A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

A small collection of entries by second years at Caius detailing a day in the life of their subjects.

note: not all subjects are included, but it’s worth having a read!
In first year, the course is split equally between languages. Supervisions, lectures and classes are spread out throughout the week with nothing scheduled at the weekends, leaving a few hours a day to get work done, do any extra-curriculars and even relax a little bit!

9am: One of the many perks of MML is that it is very rare to have a 9am; you might have a Use Of class (grammar and language) but if you’re not a morning person, you’ve definitely picked the right subject.

10am: Once a week I have an hour-long Use Of class in each language, which is in a group of about 12 and centres around improving grammar and language skills. Use Of classes, although not always the most riveting, are one part of the course which makes MML such a sociable subject – this is where most of my course friends come from as you end up spending a lot of time together. The work for these classes is often quite short and can be a nice contrast from a literature essay.

11am: I usually have something at 11 every day – every other week we have translation classes in each language but these are pretty chilled out and are also in groups of about 12. I also have language supervisions with 1 or 2 other people, which coordinate with Use Of classes.

1pm: Lunch time (one of the 3 most important meals of the day)

2pm: In each language, I have one literature supervision per week. These are either an introduction to a text or going through an essay. It works out to 1 essay a week, and the supervisions aren’t scary at all – they’re much more like a discussion and the chance to ask any questions.

3pm: A few days a week, I have a lecture in the afternoon. Lectures are all done in English and focus on one text in the literature modules – there are between 2 and 4 lectures on each text throughout the year, so we get the opportunity to hear lots of different interpretations and opinions before writing an essay.

4pm: Most days I have a few hours before dinner to do some work in the library, go to rehearsals or have a quick nap. On a good day, I usually find that I don’t need to work that much after dinner so it’s nice to take the evening off to get some rest before a Wednesday Cindies or grab a Sainsbury’s pizza (highly recommend).
9.15: is the latest I wake up when I have lectures. I will sometimes wake up early to exercise or do maths. After a night out, I definitely wake up at 9.15. I shower and make myself breakfast and then meet the other mathmos to walk to lectures (usually at least one of us is late; when that’s me, I walk/run to lectures about 100 feet behind the other mathmos). It is a gorgeous walk through Kings.

10-12: In my year all the Caius mathmos usually sat together, along with a few other people we picked up from other colleges. Every day Monday-Saturday you have lectures 10-12 which actually isn’t too bad at all. Definitely go to them. It’s not hard to and also some of them are written on blackboards and then erased forever. Sure it’s possible to get notes for some of them online but I would highly highly recommend going to lectures. You literally have nothing better to do. (If you genuinely think you do then fair enough but like 99% sure you don’t)

12-1: After lectures I eat lunch, either I go back to my room and cook something or I go to hall/Caius meal deal in the bar. On Saturdays we always go to brunch. When I go back to my room I usually always eat with my neighbour in one of our rooms and we would chat for a bit. Also the time after lectures is usually used for food shopping as you are already in town.

Afternoon: Not going to lie, some of my afternoon is spent watching tv. Usually though I will have something going on in the afternoon. Two times a week you will have supervisions in the afternoons which are one hour long. Because maths has such few contact hours (14 a week for first term), there is plenty of time to do extra-curricular activities. In my first year I tutored French, acted in plays, did a bit of debating, played college tennis, played violin in a couple orchestras, and went to GCSU meetings (I’m your green officer!) There is tons of opportunity and time to do stuff other than at work. When I’m not doing some random activity or watching tv, I’m doing maths. Ideally I’d say you would want to spend about 4 hours a day working. I never really was that evenly paced and I would do zero on one day and then 8 on another; find what works for you.

6 or 7: Dinner time! The timing depends on whether I went to first hall or formal hall. If I wasn’t in hall that usually was because I had to miss it for a rehearsal, in which case I would usually pack myself a dinner. Hall is amazing though. Definitely try to reach your mdr otherwise it’s a waste of money. After hall, I never work in the evening, but that’s just me. Some people do their best work after hall, but again, just find what works for you. I usually will watch more tv or hang out with friends a bit. If I’m going out then pres usually start relatively quickly after formal hall. So I would go back to my room and get ready and then go to pres. I probably don’t go out much more than once a week, and you definitely don’t have to at all if you don’t want to.

