



CLASSICS at OXFORD and CAMBRIDGE



Some number crunching...

Successful Caterham Classicists into Oxbridge since 2011:	25
Percentage of Oxford Classics applicants who are invited to interview	96%
Percentage of Oxford Classics applicants awarded places (highest hit-rate of any subject)	38%
Percentage of Cambridge Classics applicants awarded places (highest hit-rate of any subject)	50%

Why study Classics at University?

"With room for specialists and generalists, the Greco-Roman world offers something for everyone. Pots and plays, Plato and Pausanias - the range of areas Classicists study is exhilarating, offering a great base from which to branch out, alongside a grounding in an inherently fascinating area with excellent travel opportunities. The magic of ancient objects and the thrill of tracing their importance throughout history have inspired people for generations. Enhanced linguistic aptitude, sharp critical skills, excellence in creating and dissecting rhetoric, and a sensitive approach to intercultural issues make Classicists interesting people with excellent employment prospects - a group it's well worth joining."

Dr Cressida Ryan, University of Oxford, quoted in *The Independent*, 30/7/11

As you can see from the figures above, those of you considering reading Classics at Oxford or Cambridge (hereafter "Oxbridge") stand a good chance of being awarded a place. We will give you all the support you need but, despite what the figures might suggest, you will need to work as hard as in any other subject to stand a chance of success, and - most importantly of all - you will need to demonstrate your commitment to Classics with a significant amount of extra reading and study over the next couple of years.

Greek Prose (GPC) is a compulsory requirement for those of you contemplating an Oxbridge application in Classics. Those of you who started GPC in the Fourth Year can continue with GPC in the Lower and Upper Sixth, with a view to taking the prose option at A Level paper. In addition to this, compulsory weekly after-school extension and enrichment classes in both Latin and Greek will begin at the start of January 2023.

To Greek or not to Greek?

Having Greek at some level is also desirable (but not compulsory) for potential Oxbridge classicists. If you do not currently study Greek (either on timetable or extra-curriculum) but are contemplating an Oxbridge Classics application then you would have to learn Greek from scratch at Oxford or Cambridge if you were offered a place. Mr. Waite and Mr. Owen have, on occasion and in exceptional circumstances, run a GCSE short-course in Greek for interested Oxbridge Classicists over two years in the Sixth Form. Be prepared, though: this course requires a significant after-school commitment, both in terms of extra classes (twice a week) and extra-curricular work (learning vocabulary, translation exercises etc.) Late converts are invited to ask for further details.

The **Bryanston Greek Summer School** runs for two weeks in July-August of every year and is aimed at Sixth Form Classicists of all ranges of ability in Greek (it regularly attracts upwards of 300 students). It is an excellent way of perfecting your language work, meeting potential university tutors and fellow classicists, and reading a much wider range of Greek authors and texts than might otherwise be the case. If you are contemplating an Oxbridge application then your attendance at this is **very strongly recommended**. More details can be found here:

<http://www.greeksummerschool.org>

Application forms should be submitted from January 2023 onwards.

Oxford or Cambridge?

Put simply, it doesn't really matter. The Classics courses in both are first rate. Some people make their selection for family reasons; for others the four year course in Oxford is more appealing than the three year course in Cambridge. You should try and visit both cities during the summer holiday to give you a feel of each, and try to see as many different colleges as you can (most of them don't mind your looking around if you tell them that you are a prospective student).

As far as your choice of college goes then, again, various factors come in to the equation. Do you want to be in town or slightly out of town? Do you want to live in college for one year, or longer? Does a small college appeal more than a large one? If you need any help or advice on this then we are always happy to help.

We are hoping to arrange visits to both cities during the course of the Lower Sixth, to give you a chance to meet Classics dons and admissions tutors. There is also an annual **Sixth Form Oxbridge Classics Conference** which is held alternately in Oxford and Cambridge (in March 2023 it will be held in Cambridge), where you can find out more about how to apply, have lunch in a college, and chat to tutors.

