

## PHILOSOPHY AT CORPUS CHRISTI

Corpus Christi admits between 2 and 4 philosophers a year. We ask for two grade As and one A\* at A level, but the choice of A levels can be science or arts, or a mixture of both. You are strongly urged to attend one of our College Open Days, where you will have an opportunity to discuss your plans with the Director of Studies.

Undergraduate teaching in the College is organised by the Director of Studies in Philosophy, **Dr James Warren**, whose particular research interests lie in ancient philosophy and also teaches topics in metaphysics and ethics. Students may also receive supervision from other Fellows of Corpus and from philosophers based in other colleges according to their choice of papers. Corpus is fortunate to have a comparatively large number of senior members with philosophical interests who are actively involved in undergraduate teaching. **Dr Marina Frasca-Spada**, the Senior Tutor, is a philosopher whose research interests lie in the history of philosophy from Descartes to Kant and in the philosophy of science. **Dr Nigel Simmonds** has interests in the philosophy of law. **Dr Thomas Land** is a Research Fellow in philosophy.

Philosophy deals with problems which are extremely general and in some sense ultimate, such as the nature of reality, logic and its relation to natural languages, the basis of knowledge and the foundations of value. It also scrutinises and evaluates the methods that are used to answer such questions.

Examples of philosophical issues are: What reasons do we have for thinking that there is a world independent of us? Are human beings just complicated neurophysiological machines or do they have minds in addition to their bodies? If they do, then how do minds and bodies relate to one another? What is art? Do communities of people need governments and, if so, why? Is there an objective standard for what is right and good? Is it rational to sacrifice your own interests to promote the welfare of others? Are there any methods for attaining incontrovertible knowledge? Could there be alternative systems of logic or mathematics?

Cambridge offers a course in which it is possible to concentrate entirely on philosophy without taking any other subject, even as a subsidiary. You begin by studying a core of compulsory subjects, and then focus in the second and third years on areas that particularly interest you. Throughout the three years you are encouraged to read the works of modern philosophers and to think directly about philosophical topics, constructing your own arguments and exploring criticisms of the arguments of others. The history of philosophy is taught at every level, and the course includes papers on ancient, early modern, and nineteenth and twentieth century European philosophers.

## **Teaching**

A lot of teaching is done in lectures. There are also classes for some subjects (e.g. first-year logic), and discussion groups in the first and second years. You are recommended reading on a topic for your weekly supervision in college and asked to write a substantial essay about it. You then discuss the essay and the topic with your supervisor. Because the Philosophy Faculty has close links with related departments such as Classics, History, and History and Philosophy of Science, students at Cambridge are able to take advantage of a wide range of specialised lectures and seminars. They also have access to many excellent libraries.

## **The Philosophy Tripos is divided into three parts:**

### **Part IA**

Part IA is taken at the end of the first year and provides an introduction to the subject. You study logic (for which it is not necessary to have done maths), ethics, metaphysics and some set texts (currently Plato *Meno*, Hume *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, Mill *On Liberty*).

### **Part IB**

Part IB is normally taken at the end of the second year and contains two compulsory papers (philosophical logic and metaphysics). You then choose two further subjects from ethics, philosophy of science, political philosophy, ancient philosophy, early modern philosophy (Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley and Hume) and experimental psychology. (The last of these options is taught in the Department of Experimental Psychology and involves a certain amount of laboratory work.)

### **Part II**

In Part II you choose four from a range of eleven papers. These include most of the subjects mentioned above, studied at a more advanced level. In addition, there is a paper in mathematical logic, a paper in aesthetics, a special subject which changes from time to time (currently Wittgenstein), and various papers in the history of philosophy, covering both ancient philosophy and later modern philosophy (Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche).

## **Examinations**

Philosophy examinations are mostly traditional written papers, each lasting three hours, but there are the following exceptions. In Parts IB and II you can opt to submit two extended essays instead of sitting one of the subject papers. In Part II you can decide to submit a dissertation on a subject of your choice instead of writing a long essay under exam conditions.

### **Subject Combinations**

Many undergraduates study philosophy for three years, but a substantial number combine it with another subject by changing to or from another Tripos. So after studying another subject for one or two years (Mathematics, Classics, Economics ...) it is possible to switch to Philosophy Part II. Alternatively you can switch to another subject (Economics, History, Psychology, Social and Political Sciences ...) after Part IA or Part IB Philosophy. Although the system is fairly flexible, not all combinations are feasible. Applicants who are thinking of such changes are advised to consult college Admissions Tutors about their plans.

### **Career opportunities**

Although a philosophy degree is not an essential qualification for any particular career, the analytic and critical skills developed through the study of philosophy prepare graduates for a variety of professions, including computing, journalism, administration and the law.

### **Recommended Reading**

If you are thinking of applying to read Philosophy, you are very strongly advised to read some books on the subject, since nothing else can give you a realistic idea of what it is like. The following are recommended:

T Nagel	<i>What does it all mean? and Mortal Questions</i>
T Crane	<i>Elements of Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind</i>
M Morris	<i>An Introduction to the Philosophy Of Language</i>
P Smith	<i>An Introduction to Formal Logic</i>

For the Formal Logic part of the first year course the Faculty will use:

*forallx: Cambridge version.*

This is freely available online at <http://www.nottub.com/forallx.shtml>

Have a look and see how you get on!

Or you might try some classic texts in the history of philosophy:

Plato	<i>Republic</i>
R Descartes	<i>Meditations</i>
D Hume	<i>Enquiries</i>
J S Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i>

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