

# PPE



## NAME OF COURSE

Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE)

(3 years)

## MINIMUM A-LEVEL GRADE REQUIREMENTS

AAA

## A-LEVELS REQUIRED

None.

Recommended:  
Mathematics and an essay subject (e.g. History, English Literature)

## ADMISSIONS TEST

Thinking Skills Assessment (TSA):  
90 mins logical reasoning questions  
30 mins essay

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

In a PPE degree, you combine the study of three different subjects to better understand the world around you. The teaching is done completely separately for each but you'll find that studying each subject improves your ability to understand the other two. At the end of the first year, students have the option to drop one of the three subjects in order to focus on the other two for the rest of their degree. As the degree is so broad, the sort of thing that you do is also quite varied: from really abstract stuff to real world examples, from essays to maths work. This really is one of the rewards of the degree.

With relatively few lectures (5-10 hours a week), most your learning is done via reading independently. The main form of teaching is done via tutorials. Tutorials are weekly meetings of 1-3 students with a professor to discuss a particular topic. Usually, you will be asked to write an essay (for politics/philosophy) or complete a problem set (for economics) on the week's topic, before discuss your ideas with the professor in the tutorial. You'll usually get an average of two assignments a week. You'll also get a couple of informal tests (called 'Collections') at the beginning of every term, giving you a chance to revise the content of the previous term.

## STRUCTURE OF MODULES

### 1st year

Politics: *Theory of Politics; Practice of Politics;*  
Philosophy: *General Philosophy; Moral Philosophy; Logic;*  
Economics: *Microeconomics; Macroeconomics; Probability & Statistics*

Uni-wide exams ('prelims') at the end of the first year. This doesn't contribute toward final degree mark.

### 2nd & 3rd year

Many people drop one of the subjects at the end of first year, but you don't have to. Once you've decided, you'll pick the modules that you want to do within your subjects. Overall, you take 8 modules over the course of the two years – there are 2 core/compulsory modules for each of the subjects that you pick, with the rest being optional modules. The range of optional modules is very broad. For example, if you pick Philosophy & Politics:

- 2 core philosophy modules, 2 core politics modules and any combination of 4 optional modules from philosophy and/or politics.

All final exams are at the end of third year.

## WHY PPE?

If you choose PPE as your degree, you should be the sort of person that has a variety of academic interests, and enjoys engaging with new ideas.

The key word to summarise the benefits of a PPE degree is *flexibility*:

- There aren't that many contact hours (lectures, tutorials etc), so it's largely up to you when, where and how you choose to learn the material - this lets you get involved with lots of societies and extra-curricular activities to fully benefit from the Oxford experience!
- After the first year, you have a lot of power to shape your degree according to your interests by picking the optional modules that interest you the most. No two PPEists pick the same options!
- A PPE degree opens the door to a very wide range of careers, giving you lots of choice when you graduate
- You are taught to think in a variety of different ways, which helps you develop a wide range of skills

## CAREER PROSPECTS

PPE is a degree that is very well-respected by employers as it provides you with critical thinking skills that can be applied to almost any job. People go into all sorts of things afterwards, including:

- Politics
- Journalism
- Consulting
- Entrepreneurism
- Banking
- Law
- Academia
- Charity

And so much more!

## TUTORIAL TESTIMONIAL

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Before each tutorial, you will be set a reading list and essay (1500-2000 words) to write, or a problem sheet to solve. Tutorials consist of going through the essays or through the topic with your tutor. The number of students in each tutorial ranges from 1 to 4.

## Recommended reading/podcasts

### **Economics**

We'd probably recommend these two YouTube channels:

- Crashcourse (Economics playlist: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtPNZwz5\\_o\\_5uirJ8gQXnhEO](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtPNZwz5_o_5uirJ8gQXnhEO))
- Marginal Revolution University:
  - [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-uRhZ\\_p-BM4XnKSe3BJa23-XKJs\\_k4KY](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-uRhZ_p-BM4XnKSe3BJa23-XKJs_k4KY) (Microeconomics)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-uRhZ\\_p-BM52EbMG1NR1ZfG9tEvcxE4u](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-uRhZ_p-BM52EbMG1NR1ZfG9tEvcxE4u) (Macroeconomics)

Other than that, it might be a good idea to keep an eye on what's happening in the economy generally.

Other resources (recommended as introductory by our tutors):

- Core Econ Textbook: free online introduction to economics found at: <https://core-econ.org/theeconomy/?lang=en>
- T Harford, "The Undercover Economist"
- A Banarjee and E Duflo, "Poor Economics"

### **Politics**

We'd definitely recommend:

- 'An Introduction to Political Philosophy' – a book by Jonathan Wolff (covers a lot of political theory)

A couple of weeks before starting first-year, our tutors sent us this information and asked us to read these (maybe do some googling to understand what sort of thing is discussed in these books – it's not worth buying these books):

"As an introduction, we recommend:

- Lijphart, Patterns of democracy: Government forms and performance in 36 countries, 2012.

Also, look through:

- W.R. Clark, M. Golder, and S. Golder, Principles of comparative government, 2009.

You will also have lectures and workshops in quantitative methods for political analysis, organised in the university Department of Politics and International Relations. As an introduction, you should try to look through:

- P.M. Kellstedt & G.D. Whitten, The fundamentals of political science research, 2008."

### **Philosophy**

We'd definitely recommend:

- "Think" by Simon Blackburn
- "Ethics: inventing right and wrong" by John Mackie

For the formal logic module, definitely check this out – a lot of people are usually really surprised what Logic is:

- <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~logicman/> (Our official lecture slides)

## ONE THING I WISH I KNEW WHEN I WAS APPLYING

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PRACTICE THE TSA – IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE! There's a lot of good books on Amazon where you can practice the TSA and it'll explain the answers, (you definitely don't need more than one). Or just go through past papers – you'll see how your mark improves as you practice. Try aiming to practice until you start hitting 70s in your TSAs - it's not necessary but it is helpful for admission.

## STUDENT INSIGHT

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The thing that most helped me for Philosophy was thinking about the big issues in the world through an Islamic lens – in my interviews, I argued that intentions were what mattered when thinking about 'right and wrong', which was a belief I formed off the basis of reading the Qur'an and Hadith.