

Philosophy for Computer Science and Philosophy

We are delighted that you have been offered a place to read Computer Science and Philosophy at St Hilda's, and we look forward to seeing you in October.

Many undergraduates who come to Oxford to study philosophy do not have an extensive background in the subject. Consequently, the course is geared towards taking you through the first steps in philosophy from the beginning and advancing quickly. For this reason, we are providing some information about the first year syllabus and some advice on how to prepare effectively for the first stages of the course.

As you may already be aware, the first year syllabus is divided into three central areas in philosophy. By the end of the first academic year you will need to become familiar with all three areas.

The three parts consist of:

(1) General Philosophy. The subjects to be studied include: knowledge and scepticism, induction, the relation of mind and body, personal identity, free will, and God and evil. To get some idea of the subject, you may find the following reading helpful:

- J. Cottingham (ed.) 1986. *René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy*. Cambridge University Press. (Especially Meditations One and Two.)
- S. Blackburn. 2001. *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*. Oxford University Press. (Read what interests you.)
- E. Conee & T. Sider 2014. *Riddles of Existence, 2nd Edition*. Oxford University Press. (Read what interests you.)
- Jennifer Nagel, 2014. *Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press.

(2) Logic. The set text for this course is:

- Volker Halbach, 2010. *The Logic Manual*, Oxford University Press. (This is best studied in conjunction with the lectures when you arrive, but if you are curious, you may find the first two chapters interesting).

(3) Philosophy of Computability. The first year course consists in a study of Alan Turing's concept of computability in terms of Turing Machines. A comprehensive introduction to this subject can be found in:

- C. Petzold, 2008. *The Annotated Turing: A Guided Tour Through Alan Turing's Historic Paper on Computability and the Turing Machine*. Wiley. (Selections from this book will be studied in conjunction with the lectures when you arrive, so it is not essential to read through it. If you are unfamiliar with the details of Turing Machines, though, you may find it useful to browse through to get the general idea.)

Please do not hesitate to get in contact with us if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Matthew Parrott
Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy