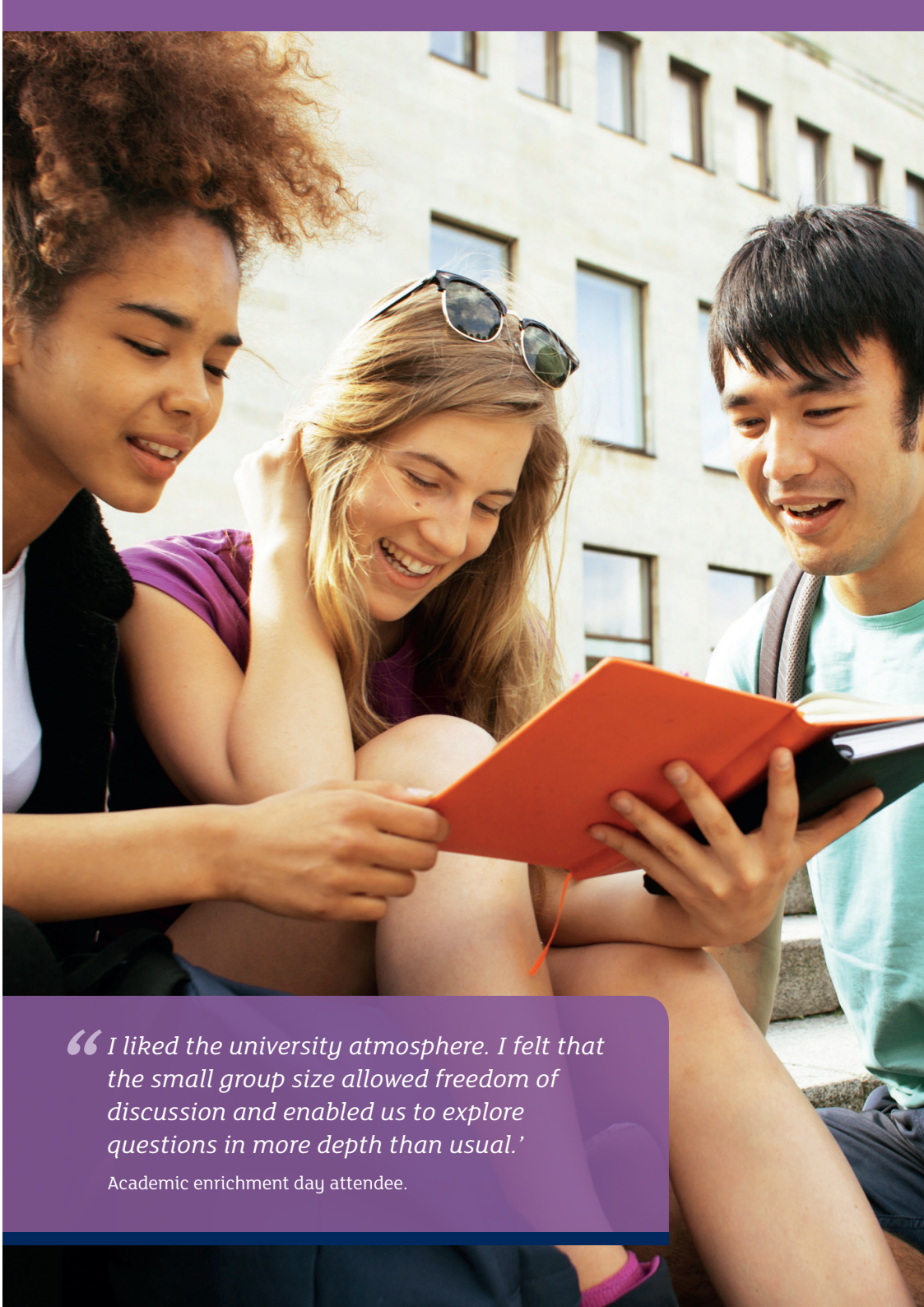


INDEPENDENT THINKERS COURSES

*Humanities and  
Social Sciences Webinars*





# INTRODUCTION

*For two and a half years Independent Thinkers Courses has been delivering university preparation and academic enrichment workshops in schools and colleges across the country. In all that we do, we place particular emphasis on helping students to become critical, independent and passionate learners. Now, as schools have moved online, we are offering our stimulating and enjoyable courses as webinars.*

The courses in this brochure, aimed at students in Years 12 and 13, have two aims: to introduce young people in the final two years of secondary school to the excitement, pleasure and rigour of university level study; and, to help prepare them effectively for the next stage of their academic careers.