Another essential for your diary are the annual university **Open Days**, usually held in Oxford over two days during the last week of June, and in Cambridge over two days in the first week of July. Many colleges require booking for this, but these are important days for you to attend (in one, or both cities): you will get the opportunity, again, to chat to college dons about the nature of the Classics course and find out more about what is involved in the application process. You should

check on-line for booking: dates and information usually appear in March. Note that your choice of college for open day does not in any way affect your final choice of college when it comes to making your application.

Summer Open Days: information and booking

Oxford

clasoutreach.web.ox.ac.uk/oxford-university-open-days

Cambridge

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/events/cambridge-open-days

In the meantime, it has never been easier to investigate courses and colleges from the comfort of your armchair. There are numerous on-line sites which you can find out more about Classics at Oxford or Cambridge:

Oxford

www.classics.ox.ac.uk

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literae_Humaniores (course details)

Cambridge

www.classics.cam.ac.uk

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_Tripes (course details)

The Oxbridge Sixth Form Classics Programme

The aim of our Oxbridge programme is to give you a wider range of experience of Latin authors than simply the ones which we study on the A level syllabus. You will have the luxury of a full year to learn new vocabulary and read as widely as possible. You will also be required to submit a degree of additional written work during the course of the year.

First and foremost, you need to be passionate about Classics and dedicated to the cause! The workload will be heavy, as you will be signing up for a weekly, after-school Oxbridge class from January 2023, on top of possible LPC and GPC commitments. All of these classes carry their own extra commitment of writing and learning. Please keep other engagements to a minimum and do NOT assume that you need to participate in every extra sport and activity going in the Sixth Form to enhance your university application. Tutors in an Oxbridge interview are only interested in one thing: your commitment to the Classics.

Those of you making an **Oxford** application should bear in mind that you will need to sit formal prose and verse unseen translation papers in school (in Latin, and Greek if you are taking Greek to A level) in late October/ early November of Upper Sixth. This is usually during half term, so please don't make wide-ranging holiday plans! These papers are then sent to Oxford for marking. After this, you will almost certainly be called to interview in early December, but the marks which you gain on these papers will certainly contribute towards the strength of your application, and it is important that you perform well on them. If you are applying for Cambridge then you will need to take a written assessment in Latin (and Greek, if you have any) as part of your interview.

For both Oxford and Cambridge applications, you will also be asked to submit some written or project work to your chosen college in advance, so that tutors can get an idea of your interests and level of ability. With this in mind we shall ask you to submit an original essay for one of the **University Classics Essay Competitions** on a topic of your choosing during the Easter Term of the Lower Sixth. The three main ones are the ones from St. John's College, Oxford; Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; and Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. Here are more details:

www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/study/working-schools/study-days

hwww.st-hughs.ox.ac.uk/prospectivestudents/outreach/mary-renault-prize

www.classics.cam.ac.uk/prospective/undergraduate/essay-competitions

Applications Guides on You Tube

Both Oxford and Cambridge University now have a heavy presence on You Tube, with material ranging from advice about the applications process to interview tips. The following links are especially helpful:

Oxford

www.youtube.com/user/oxford

Helpful links and short films concerning to *How to Apply*, *Choosing a College* etc.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVpwZYyif6s

The Classics Course at Oxford.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDIb6G-9N3g

A day in the life of an Oxford student.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X48UpbidOZw

Information about the Classics and English Course.

Cambridge

www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBpf9eoDPvE

Good introduction to the Classics course at Cambridge.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ieV3qKi_2bE

The Cambridge admissions process explained.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=8S4rTLibYQw

Preparing for interview at Cambridge (also of some use for Oxford interviews).

Oxbridge interviews

As well as giving you mock interviews ourselves, we will aim to provide mock-interview practice in November with colleagues in schools in Reigate Grammar School and Tonbridge School.