In conclusion: You have a lot of free time. It’s your choice what to do with it! Ideally, some of it will be spent doing maths.
KHALIL SHAM
physical natural sciences

8:00-9:00
Monday to Saturday, Phys Natscis have a 9am lecture — it’s a hard life. Shower, get ready and head to your lecture hall. If you’re cycling, the lectures are a 5 to 10 minute cycle away. If you’re walking, between 15 and 25 minutes.

9:00-13:00
Between these times you will normally have either two or three 1 hour lectures, depending on which modules you decide to take. If you did Earth sciences (as I did), you may also have an hour long practical class.

13:00-13:30
Pick up something to eat in town, or make something back in Harvey Court. What I do at this time is normally dictated by my afternoon’s activities and how much time I can afford for lunch.

13:30-17:30
I normally spend the afternoon working, either in the library or in my room. Phys Natscis have 4 supervisions a week, each one hour long. The work for each takes about 6 hours on average, and so most afternoons are spent completing this work. Once a week I also have either a chemistry or physics practical, which takes up most of the afternoon. If I don’t, I may have a supervision or two instead.

18:00-19:00
Dinner at first hall. This is a good chance to catch up with friends and take a break from work.

19:00-20:30
Back to the library or my room for more work. I try to avoid working beyond this time, but if I’m behind on work (as I often am), I end up working till later.

20:30 onwards
If I don’t have any more work, then I normally go out. Typically pre-drinks start around 9, and we go to the club around 11. Cambridge clubbing does not go on too late — normally I am back in my room by 2:30 at the latest.
Historians are notorious for failing to attend their lectures, but I can tell you now that a lot of them are, in fact, extremely useful. To that end, I generally get up around 8:15 if I have a lecture starting at 9. The accommodation for Caius freshers is perfect for humanities students given that the history faculty is right next door. Your lecture timetable will vary with the modules you pick but, with the exception of HAP lectures (an exam you will be mocked on at the end of first year and take properly in third year), they will almost invariably be in the morning.

In between lectures I usually tend to go to the History Faculty library, which is convenient and extremely well stocked. My favourite place to work, however, is up at the Caius library so after my last lecture I will generally tend to trudge up there to do my reading. The UL is also an option, which is also very close. While it can be intimidating to start off with, I can thoroughly advise getting to grips with it given their incredible stock of books. Their collections of pictures are also worth looking at, especially when you come to Themes and Sources. Themes and Sources is a module you’ll have to take in the second and third terms and comprises a two hour class, usually every other Wednesday, which you will have to read for. It is part of working towards writing an essay that you will have to do over the summer.

After a morning of lectures and/or reading, I usually go back to Harvey Court for lunch, which I would eat with my lovely corridor. There are also places to eat in the Sidgwick site though if you don’t want to leave the Faculty for too long. For the afternoon I will generally head to Caius library, which is one of the most beautiful in Cambridge and is usually filled with fellow freshers, so there is a lovely sense of camaraderie (and plenty of people to attend impromptu coffee breaks with you when you feel you need them). Here, I usually read for my weekly essay, for which a reading list is always set. Caius is incredibly well stocked for historians, but if you can’t find the books you need there, it is always worth looking in the UL or the Seeley (the History Faculty library). You will have a supervision once a week with an expert in your module. I would thoroughly advise taking as much advantage of these as possible and making a list of any questions you might have for them as and when you do your reading. You will usually submit your essay around 24 hours before the supervision (the turn around is incredibly fast). It doesn’t take long to learn that different supervisors want different things and that they each have their own methods to teach (and encourage...). My first supervisor was very meticulous with my essays but it did me a world of good, and I am now very relieved that I had her at the beginning. Take everything with a pinch of salt, as long as you are trying your best it will be good enough!

Studying history relies very much upon self-motivation. No one is going to tell you how many books to read or document your lecture attendance. One of the joys of this is that you will have a very flexible timetable. This year, I have been playing mixed lacrosse for both the university and Caius. I can thoroughly recommend getting involved in some kind of extra-curricular activity. Not only does it look good on your CV but it is also a lovely way of meeting people from other colleges, but don’t exploit this; make sure you keep a balance between work, extra-curriculars and your social life.
Hi, I’m Ryun and I’m a second year student at Gonville and Caius College currently studying Human, Social, and Political Sciences (HSPS). My academic interests lie most strongly in early political thought and great power rivalries of international politics. Here is the day in the life of a typical HSPSer!