All courses are designed, developed and delivered by experts in their respective fields committed to sharing their passion for 'the best which has been thought and said' with the next generation.

For each set of webinars, as well as the materials covered in the course, we provide further reading and materials for students to work on by themselves, with their peers and with their teachers.

We look forward to working with you and your students.

Jane Slinn and Bono Xu

**Independent Thinkers Courses**

*“I liked the university atmosphere. I felt that the small group size allowed freedom of discussion and enabled us to explore questions in more depth than usual.”*

Academic enrichment day attendee.

## CLASSICS AND ORIENTAL STUDIES

### **CLASSICS I: Masters of Oratory: Cicero, Lysias and Demosthenes (3 one-hour webinars)**

Through close analysis of the language of some of the most sophisticated rhetorical texts produced in the classical world, students will explore how Cicero, Lysias and Demosthenes used language to dominate the political landscapes of ancient Rome and Athens. Texts will be provided in English, as well as the original languages.

### **CLASSICS II: Writing Rome: Ovid and Virgil (3 one-hour webinars)**

The works of the Roman poets, Virgil and Ovid, frame the Classical Roman empire, yet in contradictory ways. While Virgil's Aeneid describes the heroic deeds of the city's founders, Ovid's exile literature explores how exile and disgrace could dramatically transform a poet's fortunes. In these sessions, students will learn to apply their critical reading skills to texts which celebrate empire and those which expose its dark recesses.

### **CLASSICS III: Preparing for the Oxford CAT and the Cambridge at Interview Classics Assessments (Latin unseen: 3 one-hour webinars; Greek unseen: 3 one-hour webinars)**

These two sets of webinars provide students with key tools and techniques for successfully tackling the unseen passages in Latin and/ or Greek with which they will be faced in Oxbridge admissions assessments and at Oxbridge interviews. Participants will have the opportunity to sit a mock assessment and receive written feedback on their performance.

### **CLASSICS AND ORIENTAL STUDIES I: Preparing for the Oxford CLAT and OLAT (3 one-hour webinars)**

These webinars will help students prepare for the Oxford University language aptitude assessments: the CLAT and the OLAT. Participants will have the opportunity to sit a mock assessment and receive written feedback on their performance.

## ECONOMICS

### **ECONOMICS I: Preparing for the Cambridge ECAA (3 one-hour webinars)**

This course comprises three webinars: one session on preparing for the problem-solving section of the ECAA; one session on preparing for the ECAA Maths section; and, one preparing for the ECAA Written Task. Students will have the opportunity to sit and receive feedback on a bespoke ECAA test.

### **ECONOMICS II: Preparing for the Cambridge ECAA and Economics Interview (4 one-hour webinars)**

This course comprises four webinars: one session on preparing for the problem-solving section of the ECAA; one session on preparing for the Maths section; one on preparing for the ECAA Written Task; and, one interview skills session. Students will have the opportunity to sit and receive feedback on a bespoke ECAA test.



*“I enjoyed all the tips and strategies for each section of the test. The tutor was an excellent speaker and very helpful. It was great to talk about my subject with Cambridge University Ph.D. students.”*

Test preparation and academic enrichment day attendee.

“Thank you so so much for all your help - this was definitely the most helpful experience I had, absolutely invaluable for feeling confident and prepared when I went to my interviews.”

Oxford offer holder for 2019 who attended academic enrichment, test preparation and interview preparation workshops over the course of an academic year.

## ENGLISH AND MODERN LANGUAGES

### ENGLISH AND MML I: From A-level to University (3 one-hour webinars)

This course will guide you through some of the key differences between the study of literature at school and university. It will help you to anticipate some of the academic demands of that first term, so that you can start your degree with confidence. Week one: what can we take from A-level and build on for university? Week two: the first term in detail – seminars and lectures; bibliographies and research skills; university seminar taster session. Week three: academic skills – note taking; essay writing; how to use secondary material.

