



**Alumnus Subject Graduated Place of Work Position**  
Christian Jarrett  
Psychology  
1999  
British Psychological Society  
Editor and Staff Journalist



Dr Christian Jarrett is a psychologist and author of *The Rough Guide to Psychology*. He's founding editor of the British Psychological Society's award-winning *Research Digest* blog ([www.researchdigest.org.uk/blog](http://www.researchdigest.org.uk/blog)) and staff writer on their house magazine *The Psychologist*. He also writes regularly for *Psychology Today* and the 99U creativity think tank in New York. His work has appeared in *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *New Scientist*, *Wired UK* and many other outlets. His next book is *Great Myths of the Brain* (Wiley-Blackwell).

# Great minds go on to great places

## Did you apply to other universities, and what were your reasons for choosing RHUL?

Yes I did apply to some others, but I chose Royal Holloway as my first choice. I'd stayed at the university during my sixth form years whilst visiting a friend and really loved the campus atmosphere, so that played a big part in my decision making.

## What was your priority – the College or the course?

For a while I was torn between studying Psychology or History. Once I settled on psychology, I soon discovered that the department had a reputation for being one of the best in the country. Together with the fact that I was keen to go to a university in the South, and that I knew I loved the feel of the place, it quickly became my preferred option. I just needed to make the grades!

It was important to me that it was part of the University of London, which I knew was a prestigious name with a world class reputation. Having the bright lights of London a short train ride away was also appealing.

## Why did you choose to study your particular course? What were your favourite aspects?

I hadn't really come across Psychology as a subject

at school until I completed one of those computer programmes that tells you what kind of career would suit you. When it suggested psychologist (and cartographer!), I was really curious and the more I found out about the subject, the more it intrigued me. I'd always been interested in people and why they behave the way they do – to discover that there was an actual science devoted to studying these questions really excited me. Once I started the course, I enjoyed it all, but my favourite subject area was cognitive psychology. Some of the experiments devised to find out how memory, perception and language work just seemed so elegant and ingenious. I loved discovering that you can study the mind objectively and I liked how the science often felt like detective work.

## Were you involved in any clubs or societies? Do you have any anecdotes from your time here?

I remember seeing all the clubs and societies jostling for your interest during freshers' week – there was such a buzz in the air, and such a diverse mix of opportunities and personalities, I'd never seen anything like it. In the end I'm afraid I wasn't that adventurous. I'd been a martial arts fanatic at school and so I carried on that interest by joining the jiu jitsu club. I was always tempted by the James Bond Society, but for some

reason never joined up. Later on, I got involved in my department's Psychological Society, helping arrange social events and inviting guest speakers. I also got a part-time job as an instructor in the university gym!

## What are your fondest memories of being a student/being in your department?

I remember the way my friends and I would plan some of our nights out with great care. For example, for one Christmas party we all agreed to wear black tie and we all bought and wore the same Father Christmas hats with flashing lights. It sounds really corny now, but that kind of camaraderie was so much fun. I also have fond memories of heading over to Holloways bar after lectures to play pool with my psychology class mates. I was a pretty sharp player by the end of my degree!

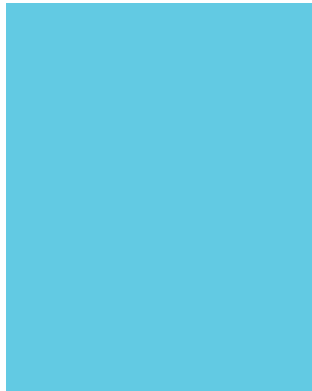
## What would you say to someone thinking of studying here?

If you want to go to a world class institution in a beautiful setting, and you like the idea of being part of a relaxed, friendly campus community, then Royal Holloway is probably for you.



# people with passion

“I’m proud of where I went to university. It’s been so exciting and rewarding.”



## What has been your career path since graduating?

My psychology degree really got me hooked on the subject and gave me a solid grounding for the next stages of my career. I followed it up with a Masters in Neuroscience in London, then I moved to Manchester to do a PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience. After a brief post-doc, I’ve been working full-time for the British Psychological Society, as an editor and writer. I’ve also taken on a number of freelance writing projects over the years in my spare time, including work for Unilever and the Centre for Affective Sciences in Geneva. I’ve also written some books and contributed to many newspapers and magazines; most recently I’ve started a blog for Psychology Today in the USA. A few years back I also did a brief stint as a tutor for the Open University.

## Please tell us about your current role.

My role at the British Psychological Society is split in two – I’m the writer and editor of the Society’s Research Digest newsletter and blog (which I created in 2005; see [www.researchdigest.org.uk/](http://www.researchdigest.org.uk/) blog), and I’m staff writer for the Society’s monthly magazine The Psychologist ([www.thepsychologist.org.uk](http://www.thepsychologist.org.uk)). The aim of the Research Digest is to provide accessible, exciting, plain English reports on the latest research in psychological science.

My work for the magazine is a mix of writing news, conference reports as well as more in-depth feature-length pieces. I’ve also recently started giving more talks: for example I gave a keynote talk at a conference for psychology teachers and a talk in a pub in Manchester (that was a bit different!).

## What are your favourite aspects of the job?

The variety. I love that I get to hear about the whole breadth of psychology. One day I could be writing about a breakthrough in brain imaging, the next day I could be attending a conference on language development in young children. It’s also hugely rewarding building up a following of loyal readers and trying to keep them entertained and informed.

## What is the best project that you have been involved in recently?

My book The Rough Guide to Psychology came out last year. I was so thrilled when they asked me to write the book and it’s been so exciting and rewarding seeing it published. Next I’m writing a book about brain myths.

## Do you have any tips for people considering a career in Psychology?

Don’t shy away from the research methods and stats or from the neuro-anatomy. Conquer those

areas and it will give you a great platform for postgrad work. Also, really choose your post-grad options carefully. Don’t be rash. Talk to people, research your options and realise that your decision as to what to do next could end up shaping the rest of your life.

## Where would you like to be in five years time?

I’d like to write a best-selling popular psychology book or maybe even try writing a novel. There’s also talk that we might start a BPS Research Digest podcast, so I hope that gets off the ground.

## What does it mean to you to be an alumnus of Royal Holloway?

I’m proud of where I went to university and being an alumnus means I still feel a connection to the College and part of its community. I leapt at the opportunity to give a careers seminar earlier this year and it was great to have a chance to give something back. Even if I helped just one student, it was worth it.

For more Alumni Profiles visit: [www.rhul.ac.uk/alumni/profiles/](http://www.rhul.ac.uk/alumni/profiles/)