08:15 – wake up, leaving the warm comfort of my double-bed (F13 Harvey Court!) and make myself a quick bowl of Jordan’s Country Crisp Cereal
08.45 – saunter down to the Harvey Court bike shed and bike towards my lecture venue
09:00 to 10:00 – lecture time…get ready to whip out that notepad or laptop and (unsuccessfully) attempt to take note of the lecturer’s every word on modern threats to representative democracy
10:00 to 11:30 – take out any books and/or take notes and read them at the best college library in Cambridge
11:30 to 12:30 – supervision time! 60 minutes of deep discussion, exploration and debate with a leading academic in their subject field, often best to prep for these…
12:30 to 13:30 – grab a cheeky, often questionable, £3.29 Boots meal deal or if I’m feeling particularly extravagant, Chicken Katsu Yakisoba noodles from Wasabi for lunch
13:30 to 14:30 – head to Barty Sports Ground for an ‘intense’ hour of cardio, possession led drills and much needed shooting practise led by no other than Rob Melling, captain-leader-legend of Gonville & Caius Football Club
15:00 to 18:00 – continue with more arduous reading, planning and writing for that lovely 2,500 word essay on Karl Marx’s theory of alienation
18:00 to 19:00 – enjoy Caius’ notorious First Hall food at Old Courts, at the same time catching up with friends you haven’t seen in 24 hours and making sure you use up your MDR tickets
19:00 to 21:30 – back to Caius library for another, late-night session of study
22:00 to 23:00 – hit Caius gym for an all too typical ‘chest’ or ‘arms’ day
23:30 to 00:30 – either finish off some work for the day or some downtime with friends
01:00 – lights out! Do my best to get at least 7 hours of sleep, ready for another day of productive study…
The Morning: I normally managed to drag myself out of bed in time to wolf down some breakfast and make my 9am lecture on time give or take a few minutes — once I got hold of a bike I would always cycle as unlike the lucky humanities students our lectures were more than 2 minutes’ walk away. I had two lectures per day from Monday to Saturday (if this is the first you’ve heard of Saturday lectures I’m so, so sorry) which ran from 9 to 11am. The structure of the lectures varies from course to course; for example, Biology of Cells lectures largely consist of the lecturer explaining and expanding on the information provided in the lecture notes, leaving it up to you to decide how much to note down (very little in my case) while in Chemistry there are specific gaps to fill in, diagrams to copy down and example questions to have a go at in the handouts given to you.

The Afternoon: On most days I would head back to my room and procrastinate for a bit before having lunch in the gyp, then head to the college library with some friends for a few hours to do some supervision work, which could be either an essay on the material covered in Cells that week or a problems sheet for Chemistry. In my case the supervisions themselves would normally be in the late afternoon and mainly involved going through the work set by the supervisor that week, as well as providing an opportunity to get help with anything I didn’t understand from recent lectures. Around two days a week I would have labs, which started straight after my 11am lecture. First year labs are reasonably slow paced and are all about learning how to use all the new equipment and turn you into someone that vaguely resembles a scientist. Labs don’t finish until 5pm but I would normally be done by around 3ish and sometimes even before the hour-long lunch break, leaving a few hours to collapse in my room and nap/watch TV before hall.

The Evening: I always tried to avoid working after hall aside from skimming through the next day’s lecture notes, although there were occasionally weeks when working into the evening was unavoidable. I normally went to formal hall at 7pm about 4 nights a week for my evening meal as it’s a great way to catch up with everyone in a beautiful hall that always made me appreciate how lucky I was to be at Caius no matter how long a day I’d had, as well as providing a three-course meal better than anything my feeble cooking skills could. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, I would normally stay at Caius bar for an hour or so afterwards then head back to West Road for pre-drinks before going out clubbing, while on other nights I’d either chill in someone’s room for a bit or sometimes go for a game of squash at the sports ground before attempting to get a relatively early night.

