

Student Profile

Emma Goodliffe

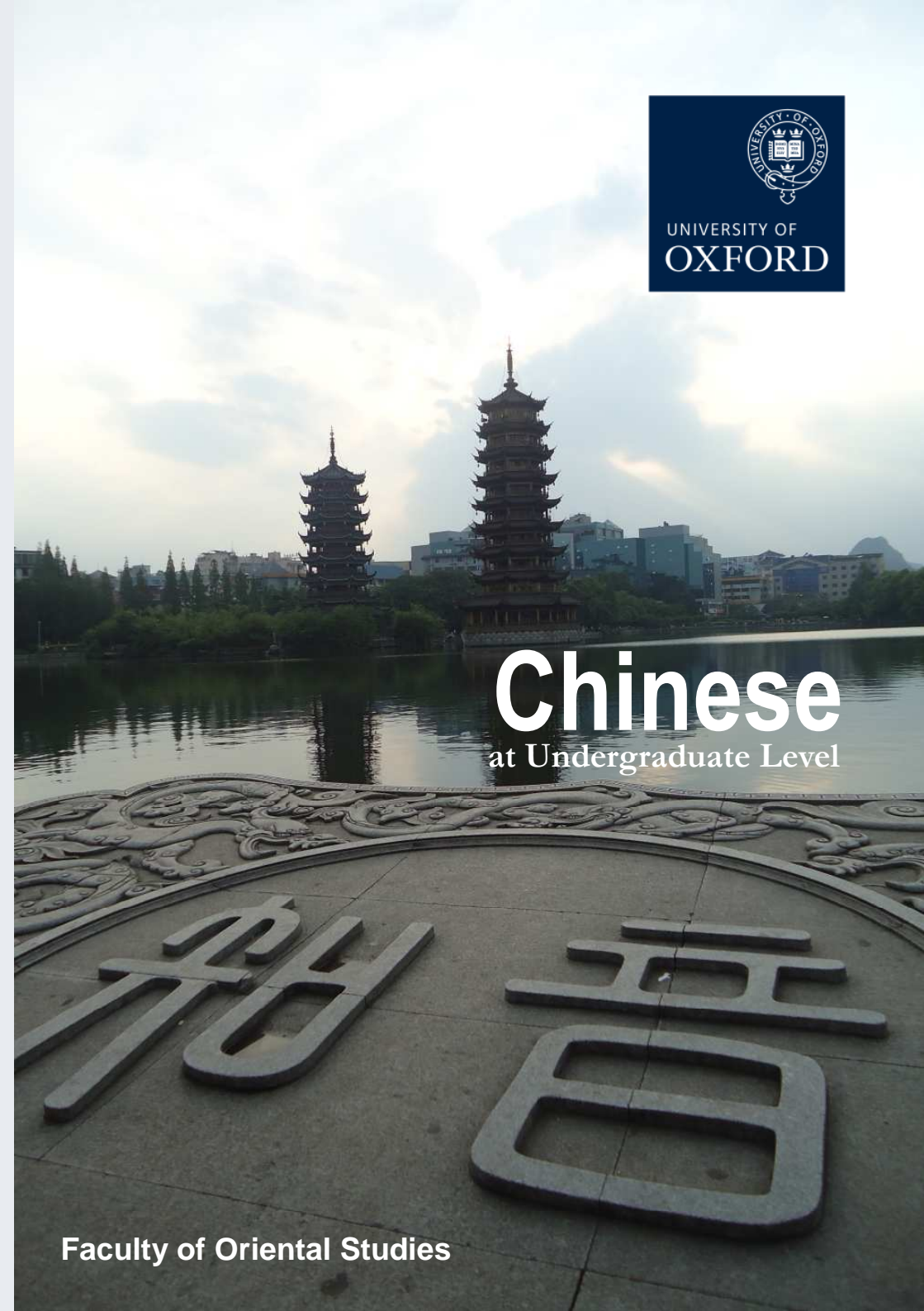


When I started the B.A in Chinese at Oxford, I had no prior knowledge of the Chinese language and I hadn't spent any time at all in the country, but I had been totally fascinated by the culture for many years. I really loved French at school, but I wanted to try something completely new and a bit out of the ordinary. It didn't take long for me to realise I had made the right decision, and this conviction only strengthened as time progressed. One of the biggest surprises for me when I started was how I took to classical Chinese, as it is so rarely offered that I hardly knew what to expect. By learning it alongside the modern language and maintaining both throughout the course you get a unique understanding of how the language and culture developed. Add to this the series of essays on modern and traditional history and culture that you also do throughout, and you'd be surprised how familiar the 'mysterious Orient' starts to feel. By third year you have a good enough grasp of the basics to choose either to specialise in something which caught your eye earlier in the course, such as modern literature, ancient philosophy, or society and politics, or to branch out into uncharted territory, by learning Japanese or Korean for example. Still a language nerd at heart, I chose subsidiary Japanese and dabbled in linguistics for my dissertation topic. Given the diverse and challenging nature of the course, it is also important to say that we have one of the friendliest and supportive departments imaginable. Cloistered in our own institute, there is a real close-knit community feel between the tutors and students. Because there are only a dozen or so students per year, you don't become part of the anonymous sea of faces in a packed lecture theatre. It gets to the point that you sometimes forget the lecturers you see everyday are some of the best in the world in their field...until perhaps one of their books comes up on your reading list! I've had four of the best years of my life here, with perhaps the five best months being those I spent studying and travelling in China. Having only spent a term there myself, I am immensely jealous of the students now going for a full year, for the wonders that will work on their Chinese and for the amazing stories they will come back with!"



