

## The Queen's College, Oxford

### PRELIMINARY READING FOR UNDERGRADUATES INTENDING TO READ PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS & ECONOMICS

The First Public Examination, PPE Prelims, is taken after three terms. All three subjects must be taken. After taking PPE Prelims, a choice can be made as to which subjects to read for the Final Honour School. All three subjects may be read, or alternatively a combination of any two of them. However, there is no need to make a final decision about this until the end of your first year.

#### PHILOSOPHY:

It is essential to have started to read and think about logic before coming up. Please read one (or preferably both) of the following:

R.M. Sainsbury: *Logical Forms*, especially chs. 1 & 2  
V. Halbach: *The Logic Manual* (Oxford University Press 2010)

Please also read one or two of the following (and more, if possible):

A.J. Ayer: *The Problem of Knowledge*  
P.F. Strawson: *Analysis and Metaphysics*  
T. Nagel: *The View from Nowhere*  
A. Kenny: *A New History of Western Philosophy*, especially vol.3

And one or both of the following:

B. Williams: *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*  
J.S. Mill: *Utilitarianism*, ed. Crisp, R. (Oxford University Press, 1998)

#### POLITICS:

1. You are required to write an essay before you arrive in Oxford based on reading J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*. (Lots of editions of this are available, and any of them will be fine.) The essay title is "What constraints on personal liberty is it reasonable for a citizen to accept?" This essay should be handed in to the lodge, labelled for Dr Nick Owen, by Friday of 0th week.

2. You should also read Arend Lijphart's *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries* (2nd ed., 2012), chapters 1, 2, 6 and 7. Based on this reading, please make notes on the following questions:

- What is the difference between a presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary system?
- What other variables do the real-world operation of a regime depend on, besides those found in constitutions?

These notes should be handed in to the lodge with the Mill essay - by Friday of 0th week. You will get these notes back, to use when writing your first Tutorial essay.

3. Two other books that it would be useful to read are:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Revised ed., 2006)
- Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (2012)

Reading these two texts is recommended, but not compulsory. Points 1 and 2 are compulsory.

#### ECONOMICS:

**Please bring assignments 1 and 2 with you and hand it in to the porters at the Lodge when you arrive.** The work should be addressed to **Elwyn Davies**. (Mark it “FAO Elwyn Davies” and don’t forget to mention your own name!)

1. Please read Chapters 1 – 4 of the Maths Workbook and attempt the following questions.

- Worksheet 1: 3(a), 4, 5(a), 6, 8, 9, 10 (b)(c), 11, 12(a)(c), 13(b), 14(a)(c)
- Worksheet 2: 1, 2, 3(a), 4, 6, 7
- Worksheet 3: Quick questions 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, Long Question 1, 2.

Please hand this in together with assignment 2. This work should be **written**. (Typing equations on a computer can get quite tedious!)

2. First of all, make sure that you read the *Financial Times* and/or the *Economist* on a regular basis. In particular, the Free Exchange column of the *Economist* often shows interesting applications of economic theories on real-world applications. Similarly, Tim Harford’s Undercover Economist columns in the *Financial Times* are worthwhile to read. (They appear every Saturday. You can also find these on his website for free. The Bodleian Library offers online subscriptions to the *Financial Times* for free, but you can only activate this as soon as your Oxford IT account has been set up.)

Read at least one of the following “popular” introductions to economics:

- Tim Harford, *The Undercover Economist* (Little, Brown, 2005)
- David Smith, *Free Lunch: Easily Digestible Economics* (Profile Books, 2003)
- Paul Krugman, *The Accidental Theorist* (Norton, 1998)
- Partha Dasgupta, *Economics: A Very Short Introduction* (OUP, 2007)
- Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot, *The Tiger that Isn't: Seeing through a World of Numbers* (Profile Books, 2007)
- Roger E. Backhouse, *The Penguin History of Economics* (Penguin, 2002)
- Dixit, Avinash K., & Nalebuff, Barry J., *The Art of Strategy: A Game Theorist's Guide to Success in Business and Life* (or their other book, *Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life*)

In addition, but optional, read at least a couple of chapters from the following books, which provide some interesting applications of economics on behaviour and development:

- Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics*.
- Steven D. Levitt & Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics*.
- Richard H. Thaler & Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge*.
- Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*.

The readings are meant to get you started thinking about economics. The books give you a more “popular” introduction on what economics is about. Most of these books are quite accessible and less dry than most textbooks. They make good readings on a lazy Sunday afternoon.

**Essay Question:** Please prepare one-page **typed** essay about the most interesting case you read in one of those books, the economic analysis presented in the book about that case, and your own opinion about it. Hand this in together with Assignment 1.

3. Optional: It is useful to already start reading some of the textbooks we will be using.

- A **good introduction** to what will be covered during your first term can be found in parts 1-3 of Begg, Vernasca, Fischer and Dornbusch, *Economics* (10th Edition, 2011).
- The **main text** used in the first term is Hal R. Varian, *Intermediate Microeconomics: A Modern Approach*, Norton (8th edition). Varian emphasises technical competence and theoretical

rigour. **You will find it very helpful to read the first six chapters of Varian before coming up to Oxford.**

Alternatively, you could have a look at the following books:

- Frank, *Microeconomics and Behavior* (8th edition, 2010)
- Morgan, Katz and Rosen, *Microeconomics* (2nd European edition, 2009)

Please note that using an older or newer edition of these books is generally fine.

The College Library stocks many copies of these books, which you can borrow as soon as you are in Oxford. So there is no need to buy all of these books in advance.

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