



## Reading and activities list for History & Philosophy

### Checklist of Actions for Oxbridge preparation

- Complete the course and college research booklet which covers entry requirements for your course (e.g. admissions tests during interviews). Use it to help you make informed choices.
- Respond and maintain email contact with your OMS Mentor and do not hesitate to ask questions which may help your Oxbridge preparation.
- Read British broadsheets such as The Daily Telegraph, The Independent or The Guardian preferably every day (if not feasible, then at weekends). Think critically about what you have read; what issues are raised?; What assumptions are being made? What information is being relied on to draw which conclusions? How would you frame a counter-argument?
- Make note of subject-related terminology to look up definitions with the aim of working them into future academic discussions on your chosen Oxbridge course.
- Keep a "Learning Log". Note down (i) book titles/ articles (ii) author (iii) your thoughts, feelings and observations (iv) context and relevance of the book/article (v) whether you agree with what you have read.

### History

Undertake preliminary reading of books relating to modern History. Choose from among the following:

- History: a very short introduction* by J.H. Arnold
- What is history?* by E.H. Carr
- In Defence of History* by Evans

Read some the following, researching into the historical context in which they were written:

- Histories* by Herodotus
- Histories* by Tacitus
- Politics* by Aristotle
- Beowulf* (any English translation)
- The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli
- Utopia* by Thomas More
- The Art of War* by Sun-tzu
- Candide* by Voltaire
- Primo Levi *If This Is Man* (I would say this was essential reading.)
- Animal Farm* by George Orwell

Broaden your reading of history by reading *The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World* by Professor Niall Ferguson. This is an excellent summary of the historical development of capitalism, along with a summary of past crashes and how they compare to the current situation.

Also by the same author (Niall Ferguson), try *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World*. The book provides a synoptic survey of the British empire since the 17th century, as an arresting argument about why it arose, and how it fell. Ferguson's emphasis throughout is on the pursuit of economic profit and military might.



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Identify three historical figures of most interest to you. Be sure you can articulate why they are interesting and describe their impact on history.

Mini-project: Use the PESC model to consider the Political, Economic, Social and Cultural impact of each of the following on world history:

1. Roman Conquest
2. Norman Conquest
3. Hundred Years War
4. Reformation
5. Tudor and Stuarts
6. English Civil War and Interregnum Period
7. Renaissance
8. Enlightenment
9. French Revolution
10. 1848 Revolution(s)
11. Russian Revolution
12. World War I & World War II

- Consider subscribing to History Today or the BBC's History magazines. In the meantime, visit them online and take note of interesting articles and their authors.
- Also view [www.history.com](http://www.history.com) which is the cable TV history channel's website.
- Know your chronology and geography. To accurately date and place historic events, keep the *Penguin Atlas of World History* on your shelf and a hand-written chronology of historical events you have studied on your wall.
- Try to attend at least one local lecture, event or workshop on a historic theme (you can find one by internet), so you can hear real historians talk.

### Philosophy

General Introductions for getting an idea of what academic philosophy is like:

- J. Ayer. *The Central Questions of Philosophy* (Penguin)
- J. Ayer. *Language, Truth and Logic* (Penguin)
- S. Blackburn. *Think* (Oxford University Press)
- J. Hospers. *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (Routledge)
- T. Nagel. *What does it all mean?* (Oxford University Press)
- Russell. *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford University Press)
- W. Poundstone. *Labyrinths of Reason: Paradox, Puzzles and the Fruit of Knowledge* (Penguin)

### General

- When reading books and articles, try to be very critical in your analysis at all times. Develop counter-arguments and attempt to justify these with logic and evidence.
- Learn to express your own views by referring to what you have read or heard from a reputable source. When researching, use reliable sources and make sure you can explain what makes a source reliable.
- As part of your learning process throughout Oxbridge preparation, create a cumulative list of definitions and key concepts to expand your academic vernacular and knowledge of historical terminology for use in academic conversation.