If you are lucky enough to be called for interview at Oxford or Cambridge then these usually take place at the start of December of the Upper Sixth. In Cambridge it is all over in a day; in Oxford you can look forward to a stay of up to four days. As well as one (or more) interviews you might also be asked to translate some Latin or offer your opinions on a short extract of Latin (or English). You can find out more information about the interview process here:

www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/interviews

www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/interviews

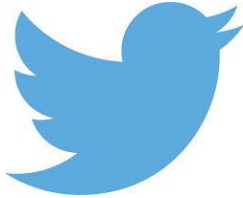
Classics after University

*“Despite what one might think, **people graduating from classical studies are highly valued by employers**. Thanks to their studies, they learn to think logically, to compile and evaluate evidence and to express themselves clearly and succinctly both orally and in writing. Classicists can make their way into careers as diverse as computing, the civil service, gold dealing, insurance, journalism, law, accountancy, public relations and the wine trade. Further study is common, and according to The Times’ **Good University Guide**, over one third of graduates choose to pursue a postgraduate degree. The same guide claims that 27 per cent of graduates are employed in graduate-level jobs within six months of finishing, earning a healthy average salary of around £25,000.”*

The Independent, 30/7/11

*“Unless it’s a technical job which requires a particular degree, the fact that someone’s done Classics **will make them stand out** when compared with English or modern languages. It’s quite an unusual choice. It implies that then person is interesting, that they have followed their interests and done something off the beaten track. I think employers look upon that favourably.”*

- Hardwin Jones, Milkround Graduate Recruitment, quoted in *The Times*, 2008



The folowing Twitter feeds regularly posts information about university open days and a host of other classically related information. Be sure to check them regularly!

twitter.com/oxfordclassics

twitter.com/camclassics

Caterham Classics @ pipiandum



OXBRIDGE READING LIST

A well-known university don, when recently asked by a member of this parish how he might improve his chances of success in applying to read Classics at Oxford, offered this thoughtful and thought-provoking reply: “Read! Read! Read!” And indeed, one of the most important things which you can do in the coming weeks and months is to expand your knowledge of all things classical.

Find an area which interests you - Greece versus Persia, classical comedy, Athens versus Sparta, the invention of democracy, the Greek historians, Alexander The Great, and so on - it's all there, waiting to be discovered. And if you aren't borrowing books from us on a regular basis, then you really *ought* to be.

Here are a few recommendations to get you going over the summer break. Try and read **at least three** of the books mentioned below. All are easily available in paperback versions from all good bookshops (and the usual on-line means) - they are also available to borrow from the Classics Library in CL22.

GREEK HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

** indicates a useful book on ancient history (Greece & Rome) in general*

It's All Greek to Me - Charlotte Higgins (Short Books) - *a good starting point*
The Ancient Guide to Modern Life* - Natalie Haynes (Profile) - *first rate intro*
The Ancient Greeks: Ten Ways They Shaped The Modern World - Edith Hall (Vintage) - *thought-provoking on how much we are shaped by Greek civilisation*
The Greeks - H.D.F. Kitto (Penguin) - *the classic thinking man's one stop shop*
Persian Fire - Tom Holland (Abacus) - *the Persian invasion of Greece explained*
Herodotus - A Very Short Introduction - Jennifer Roberts (Oxford) - *very fine!*
The Man Who Invented History - Justin Marozzi (John Murray) - *Herodotus again*
The Hemlock Cup - Bettany Hughes (Vintage) - *the tragic death of Socrates*
The Spartans - Paul Cartledge (Pan) - *a lengthy but worthwhile tome*
The Peloponnesian War - Donald Kagan (Harper) - *Athens vs Sparta*
From Democrats to Kings - Michael Scott (Ikon) - *4th Century Greek history*
The Birth of Classical Europe* - Simon Price and Peter Thonemann (Penguin)
Xenophon's Retreat - Robin Waterfield (Faber) - *the legendary "Great Escape"*
Socrates: A Man for our Times - Paul Johnson (Viking) - *the philosopher explained*
The History of Greek Philosophy, vol. 1 & 2 - Luciano de Crescenzo (Picador) - *much more fun than it sounds!*
Alexander the Great - Philip Freeman (Simon and Schuster) - *engrossing biography*

