

Personal Statement 1

Currently, the world is undergoing a profound shift, both economically and politically. The West has seen a huge surge in populism across the political spectrum. From the presidential campaigns of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders in the USA, to the 'Brexit' vote in the UK, people have been rejecting globalism due to rising economic inequality, and turning away from the political establishment. Only by studying PPE can one draw on a broad range of disciplines to unravel these exciting phenomena, which shows that although all three subjects are important, the whole is worth more than the sum of its parts.

My affinity for politics began when I started attending Model United Nations conferences, where I have been recognised with several awards. MUN has helped me develop my independent study skills, and my ability to grapple with complex issues, as well as my argumentation skills as I debated resolutions with other students. This engagement with politics has spurred me to read daily broadsheets, as well as "The Economist". A lively interest in current affairs has been paired with a more academic study of the subject - I have read numerous books, including Mann and Ornstein's "It's Even Worse Than It Looks", a look at America's increasingly hyperpartisan and dysfunctional political system. Also, fluency in Spanish and French has enabled me to read Sender's "Réquiem", which focuses on a Spanish peasant's class war with the rich landowners, and Vercors' "Le silence de la mer", WW2 French resistance propaganda.

I have a passion for economics, and soon after beginning the A-Level course I found myself investigating beyond the syllabus. The RES essay competition allowed me to discuss the statement 'Inequality is not just bad for society, it is bad for growth'. The Bank of England's 'Target 2.0' challenge gave me the chance to research and analyse economic data, as well as develop my ability to think on my feet as I responded to questions from a panel of judges. I have also read widely, including "Nudge", where I was fascinated to explore how human choices can be influenced. However, I feel that the practical application of some of the suggestions presented raises problems, as I disagree with aspects of the authors' philosophy of liberal paternalism, in favour of a more Millian, stronger conception of individual choice. Regardless, it does illustrate the immense promise that the discipline holds, as we continue to add to the wealth of existing economic knowledge and improve our understanding of how we can maximise welfare.

My attraction to philosophy is twofold - as well as adding perspective to both politics and economics, it is an engrossing subject in itself. Throughout history, philosophical questions have been a central preoccupation for the world's thinkers and it is wonderful to tap into this rich vein of intellectual heritage. My philosophical inquiry has been self-guided, and better for that, as I have developed analytical skills and have grown an appreciation for the academic rigour and clarity of thinking that is required. This has allowed me to devote particular attention to those aspects that I find most interesting, such as the nature of 'the good life'. To this end, I have read Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics".

Outside the classroom, I have a range of hobbies and responsibilities. These are in almost every sphere of endeavour, including music, drama, and volunteering for numerous causes. Volunteering has been very important to me, and through my work with people from disadvantaged backgrounds I have stepped outside my realm of experience, gaining perspective on philosophical and political questions. These interests are joined by a love of physical activity and sports - I believe that a balance between mental and physical pursuits improves my focus and is crucial to my academic success. I look forward to continuing this as I work with tutors and fellow students in order to truly engage with humanity's greatest issues.