

June 2026



St Hilda's College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Philosophy for Philosophy and Modern Languages

We are delighted that you have accepted our offer of a place to read Philosophy and Modern Languages (German/French) 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. 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:

- T. Nagel . 1988. *What Does it All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*. Oxford University Press.
- 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: OUP

(2) Moral Philosophy. The subjects to be studied include: hedonism, forms of utilitarianism, the 'proof' of utilitarianism, and issues relating utilitarianism to virtue, integrity, justice and rights. The set text is considered a classic in philosophy, and is influential in other fields.

- J. S. Mill, 1871 and modern reprints. *Utilitarianism*. (Many editions are available; the most useful edition is R. Crisp (ed.) 1998, Oxford University Press).
- You may also find it helpful to have a copy of R. Crisp, 1998. *The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Utilitarianism*, Routledge. This discusses the text in relation to these topics in a clear and accessible way.

(3) 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).

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