This handbook gives subject-specific information for your course in Polish. For general information about your studies and the faculty, please consult the Faculty’s Undergraduate Course Handbook (https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv:modlang)
The Polish Degree Course: General

The subsidiary degree course is available in combination with one of the following languages: post-A-level French, German, Russian, or Spanish. Under specific circumstances, it can also be combined with Italian, Portuguese, Beginners' Russian, Beginners' German or Greek.

Technically speaking, you are enrolled on a course in, say, German with Polish.

There are two ways of entry to the subsidiary degree course in Polish. You will have normally applied and been admitted for Polish in combination with one of the following languages: post-A-level French, German, Spanish, or Russian. Alternatively, it is in principle possible too to change to the subsidiary degree course in Polish after the Preliminary Examination, including combinations with languages other than post-A-level French, German, Spanish or Russian. It will imply that you need either to drop, in favour of Polish, one of the two languages, or the Joint School subject, which have you studied until Prelims, or that you switch from a Language sole course to reading that language ‘with Polish’. In this case, Polish language tuition will start in the first year of your FHS course. If you are thinking about including Polish after the Preliminary Examination please consult your tutor or the Polish tutor, Dr Jan Fellerer: jan.fellerer@wolfson.ox.ac.uk.

‘With Polish’ accounts for one third of a Modern Languages degree course. For students taking Polish at entry, there will be one Polish language paper in the Preliminary Examination at the end of the first year. Polish language tuition throughout the first year will prepare for that paper. Beginners, in particular, will normally attend two to three weekly hours of ab initio classes. The Polish degree course proper starts in the first year of the Final Honour School. For those joining the course after the Preliminary Examination, this will be their first year of Polish, including Polish language classes. During the Final Honour School there will be continued Polish language tuition. Altogether, you will be working towards three Polish papers in the final examination. Apart from a paper in Polish language, these are a paper in Polish literature and one in Polish linguistics or philology. There will be a minimum of six more papers in your other language. The third year of the course is spent abroad. Typically, in the case of Polish, students spend up to six months in Poland, where, for example, they attend an academic language course.

For further information about the Polish course, see below. Note that there are also special optional subjects in Polish (Papers XII and XIV) which are available to students of Polish as well as to other students in Modern Languages, depending on their linguistic background.

The First Year

In the first year of your course you will embark on regular Polish language tuition, typically from scratch for those without any prior knowledge of the language. One of the papers in the Preliminary Examination at the end of the first year will then be ‘Elementary Polish’. The other papers in the Preliminary Examination will be in your other language.

You will be attending two to three weekly hours of general Polish classes in your first year. Beginners’ students in Polish will start building up a basic knowledge of Polish grammar and vocabulary. We give special attention to reading and writing skills. At the same time, there will also be introductory training in spoken Polish. Students with...
a background in Polish usually need to improve their grasp of the standard written language. Grammar classes as well as reading and writing exercises are of particular importance and can be geared towards the needs of the student. The aim is to achieve an entry level towards intermediate language proficiency.

**Elementary Polish (Prelims Paper XIII)**

The content of the ‘Elementary Polish’ paper in the Preliminary Examination at the end of the first year includes the following three elements: a passage of English prose, approximately 150 words in length, for translation into Polish; monolingual grammar exercises; and a passage of Polish prose, approximately 180 words in length, for translation into English.

**The Final Honour Course: General**

The Polish subsidiary degree course proper starts at the beginning of the second year. Students who did not read Polish in their first year may, in principle, still join the course at this point (for further details, see above under “The Polish degree course: General”).

Tuition in Polish will continue to be relatively intense. There will be one-to-one or small group tuition, lectures and seminars which are designed to build up knowledge and skills leading on to three examination papers in the Final Honour School at the end of the fourth year. The three papers are:

- **Language (Polish Paper II):** Unprepared translation (A) from and (B) into modern Polish.
- **Philology Or Linguistics (Polish Paper IV Or Polish Paper V):** The history of the Polish language Or Analysis of Polish as spoken and written at the present day.
- **Literature (Polish Paper VIII):** Polish literature from the late 18th century to the 20th century.

Please consult with your tutor or with the Polish tutor in case you have questions about how these three Polish papers combine with the syllabus of your other language.

For students who started Polish in their first year, language tuition will continue throughout the second and fourth years. Equally, students newly joining the Polish course in their second year will receive language tuition appropriate to their level, including beginners’ level. Typically, there will be three weekly hours of language work, eventually leading on to the language paper (Polish Paper IIA and B). The study of Polish literary texts starts in the second year, with tutorials and lectures being offered then and / or in the fourth year. This strand of the course concludes with the literature paper (Polish Paper VIII). Equally, tuition for the linguistic / philological component starts in the second or fourth year. You can choose between the History of the Polish language (Polish Paper IV) and Analysis of Polish as spoken and written at the present day (Polish Paper V). The two ‘content’ papers, i.e. literature and linguistics / philology, are typically taught in the form of a lecture course followed by eight tutorials. Note that the timing and further details concerning these teaching arrangements may vary from year to year.

