

July 2016

Dear Fresher

Can I start by saying that we look forward to being able to welcome you to Queen's in October to begin your Classics course (Mods IA)?

For 'Mods', your first examinations which take place in the fifth term, you will study the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* in the first two terms, followed by Special Subjects and Texts & Contexts in the next two. Language work carries on alongside these topics for the whole period, with specialised University classes designed to refresh your linguistic knowledge already in the first two terms.

Before you come up, we would like you to have done the following. **You should have read at least the first book of the *Iliad* in Greek, and the rest in translation:** a good translation is M. Hammond (Penguin). If you want to read the *Odyssey* (also a good idea, especially for Virgil), there is W. Shewring (Oxford, World's Classics). To put Homer into perspective it would be a good idea to read some of the near-eastern epics, such as *Gilgamesh*, which are conveniently available in *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford World's Classics, tr. S. Dalley).

We would also like you **to write an essay** 'Discuss the outbreak of the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles in *Iliad* 1: what issues are involved and are we invited to take sides? Give evidence from the text for your answer.' You should write this before you come up: you only need the text to do so. The advice of undergraduates already at the College is that you will find that there is *no* time in the week before term starts to do this work, so make sure you have finished before you arrive. The essay need not be very long. Please bring the work with you and hand it in to the Porters at the Lodge when you arrive. Address the work to Dr C Metcalf.

We will give you advice on which books and editions are prescribed for the exam when you come up, but for Homer the Oxford Classical Texts series is used for examinations (as it is wherever possible). You should also *always* read texts with a good commentary. I recommend you buy yourself the commentary on the *Iliad* by M.W. Willcock (Macmillan) or W. Leaf & M.A. Bayfield (Macmillan); G. Authenrieth, *An Homeric Dictionary* (Macmillan) is very useful. You will need for your language work a good dictionary for each language. Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* (9th edition) and *The Oxford Latin Dictionary* (or Lewis & Short's *Latin Dictionary*) are great resources, but you will find the smaller versions more convenient for reading texts. You also need grammars, the *Oxford Greek Grammar* and *Oxford Latin Grammar*, both by James Morwood are good basic grammars: if you want something more detailed, go for H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Harvard) or W.W. Goodwin *Greek Grammar* (Macmillan), and for Latin, B.L. Gildersleeve & G. Lodge, *Latin Grammar* (Macmillan). You would also find *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th edn., edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, 2012) a useful (if not exactly inexpensive!) work of general reference; there is a smaller version in *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization* (1998) by the same editors.

There follow some suggestions for books to read before next October. You need not read all of them nor indeed every page of those you do look at: the ability to 'gut' a book will be a useful skill to acquire. For classical culture and history in general:

R. Lane Fox, *The Classical World: an epic history* (Penguin)

R. Osborne, *Greece in the Making 1200-479* (2nd Edition, Routledge 2009)
 S. Price *The Birth of Classical Europe: A History from Troy to Augustine* (Penguin 2011)
 & P. Thonemann
 P.E. Easterling *Greek Religion and Society* (Cambridge)
 & J.V. Muir
 M. Goodman, *The Roman World 44 BC – AD 180* (Routledge)
 M. Beard & *Rome in the Late Republic*, (Duckworth)
 M. Crawford

For an introduction to philosophy you might look at one of:

A.E. Taylor: *Plato* (Methuen)
 J.C.B. Gosling: *Plato* (Routledge)
 W.K.C. Guthrie: *The Sophists and Socrates* (Cambridge)
 A.C. Danto *What Philosophy is* (Penguin)
 J.A. Passmore *Philosophical Reasoning* (Duckworth)

It is also important that you read something on the theory and practice of literary criticism. To know something about the different types of criticism will greatly increase your ability to enjoy the books you read. The following will help you as introductions to this subject:

T. Eagleton: *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Blackwell)
 J. Culler: *Literary Theory: a very short introduction* (Oxford)

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the syllabus or would like to talk to any of the Classical Tutors at Queen's, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me and I will try to give you any help I can.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Charles Crowther and
 Dr Christopher Metcalf