HOMER AND MYTHOLOGY

Mythos - Stephen Fry (Penguin) - *a lively re-telling of the Greek Myths*
Heroes: Mortals and Monsters - Stephen Fry (Penguin) - *a great follow up to Mythos, this time telling the stories of the greatest Greek heroes*
Songs on Bronze - Nigel Spivey (Faber) - *a lively take on some familiar legends*
The Greek and Roman Myths - Philip Matyszak (Thames and Hudson)
In Search of the Trojan War - Michael Wood (BBC Books) - *did Troy really exist?*
The War That Killed Achilles - Caroline Alexander (Faber) - *the Iliad re-told*

HISTORICAL NOVELS

The Song of Achilles - Madeleine Miller (Bloomsbury) - *much acclaimed prize-winning novel based around the Trojan exploits of Achilles and Patroclus*

The War at Troy - Lindsay Clarke (Harper Collins) - *The Trojan War re-told*

The Return from Troy - Lindsay Clarke (Harper Collins) - *The Odyssey re-told*

The Penelopiad - Margaret Atwood (Canongate) - *The Odyssey from the point of view of Odysseus' other half*

The Alexander Trilogy - Mary Renault (Penguin) - *the life of Alexander the Great*

Gates of Fire - Steven Pressfield (Bantam) - *the battle of Thermopylae*

Tides of War - Steven Pressfield (Bantam) - *Athens' doomed war with Sparta*

The Ten Thousand - Michael Curtis Ford (Orion) - *Xenophon's famous tale retold*

The Walled Orchard - Tom Holt (Abacus) - *Greek comedy and Aristophanes: very amusing!*

Alexander at the World's End - Tom Holt (Abacus) - *i.e. The Great: a top read*

PRIMARY TEXTS (try to read one in translation)

Homer's *Odyssey*

Odysseus battles one-eyed monsters, witches, sirens and a host of other nasties as he makes his way home from Troy: an essential purchase for any serious classicist.

Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. Rieu)

Herodotus' *Histories*

AKA the "Father of History": his enthusiasm is infectious! A mighty big read, but make sure you hang in for the Persian Wars (Thermopylae, Salamis etc.) in Book 8.

Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. De Sélincourt)

Xenophon *The Persian Expedition* (also known as the *Anabasis*)

Ten thousand Greek mercenaries stranded in Iraq make their way back home. The original and best "Great Escape" as related by one of the Expedition's leaders.

Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. Warner)

Plutarch's *Lives*

The Penguin edition 'The Rise and Fall of Athens' has all the big names (Theseus, Solon, Themistocles, Pericles) and makes for fascinating, if often grim, reading.

Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. Scott-Kilvert)

Aristophanes *Frogs and Other Plays*

A classical humorist with a twist: he's actually funny. Satire, slapstick, rudery: western comedy begins here. Read 'Frogs' and then 'The Poet and the Women'.

Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. Barrett)

Plato *Symposium*

An account of a riotous drinking party in Athens, as Socrates, Aristophanes and assorted big names from the city discuss the meaning and true nature of love.

Translation: Penguin Classics (tr. Gill)



FURTHER RESEARCH



There's never been a better time to investigate the world of Greece in the media. We can warmly recommend the following documentaries which can easily be found on the information super-highway:

HISTORY

The Greeks (BBC)

An excellent introduction to Greek life and culture.

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

Ancient Greece: The Greatest Show on Earth (BBC)

The absorbing story of Greek Theatre: inventing tragedy and comedy.

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

The Spartans (Channel 4)

The story of Ancient Greece's greatest warrior state.

Borrow the DVD from the Classics Department.

MYTHOLOGY

The Minoans (Channel 4)

The story of the Labyrinth, the Minotaur and King Minos's kingdom.

Channel 4 On Demand

Helen of Troy (Channel 4)

She was the "face that launched a thousand ships": but was there a real Helen of Troy and did the Trojan War actually happen?

Channel 4 On Demand

ON THE RADIO

The excellent Radio 4 series *In Our Time* has an outstanding catalogue of discussion programmes which you should download and enjoy at leisure on the train/ in the bath/ in the car etc. Listen and learn! Click here for starters (then browse and pick the topics which interest you):

www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/ancient_greece

If you are serious about your Oxbridge Classics application then you should try to listen to at least one of these every month.