

Philosophy, Politics, and Economics
St Peter's College, Oxford
Pre-Reading List
Academic Year 2026-2027

Congratulations on fulfilling your offer to read Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) at St Peter's College, Oxford. We are looking forward to meeting you in Michaelmas Term. In your first year of the PPE degree, Politics teaching will commence in Hilary Term 2027; in Michaelmas Term, you will be focusing on Philosophy and Economics. That said, it is very helpful for you to familiarise yourselves with some of the key texts you will study in Hilary Term, and as is the case with other subjects, you will be expected to produce your first Politics essay in the first week of Hilary Term.

The first-year Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Politics paper is divided into Political Theory and Practice of Politics components. Prior to your arrival, you would be well-advised to read the following books pertaining to the **Political Theory** component of the paper. Please read the original texts and not secondary commentary on these sources.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* – any edition

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* – any edition

The following works offer useful overviews of the study of political theory:

Adam Swift, *Political Philosophy: A Beginners' Guide for Students and Politicians*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

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The **Practice of Politics** component of the first-year paper focuses on comparison across different political systems. A wide range of topics are available to study, including the relationship between democracy and war; democracy and authoritarianism; social movements; and the relationship between voters and political parties. A few introductory texts are outlined below:

Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performances in Thirty-Six Countries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

The following books offer useful accounts of questions of political change. *The Leopard* is highly recommended, given its outstanding writing.

Darren Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. (London: Profile, 2012)

Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile, 2011)

Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, Revised edition, (London: Random House, 1958[2007]) – **particularly recommended.**

Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD990-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)

We look forward to seeing you in October.

Dr Gideon Elford

Dr Edward Howell

August 2026