The content and structure of the three parts of the Polish course are as follows.
Language (Polish II)

The Honour course aims to develop a good active and passive command of correct spoken and written Polish for non-technical purposes. Total beginners entering the course in the first year or in the second year will attend general language classes from scratch.

At intermediate and advanced level you will be offered regular grammar classes and/or oral exercises. These may include elements of prose composition and listening comprehension. Another focus of the post-beginners’ language work will be on reading comprehension. There are regular reading and translation classes tied in with the reading list for the Polish literature paper. Regular translation classes into Polish (‘Polish prose’) form a further core part of the language tuition.

Polish Paper II in the final examination consists of two unseen passages, one for translation from Polish and a second one for translation into Polish. Authors set for translation from Polish in previous years have included Kazimierz Brandys, Jósef Mackiewicz, Tymon Terlecki, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Andrzej Kusniewicz and Adam Schaff.

The History of the Polish Language (Polish IV)

This part of the course deals with the history of the Polish language since the early Middle Ages, when Polish began to develop separately from other varieties of the Slavonic language family. It focuses on textual records in Polish from the middle of the 12th century to the present. The first significant written record of the Polish language, the “Bulla gnieźnieńska”, dates from 1136. Though written in Latin, it includes a considerable number of Polish place and proper names. They shed an interesting light on the state of Polish on the threshold of a new era of its development. This is usually divided into an Old Polish period from 1136 until the end of the 15th century, a Middle Polish period through the Baroque and Enlightenment, and a New Polish period to the present day.

There will normally be a lecture course which introduces aspects of Polish historical grammar and of the development of written Polish in its historical context. We will explore some of these topics in more depth in individual or small group tutorials. Passages from Old and Middle Polish texts which illustrate the history of the language will be prescribed for study. They give students the opportunity to explore for themselves some first-hand evidence of the development of Polish in its historical context. Studying the history of the language is a good way to familiarize oneself with aspects of the history of Poland in general. It also helps to build up some valuable methodological knowledge in diachronic linguistics and philology.

The examination at the end of the course consists of two parts: the first component is a translation from pre-modern Polish with a linguistic commentary on particular features occurring in the text set for translation. The text will be chosen from a list of passages recommended for study prior to the examination. The second component consists of a range of different questions on the historical grammar of Polish and on the formation and development of written Polish. Students are asked to choose two out of a total of approximately ten questions.

Analysis of Polish as Spoken and Written at the Present Day (Polish V)

The other option in linguistics/philology deals with the descriptive analysis of the most important phonetic, phonological and morphological characteristics of
contemporary spoken and written Polish, i.e. with its phonological system, processes of phonetic adaptation, inflection and, if time allows, word formation. Furthermore, it comprises a syntactic component. Here students may apply concepts from Government and Binding and subsequent, or other formal models, provided that they help to elucidate structures in Polish (and other Slavonic languages) beyond the descriptive and structuralist approaches traditionally used in Polish (and Slavonic) grammar. If time allows, the grammatical part of the paper will be complemented by discussion of Polish as used in different registers, styles of speech, sociolects and dialects. Emphasis will be given to the vocabulary, as well as phonetic, morphological and syntactic variants. While studying the modern linguistic option, you will gain insights into some of the major methods and current trends in Slavonic linguistics.

There will normally be an introductory course on aspects of the structure and usage of modern Polish. In tutorials, you will learn to apply and critically review standard treatments of Polish grammar. Oxford makes excellent provision for those interested in general linguistics and comparative philology. Students are welcome to attend introductory and more advanced lectures and seminars on topics such as syntactic theory, semantics, pragmatics etc. Students of Polish who take a linguistic or philological paper in their other language are encouraged to review and, if suitable, to apply relevant concepts and methods in general linguistics to topics in Polish grammar and usage.

In the final examination at the end of the fourth year students must answer three out of a total of about ten questions on Polish grammar and usage. One of them may be a passage of modern Polish prose for linguistic commentary. There may also be a passage for phonetic comment and transcription either in IPA or in the phonetic alphabet conventionally used in Slavonic phonetics.

**Polish literature from the Late 18th Century to the 20th Century (Polish VIII)**

The literature course is centred around five areas of study.