### ENGLISH I: Tragedy (4 one-hour webinars)

This comparative literature course will extend your understanding of tragedy by comparing Greek and Renaissance plays. We will study plays by major classical authors (Sophocles and Euripides) and Shakespeare (*Hamlet* and *King Lear*), as well as examine some of the most influential theories of tragedy. The key question that we will be thinking about is why tragedy, which evokes painful emotions such as pity and fear, nonetheless gives pleasure. This course is also of interest to classicists.

### ENGLISH II: What is Literature? (3 one-hour webinars)

This comparative literature course will introduce participants to some of the most persistent and challenging questions in literary studies: what is literature? What is an author? And, what is interpretation? Students will discuss a range of extracts from Plato and the Renaissance Neo-Platonist, Philip Sidney through to twentieth-century classics of literary theory, such as essays by Roland Barthes and the work of the Russian Formalists. The course will be of interest to classicists and modern linguists, as well as those wanting to study English at university.

### ENGLISH III: Preparing for the ELAT (4 one-hour webinars)

These sessions are for students preparing for the ELAT admissions test, used to select applicants to read English at Oxford and Cambridge. The course will focus on developing students' practical criticism and essay-writing skills so that they approach the ELAT test with confidence. All participants will have the opportunity to sit and receive written feedback on a mock ELAT paper. The course is delivered by tutors with extensive experience of marking the ELAT test, and of teaching English to Cambridge undergraduates.

## HISTORY

### HISTORY I: Preparing for the Oxford HAT (4 one-hour webinars)

These sessions are for students preparing for the HAT admissions test, used to select applicants to read History and related subjects at Oxford. Participants will learn essential strategies for approaching unseen historical sources, as well as for structuring an effective HAT essay. All participants will have the opportunity to sit and receive written feedback on a mock HAT paper. The course is delivered by tutors with extensive experience of marking the Oxford HAT, and of teaching History to Oxford undergraduates.

## LAW

### LAW I: What is Law? (3 one-hour webinars)

These sessions will introduce students to how laws are made in England and Wales. How exactly do judges 'make' law when they give judgments in court, and how are we to understand the legal reasoning and conclusions contained in those judgments? The sessions also cover how Acts of Parliament come about, what they mean once they are on the statute book and how they are to be interpreted.

### LAW II: Preparing for the LNAT, CLT and Law Admissions Interviews (4 one-hour webinars)

This course is made up of four webinars: two sessions on preparing for the critical thinking section of the LNAT; one session on how to write a persuasive and memorable LNAT and/ or Cambridge Law Test essay; and, one session on how to excel in the admissions interview. Students will also be advised as to how they might continue their university application preparation independently and imaginatively. The interview preparation session is run by a former Cambridge Law fellow.

## MANAGEMENT

### MANAGEMENT I: Innovation and Group Dynamics (4 one-hour webinars)

A family, a school, and a company are all groups in which work has to be shared. But why is it that these groups sometimes lead to a surge in productivity and creativity, and sometimes to slow and unsatisfying results? This course is adapted from a course taught at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, where the tutor teaches Organisational Behaviour.

### MANAGEMENT II: Management Consulting 101; Or, Should We Launch a Drug for Arthritis in Dogs? (3 one-hour webinars)

Consultants have an enormous impact on our daily lives. They advise governments, private companies and NGOs alike. Consultants are often in their early 20s; how is it that they can advise the CEOs of FTSE100 companies? In this course, delivered by a tutor who has worked as a management consultant for McKinsey & Company, students will learn the basic tools of management consultants that allow them to approach unknown problems systematically. Active participation is required as students tackle case studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to advise a pharmaceutical company on whether it should launch a new drug to help older dogs with arthritis.

## PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

### PHILOSOPHY I: Introduction to Philosophy (4 one-hour webinars)

This is a course based on the venerable General Philosophy paper which is a milestone for all first-year students in PPE at Oxford. Pupils will be introduced to the rigour of analytic philosophy through investigation of core philosophical themes such as free will, personal identity, scepticism and the relation between mind and body.