I’ve focused on the academic side of things here so it might make Bio NatSci life come across as dauntingly work heavy. Don’t worry! While we do have a lot of both contact hours and independent work even by Cambridge standards, it’s the same for everyone and you get used to it as the year goes on while still having plenty of time to make the most of everything else you expect from uni life.
6.00 – Wake up for rowing! You hate yourself for it but it’s worth it in the end! (not all medics are forced to be rowers but Pippa and Henry will try our best to convert you xx)
6.30 – Meet up with the others in the boat outside Harvey Court and cycle over to the boathouse – Caius has arguably the best boathouse on the river.
7.00 – time to exercise!!
8.30 – return from outing, shower and cycle to the anatomy lecture theatre for the 9am lecture.
9.00 – FAB (Anatomy) Lecture. These are probably the most fun lectures as there is often a clinical connection to the anatomy you’re learning in the dissection room. There’s various topics, such as applied anatomy and embryology.
10.00-12.00 – Free time. Most people use this to go to the library and do some work, but, I tend to pop back to Harvey Court for a nap (not recommended but definitely do-able). Occasionally you might have a practical in this slot, depending on which side of the year you are in.
12.00 – HOM (Physiology) lecture. In first term you’ll cover feedback mechanisms, nerve, muscle and the cardiovascular system (lectured by Caius’ very own Dr Fraser!)
13.00-14.00 – All the medics tend to go to Caius bar to pick up one of their amazing meal deals. No “medic talk” is allowed at lunch – you’ll welcome the break!
14.00-16.00 – Dissection session in the DR. In first term you will dissect the upper limb and the thorax. Groups of 6 or 7 from mixed colleges are each assigned a cadaver to work on together. There is help from demonstrators but the dissection manual is extremely informative as to what you need to know.
16.00-17.00 – Pop to the library to start some research for an essay.
17.00-18.00 – Supervision. Supervisions are one of the best things about coming to Cambridge, as you can gain so much from them. They are typically in groups of 3, and at Caius you have 9 supervisions in the space of a fortnight (so between 3 and 6 each week). You tend to have one or two a night but it can be up to three! This is more than other colleges but it’s definitely worth it as it really helps with consolidating what you learnt in lectures.
18.00-19.00 – First hall. Like formal hall, but without the gowns and the gong. It’s a good chance to see your friends from other courses, whilst sampling some of Caius’ finest food...potatoes, potatoes and more potatoes.
19.20 – If you’re feeling fancy, formal hall is always an option!
19.00-21.30 – Finish writing up the MIMS essay from earlier in the library and hand it into the Porter’s Lodge.
21.30 – It’s been a tough day, so head to pres and get ready for a well-deserved night out! Cambridge has four clubs that we tend to go to – Cindies, Lola’s, Life and Fez.
I usually try to wake up at 8, which gives me enough time to eat and get ready for the day before leaving around 8:45 and walking to the department with the rest of the engineers. Most days we have 2 lectures, the first starting at 9, but sometimes they start at 11 in which case we might have a lab instead.

Each lecture is 50 minutes and once they’re done we’ll often have a lab. Most labs are only one 2 hour session and are fairly simple to complete, however there are a few that go on for longer, sometimes just for another 2 hours in the afternoon like drawing labs, sometimes for a week like the structural design project.

Occasionally the lectures are timetabled such that there’s a break for an hour, or there might be a third lecture at 1, but if not I’ll usually get lunch with a few other engineers, either in the department cafeteria or in town. It’s a good opportunity to take a break after a tough morning, and before an afternoon of more work.

Once I get home I’ll sit down to get some work done. Engineers get examples papers, sheets of 10-15 questions focusing on a single lecture course. There are usually 3 or 4 of these released every week, and they’re supposed to take 8 hours each, so there’s always work to be done. As each lecture covers 2 or 3 of the questions from its paper, I’ll try and get these done in the afternoon to keep on top of it. If I don’t want to do/can’t do any more questions, then there’s other stuff to work on. Some labs require a report to be written for them, which if you’re lucky will only take a few hours, if you’re not will take quite a few more, or there might be computing work to do.

Most days I’ll go to formal hall at 7. It’s nice to get away from work and see some friends, and with any luck the food might be decent too. The later hall means I’ll have hopefully done all the work I need to, and if not I’ll only have a little bit to do when I get back. If I don’t need to work I might go to the college bar for a bit before heading back and getting ready to go out or to go to bed.