**preparing for philosophy in the 1st year of ppe, mp or pml**

The purpose of this note is to point you in the direction of some preparatory reading for the 1st-year Philosophy component of your course at Wadham. The courses covered are Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE); Mathematics and Philosophy (MP); and Philosophy and Modern Languages (PML). If you have any questions relating to the Philosophy course not covered by this letter, feel free to contact us by email (at the addresses below).

Philosophy at Wadham is studied as a component of PPE, MP and PML as well as Classics. You will be joining a group of philosophers that includes students reading for other degrees, and studying alongside them for some parts of the first year. We look forward to meeting all our new philosophers.

PPE, MP and PML students all take the Introduction to Logic course in the first term of the first year. The course textbook is *The Logic Manual* (Oxford University Press), written by our colleague Volker Halbach. The paperback edition is cheap and well worth purchasing. Students should read at least the first four chapters and preferably all of this short book prior to arrival in October. For a brief and more general introduction to logic, you could also read the article ‘Letter Games: a metamathematical taster’ by Alex Paseau; click on ‘English original’ in the Supervision/Teaching section of his website (www.acpaseau.com).

Another term of the first year will be spent on General Philosophy. There is no set text for this paper, but there is a list of topics to be covered: knowledge and scepticism; induction; the relation of mind and body; personal identity; free will; God and evil. Good introductions to these and other topics include Simon Blackburn’s *Think* (Oxford University Press) and Jennifer Nagel’s *Knowledge* (Oxford University Press VSI series). We also recommend Kwame Anthony Appiah’s *Thinking it Through* (Oxford University Press) if you can get hold of it. PPE students typically take this course in the third term of the first year, PML students in the second term, and MP students over the second and third term. PPE, MP and PML students should all try to do some preliminary reading for this course.

PPE and PML students also spend a term studying Moral Philosophy. The set text for Moral Philosophy is J S Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (we strongly recommend the 1998 Oxford University Press edition, edited by Roger Crisp). Another useful book is J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge University Press). PPE and PML students should familiarise themselves with these texts prior to arriving in Oxford.

MP students take Topics in Logic and Probability Theory in their second term. At this stage, no preliminary reading is required for this course beyond that for Introduction to Logic. In the third term, MP students take an introduction to the philosophy of mathematics, for which *The Foundations of Arithmetic* by Gottlob Frege is the set text. No preliminary reading is presently required for this course either, though MP students who wish to read some or all of *The Foundations of Arithmetic* are encouraged to do so.

We encourage students to make an effort to read some of the recommended texts before they come up to Wadham. But do not read them as if they were novels. Philosophy involves giving reasons in support of answers to particular questions. Getting clear about what the questions are and what the reasons are that are being offered is an essential skill, and you should read all these books with this aim in mind. That will often involve jumping back and forth between different parts of a text, reading the same parts several times over, and skipping others. You should also continually try to articulate for yourself what you take to be going on in the text, so get used to trying to write summaries of arguments and positions as you read, rather than taking notes along the way of what seem to you to be ‘key points’ as you read a text from beginning to end.

Students taking General Philosophy, Moral Philosophy and Frege: *Foundations of Arithmetic* will be asked to write essays as part of their course of study. In preparation for this, it is worth getting a sense of the distinctive form and style that philosophical writing involves. One helpful introduction is A. P. Martinich’s *Philosophical Writing: An Introduction* (Blackwell).

The pace of university work is extremely fast and, unlike school, **prior preparation is essential**. The students who do best are invariably those who have done a considerable amount of preliminary work in the vacation. Happy reading!

The Tutors in Philosophy

Prof. Alex Paseau ([alexander.paseau@wadham.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alexander.paseau@wadham.ox.ac.uk))

Dr Thomas Sinclair ([thomas.sinclair@wadham.ox.ac.uk](mailto:thomas.sinclair@wadham.ox.ac.uk))