(a) We begin with the heritage of the Polish Enlightenment and the comedies of Aleksander Fredro. In the second half of the 18th century, the ideas of the European Enlightenment were programmed into a strategy of economic, political, legislative and cultural reform in Poland. Satirical and didactic, the literature and theatre of the time launched the long battle for the soul of the nation, temporarily halted by the Third Partition (1795), when Poland was erased from the political map of Europe.

(b) Following the Partitions, several factors contributed to the survival of Poland through more than a century of official non-existence. Theatre and the force of poetry were two of them. The second part of the literature course explores Romantic Drama from Mickiewicz to Wyspianski in its historical and European literary context. This provides an indispensable basis for interpreting modern Polish literature, much of which is a polemic with, or parody of, the high Romantic canon. After the defeat of the November Uprising by the Russians in 1831, Poland’s greatest poets of the Romantic era – Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Zygmunt Krasiński – went into exile, and became the uncrowned kings of a kingdom that existed only in spirit. Together, they created some of the best Romantic drama in Europe, even though their monumental aspirations for the theatre could only be staged in the 20th century.

(c) The January Insurrection of 1863 was Poland’s last significant attempt to regain national independence. After its failure, fictional narrative was informed by the didactic premises of Positivist philosophy. Three novelists in particular – Eliza Orzeszkowa, Bolesław Prus and Nobel Prize winner Henryk Sienkiewicz – created
some of the great social and historical novels of the late 19th century. These authors will form the centre of our attention when we study Polish Positivism.

(d) Two writers in particular dominated the literary scene before Poland finally regained national sovereignty after World War I. The fourth part of the literature course may include a consideration of the neo-Romantic novelists Stefan Żeromski and Władysław Reymont.

(e) The inter-war period is our next and last chapter in the history of Polish literature. We study plays by Stanisław Wyspiański who is in the first league among other European Symbolist dramatists such as Strindberg and Chekhov. Wyspiański paved the way for some of the great names of Poland’s 20th century Avantgarde: Tadeusz Miciński, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Witold Gombrowicz.

A Special Subject paper XII on Post-war Polish literature follows on from there for Polonists with a special interest in some of the great names of recent and contemporary Polish literature such as Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz, Wisława Szymborska (see below).

Students will receive a more detailed reading list for the Polish literature paper some time during their first or second year. There will normally be an opportunity to attend an introductory lecture course in the second or fourth year. Essays for tutorials will deal in depth with authors, works, genres and periods discussed at lectures. There may be also scope for additional reading by other authors. Students of Polish literature will be familiar with the language of literary criticism from the study of literature in their other language.

The final examination in Polish literature at the end of the fourth year comprises a range of questions, three of which must be answered in essay form.

Optional, i.e. Special Subjects in Polish: General

Apart from the subsidiary degree course in Polish proper, there are also three special optional subjects in Polish or with a Polish component (Paper XII). They are available to students of Polish as well as to students in Modern Languages other than Polish. Important: Teaching arrangements for a Polish Paper XII option need to be made at least a year in advance. One or more of the three options may not be available in a particular year.

All Modern Languages finalists can choose to offer an optional extended essay (Paper XIV), which may be on Polish language or literature.

Note that ‘with Polish’ candidates may in principle also offer any one of papers B1-B6 of the Honour School of Modern Languages and Linguistics, subject to the agreement of the Director of Studies of the Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics.

Special subject: The Structure and History of Polish (Paper XII)

This optional subject surveys the diachronic development and the synchronic state of Polish. The historical part covers topics outlined above under “The history of the Polish language”, but is more limited in scope. The synchronic section deals with the descriptive analysis of the most important phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic characteristics of contemporary Polish.
Students who are interested in the structure and history of Polish as a special subject are encouraged to attend the corresponding lectures for Polish subsidiary students. These are offered from time to time. In individual or small group tutorials, students will explore a range of clearly defined and manageable topics. You will also have the opportunity to study some source material illustrating the development of the language.

The examination comprises a range of questions, of which you must choose three. One of the questions may be a linguistic commentary on a passage in modern or pre-modern Polish. As a prerequisite for this paper you need a passive command of Polish.

Note that students on the subsidiary degree course in Polish may not duplicate material here which they cover under Polish Paper IV or V. Those taking the Analysis of Polish as spoken and written at the present day for their main degree will concentrate on the History of the language and vice versa. In this way they stand to deepen their knowledge of the language in all its facets.

