Lincoln College

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

From the Politics Tutor

Dear Fresher,

Congratulations on your place to study History & Politics at Lincoln College! We are very much looking forward to seeing you in October. I am writing to you now with some information about the Politics side of the History & Politics course, and what you can expect for the upcoming year.

In Politics, your first year of study includes three modules. In 'Practice of Politics,' you will be introduced to the study of comparative politics and political sociology. In 'Theory of Politics,' you will study some key topics in political theory. There is also a third 'Political Analysis' module taught entirely in the department (rather than in the college) that covers the basics of political science research methods.

I have included below our plans for first-year tutorials at Lincoln. You will study 'Practice of Politics' across Michaelmas and Hilary, and you will do the tutorials Theory of Politics in Trinity Term.

I also have attached some reading lists to help you prepare for your first year of study. We recommend that you undertake some appropriate reading before arriving to Oxford. Our goal is to give you a taste of what it means to study Politics and enable you to make a confident start to the course. You will find them particularly helpful if you have not studied these topics before.

Note that books marked * will be allowed against the college's book grant scheme. Further information on the scheme will be sent to you at a later date.

I hope you will find the College and Oxford to be an exciting, friendly and supportive environment to study in over the next three years. Welcome to Lincoln, and we look forward to seeing you soon!

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jody LaPorte
Tutorial Fellow in Politics

1. The First Year History & Politics Course

You will take papers in both History and Politics, working towards an examination in June, at the end of Trinity Term.

Each college organizes its teaching slightly differently, but here is the anticipated tutorial schedule for first-year students studying politics at Lincoln.

	Michaelmas Term	**Hilary Term**	**Trinity Term**
Politics	Practice of Politics (4 tutorials)	Practice of Politics (4 tutorials)	Theory of Politics (4-6 tutorials)
		Political Analysis	

There are also lectures for each of these modules, which are centrally organized by the departments. More information on lecture scheduling will be available closer to the start of term.

2. Politics Reading for Incoming Students

An important part of the preparation for studying politics is to take an interest in current issues by reading a variety of newspapers and periodicals. You should get into the habit of reading a high-quality news sources, such as *The Economist* or a major international newspaper, on a regular basis if you can.

The first year of your politics course consists of three parts. It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with some core readings within each of these themes.

Introduction to the Practice of Politics

The first part that you will be doing is Introduction to the Practice of Politics. We will examine a range of topics within the study of politics, including: (i) regime types; definition and measurement of variations between types of democracy; (ii) political institutions and practice outside the advanced industrial democracies; stability, state capacity and state formation; (iii) the state and its institutions (executives, legislatures, parties and party systems, electoral systems, courts, constitutions and centre-periphery relations); (iv) parties and party systems; political values and identity politics.

Two good books as an introduction for this section of the course are:

- Lijphart (2002) Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. Yale: Yale University Press.*
- Robert, William Clark, Matt Golder and Sona Nadenicheck Golder (2013) The Principles of Comparative Politics. 2nd Edition. Los Angeles: Sage.*

Introduction to Political Theory

The second section of the politics course is dedicated to Political Theory. In this part of the course, students will be familiarised with core topics with political philosophy, especially pertaining to the study of democratic states. A range of topics will be discussed such as: the nature and grounds of democracy; power and influence in the democratic state; ideology; civil society; public choice approaches to democracy; the nature and limits of liberty.

As preparation for this part of the first year course, you should read:

- Wolff, Jonathan (1996) An Introduction to Political Philosophy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.*
- Adam Swift (2013), *Political Philosophy,* Third Edition. Polity.

If possible, also read the following primary sources:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762), especially Book 1, chapters 6-8, Book 2, Book 3, chapters 10-18, Book 4.

Introduction to Political Analysis

The third part of the course provides an introduction to methodology and the logic of empirical political analysis. Specifically, in students will learn how political scientists use data to test their theories.

The following book provides a good introduction to methods in politics:

- Kellstedt, Paul, and Guy Whitten (2013) The Fundamentals of Political Science Research. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*