For more information please visit the Faculty of Oriental Studies website at: www.orinst.ox.ac.uk

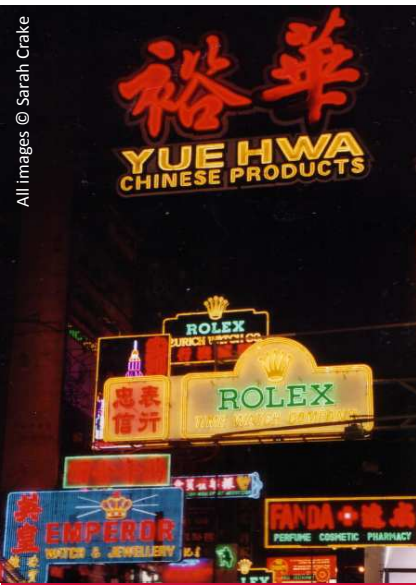
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Chinese

at Undergraduate Level

Faculty of Oriental Studies



Chinese at Oxford

The B.A. Honours course in Chinese at Oxford is designed to give students an understanding of both traditional and modern China, based on a knowledge of the classical and the modern Chinese languages. The modern Chinese language forms the basis from which students can pursue any aspect of Chinese studies, and it is given high priority throughout the course. Students are taught not only the skills of reading and writing, but also spoken Chinese including basic training in interpreting and in giving oral presentations. A training in Classical Chinese is also crucial, not only as a key to understanding traditional China, but because it remains a significant element in the modern written language. China has the longest continuous culture surviving from ancient times and Chinese culture has had influence beyond its borders throughout the whole of East Asia, significantly shaping the cultures of Japan and Korea. The B.A. Honours course in Chinese offers the study

of a subsidiary language; Tibetan, Japanese or Korean as an option in the degree in the third and fourth years. The nerve-centre of the present teaching program is the Institute for Chinese Studies. Apart from offices and seminar rooms it houses a well-developed lending library, designed to support teaching programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (but also affording convenient access to books ordered from the central Bodleian Library collection); a general common-room in which teaching staff, students and visitors can meet informally; a computer room for graduate students; an state of the art language laboratory; and facilities for receiving satellite broadcasts in Chinese. A special unit within the Institute, the Centre for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, is constantly developing new multimedia language-teaching materials in modern Chinese. A short walk away is the Ashmolean Museum with its rich collections of Chinese art and the East Asian Art library which is held in the adjacent Sackler Library. The Oxford degree in Chinese is not designed as a vocational course leading simply to a career which requires functional language skills. It should be regarded primarily as a chance to study a great society and civilisation remote from the European tradition, and to gain an educational experience which is valuable for its own sake. A special knowledge of China and its language does, however, provide advantages in certain careers, such as diplomatic work, international finance and commerce, and journalism. The Oxford course also provides a good foundation for further academic work, as well as possible career opportunities in universities, museums and libraries.

Why study Chinese?

“China has the longest continuous culture surviving from ancient times and has played a significant role in shaping the cultures of many countries in East Asia, not least Japan and Korea. Today China is the second largest economy in the world and Mandarin Chinese is currently spoken by over 1 billion people around the world. As China becomes an increasingly important player on the global stage, so the need for those who have mastered the Chinese language and have a deep understanding of China’s culture will grow. The B.A. in Chinese at Oxford does not require any prior knowledge of Chinese, nor is it necessary to have studied languages to advanced level, although an interest in and aptitude for language study is an advantage. The course lasts four years, and is structured in two main parts, with important University examinations at the end of the first year (Prelims) and the fourth year (Finals). The main emphasis in the first year is on building a sound basic knowledge of contemporary written and spoken Chinese, which involves at least ten hours a week of classroom and tutorial teaching, including language laboratory work. A further three hours a week are devoted to the study

of the language of Ancient China. By the end of the first year students are ready to tackle modern and classical texts. Throughout their first year students also attend lectures and receive tutorials on the history, institutions and culture of China, involving extensive background reading and training in essay writing. Following the Prelims examination, all undergraduates spend their second year attending a course at Peking University which has been especially designed for our undergraduates. Living and studying in China enables students to make rapid progress in all aspects of the modern language. Meanwhile, the course at Peking University also continues to build on the first year training in the Classical language through the study of Tang poetry and early philosophical texts. After returning from China at the start of the third year, students begin the second half of the course, the aim of which is to provide linguistic skills, detailed study of texts, a broad understanding of Chinese society, independent study, and the opportunity to study an additional language to intermediate level.”

Dr Laura Newby
University Lecturer in Chinese