### PHILOSOPHY II: Great Thought Experiments (4 one-hour webinars)

A thought experiment is a method of doing philosophy which starts with a story: the budding philosopher is confronted with a puzzling scenario which evokes a strong instinctive response. Pupils will learn to evaluate their intuitions about cases involving brain surgery, brains in vats, runaway trains, words that aren't really words, and the curious case of Mary the Colour Scientist.

### PHILOSOPHY III: Utilitarianism: For and Against (4 one-hour webinars)

Students will evaluate to what extent the utilitarian 'creed', which 'holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness' (John Stuart Mill), is an adequate foundation for moral and political decision making. As well as examining the arguments of prominent defenders and critics of utilitarianism, participants will consider whether utilitarian principles help or hinder us in resolving the ethical dilemmas which we inevitably face in our daily lives.

### PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY IV: Key Topics in Philosophy of Religion (4 one-hour webinars)

These sessions take as their point of departure key philosophical topics covered by A-level Religious Studies courses: arguments for the existence of God; the problem of evil; religious language; and, the complex relationships between mind, brain, body and soul. Students will delve deeper into these topics through the exploration of a wide range of stimulating primary texts, from Plato's writings on the immortality of the soul to Ludwig Wittgenstein's reflections on religious language.

*“It was even better than I expected: perfect.”*

Test preparation and academic enrichment day attendee.



## POLITICS, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & SOCIOLOGY

### **POLITICS I: Challenges to Democracy (4 one-hour webinars)**

What are the origins of democracy? Is democracy a resilient system of political order? These questions underpin the course and will enable students to consider a range of challenges to democracy, from authoritarianism in the Middle East, to the 'gerrymandering' of constituency boundaries, and even the current COVID-19 crisis.

### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS I: The Ethics of War (4 one-hour webinars)**

How has the nature of war changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? How has nuclear proliferation blurred the distinction between peace time and war time? Can the killing of non-combatants ever be justified? This course will provide an insight into the philosophical debates that are the foundation of degree level Politics and International Relations.

### **POLITICS II: CORE POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES: Conservatism, Liberalism, Socialism (3 one-hour webinars)**

These webinars take as their point of departure the three core political ideologies studied in A-level Politics courses. Students will discuss and debate extracts from classic primary texts in each tradition, as well as considering some surprising points of contact between seemingly irreconcilable ideological positions.

### **SOCIOLOGY I: Gender and Fertility? (4 one-hour webinars)**

How does fertility entwine with gender identity? What are the sociological implications of infertility? This course will discuss these issues with particular focus on the trajectory of male infertility, and the associated challenge posed to the gendered 'masculine' ideal. Students will be also be invited to consider the impact of fertility treatments on gender identity and broader societal norms surrounding family and parenthood.

### **SOCIOLOGY II: Navigating online learning: A critical webinar series (4 one-hour webinars)**

As learning is shifting online, learners need to think critically about online space and develop a critical digital literacy. These sessions will enable students to do just that by exploring the four key issues in this rapidly evolving area of enquiry: inequalities in global knowledge production; scams and misinformation online; how 'big data' increases inequality; and, surveillance, tracking and monitoring of your digital footprint.

### **TSA PREPARATION COURSE (3 one-hour webinars)**

This course is made up of three webinars: one session on TSA critical thinking; one session on TSA problem solving; and, one session on preparing for the essay section of the TSA. Students will have the opportunity to sit and receive feedback on a bespoke TSA test.

### **TSA AND INTERVIEW PREPARATION COURSE (4 one-hour webinars)**

This course is made up of four webinars: one session on TSA critical thinking; one session on TSA problem solving; one session on preparing for TSA essay task; and, one interview skills workshop. Students will have the opportunity to sit and receive feedback on a bespoke TSA test.



[www.independent-thinkers.co.uk/webinars](http://www.independent-thinkers.co.uk/webinars)

01223 461822

[info@independent-thinkers.co.uk](mailto:info@independent-thinkers.co.uk)

