
Some Recommended Philosophy Readings for future students of Computer Science and Philosophy

General Philosophy (*all Philosophy students*)

The first year “General Philosophy” course covers topics particularly associated with Descartes and Hume, who also feature strongly in the second year “History of Philosophy” course. The most useful editions are:

René Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy, with selections from the Objections and Replies*

(translated by John Cottingham, Cambridge, 1996)

David Hume *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (ed. Peter Millican, Oxford World’s Classics, OUP – i.e. Oxford University Press – 2007)

The Introduction to this Hume edition gives a general overview of the development of philosophy over the relevant period, written with first year Oxford students in mind.

Turing on Computability and Intelligence (*Computer Science/Philosophy*)

In the final term of the first year, those taking Computer Science/Philosophy study an additional text which contributes to the “General Philosophy” examination paper, namely:

Alan Turing and Charles Petzold *The Annotated Turing* (John Wiley, 2008)

You might find it interesting to read this now, but don’t worry at all if you find it difficult and have to stop, since you’ll be much better placed to appreciate it later. The examination requirement – a minimum of one question – is easily covered in the final term. In the meantime, you could usefully read books such as:

Andrew Hodges *Turing* (Phoenix, 1997) – very short, but clear and informative

Ernest Nagel and James Newman *Gödel’s Proof* – a classic exposition, readable and not too formal

Jack Copeland *Artificial Intelligence: A Philosophical Introduction* (Blackwell, 1993)

Douglas Hofstadter *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (Penguin, 1980)

Copeland’s book is an excellent and well-balanced introductory treatment of the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence. Hofstadter’s is a well-known and very stimulating exploration of the power and beauty of recursion. For many more books that could be put here, see the links at the bottom of <http://www.philocomp.net/links.htm>.

Logic (*all Philosophy students*)

The introductory logic course is now taught using Volker Halbach’s *Logic Manual*, published by Oxford University Press (2010). See also <http://philosophy.hertford.ox.ac.uk/logic.htm>. A useful book for background reading, which used to be the set text, is:

Wilfrid Hodges *Logic* (Penguin, 2001)

Background Reading

Perhaps the best way to prepare yourself for studying Philosophy is to spend time thinking for yourself about philosophical problems in the company of books such as:

Stephen Law *The Philosophy Gym* (Headline, 2004)

Simon Blackburn *Think* (OUP, 2001)

Laurence Goldstein *The Philosopher’s Habitat* (Routledge, 1990)

Bertrand Russell *The Problems of Philosophy* (OUP, 2001)

Edward Craig *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*, (OUP, 2002)

Also look for books by Julian Baggini and Nigel Warburton, who have produced several good introductions. The ideal philosophical preparation for Oxford is reading material that is clear and rigorous, but that also really grabs you, and helps you feel the interest and significance of the sorts of problems that Philosophy present.