Special Subject: Comparative SlavonicPhilology (Paper XII)

Comparative Slavonic philology deals with the methods of reconstructing pre-historical and not, or not fully, recorded stages of the development of Slavonic languages. This discipline, which is deeply rooted in the best traditions of Slavonic scholarship, aims to reconstruct Proto-Slavonic, the precursor of all modern Slavonic languages and one branch of the Indo-European language family. This task is tackled by comparing different Slavonic languages. Consequently, you may study Comparative Slavonic philology with special reference to Polish in comparison to another Slavonic language, e.g. Czech or Russian. This gives interesting insights into the Slavonic language/s which you are familiar with, and a better understanding of their present state.

You may be offered introductory lectures to Comparative Slavonic philology during your time at Oxford. In individual or small group tutorials, students have the opportunity to focus on certain aspects of the Slavonic language family and of Proto-Slavonic, especially its phonetics / phonology and morphology.

The examination at the end of the fourth year consists of a range of questions on 'your' Slavonic language, e.g. Polish, in comparison to other Slavonic languages, e.g. Czech or Russian. The aim will be to explain divergences and convergences philologically, i.e. with reference to Proto-Slavonic. The questions set will normally include passages in the two Slavonic languages with which you are familiar. You will be required to compare the two passages from a philological point of view. There will be a range of other questions from which candidates need to answer two.

Special Subject: Post-War Polish Literature (Paper XII)

This option offers students with sufficient knowledge of Polish the chance to study a wide range of Polish writing after 1945, including world-famous authors such as Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz and Stanisław Lem. You will choose from a list of nine topics which cover some of the most important authors, themes and literary forms in post-war Polish literature. Special emphasis will be given to the cultural and historical background after 1945. Within each of the nine thematic blocks there may be, according to the student's special interests, scope for variation as to which author and particular problem related to his / her work we will study. This
option requires familiarity with primary and some secondary literature in Polish. In eight tutorial essays we will deal with three or four of the following nine general topics and related authors:

(a) ‘War, Holocaust and Gulag’ (including ‘Inny Świat’ by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński).
(b) ‘Socialist Realism: Theory and Practice’.
(c) ‘Poetry of the Thaw’ (i.e. after 1956, and including Zbigniew Herbert and Wisława Szymborska).
(d) ‘Drama of the Absurd’ (mainly Tadeusz Różewicz and Sławomir Mrożek).
(e) ‘Émigré Literature’ (including authors such as Witold Gombrowicz, Czesław Miłosz and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński with his ‘Dziennik pisany nocą’)
(f) ‘Censorship and the Growth of Dissident Literature’ (including Tadeusz Konwicki),
(g) ‘Childhood and the Literature of the Heimat’ (with prose by Andrzej Kusniewicz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Paweł Huelle and Stefan Chwin)
(h) ‘Surrealism and Science Fiction’ (with a special focus on Stanisław Lem)
(i) ‘Prose of the Nineties and the New Privatisation’ (including contemporary authors such as Olga Tokarczuk and Andrzej Stasiuk)

The examination consists of a range of essay questions of which candidates must answer three.

Optional Extended Essay (Paper XIV)

Modern Languages students can choose to offer an optional extended essay of up to 8,000 words on a subject of their choice. This may be on Polish language or literature, depending on your knowledge of the language and the relevant subject area. The extended essay is an excellent way of developing and exploring ideas and questions in which you have taken a particular interest during your course. It is also a useful opportunity for students to develop their research skills, possibly, but not necessarily with a view towards further study at postgraduate level.

Note that there are special regulations for the optional extended essay. Make sure you are aware of them before you take a decision. They are included in the general Undergraduate Course handbook.

WHEN DRAWING UP THIS HANDBOOK WE HAVE TRIED TO BE AS ACCURATE AND CLEAR AS POSSIBLE. THE TEXTS PRESCRIBED FOR STUDY FOR INDIVIDUAL PAPERS ARE NOW LISTED IN THIS HANDBOOK.

THE REVISED EDITION OF THE UNIVERSITY’S EXAMINATION DECREES AND REGULATIONS LISTS THE EXAMINATION PAPERS AND THEIR PERMITTED COMBINATION FOR YOUR DEGREE COURSE. (FOR FURTHER DETAILS, REFER TO THE HANDBOOK AND THE EXAMINING CONVENTIONS.) SEE:

http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs

COURSES AND REGULATIONS ARE CONSTANTLY UNDER REVIEW, SO ALWAYS CHECK ALSO WITH YOUR COLLEGE TUTOR TO CONFIRM WHAT IS WRITTEN HERE AND IN THE EXAMINATION CONVENTIONS.

IN ADDITION, DO NOT HESITATE TO ASK FOR CLARIFICATION ABOUT THE COURSE FROM ANY MEMBER OF THE SUB-FACULTY WHO IS LECTURING TO YOU OR TUTORING YOU; WE WILL ALWAYS DO OUR BEST TO HELP.

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