow you to choose any modules that interest you. Whereas, others have built in core modules, or suggested pathways which you could follow. Some degrees are more focussed on the humanities, others allow you to complete science modules as well, there are even some which encourage you to broaden your skills further, making you take modules in the humanities and the sciences. Another thing to look out for is that some courses make you take a language module. It really depends what you are interested in, your skill set and confidence in your abilities.

When choosing modules look at how the modules are assessed and if you prefer course work or group work.

Another thing to look at is the size of the department, I liked Warwick as it is a small department, meaning that you get hands on approach from the lectures.

In the first few weeks of the course people did drop out, as they realised that they wanted a more in-depth focus on one topic, while others couldn't do the modules that they wanted to do in other departments, so make sure you check what modules you can do. Some people found it too difficult trying to do lots of different tasks from different disciplines so make sure this course is definitely for you.

