

Oxford PPE Personal Statement

The ongoing issue of Crimean independence exemplifies the relevance of PPE in a current context. The economic considerations of Ukrainian independence coalesce with the complex politics of the issue to span these disciplines, sparking my interest in the justification of moral decisions and actions. Does the basis of a government's authority truly depend on the will of its people? Intrigued, I pursued Harvard professor Michael Sandel's online course "Justice" and found the cogent manner in which he utilised logical theories to analyse current issues very refreshing. I sought to employ them in my own understanding of the Crimean crisis, which subsequently became the focus of my Theory of Knowledge essay. In my research, I found Kant's categorical imperative and universal maxim interesting, as it would suggest that Russia's annexation of Crimea is not a moral duty - if countries went around annexing territories at will, the concept of 'sovereignty' and 'annexation' would break down. However, as I discovered Kant's deontological approach only sheds light on what is not (but not on what is) our moral duty, I read into consequentialist theories and was struck by the relevance of J.S Mill's Harm Principle and Bentham's "Principles of Morals and Legislation".

Sandel's "What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets" then helped me bridge the initial gap between my interests in philosophy and economics. In my growing conviction that the two disciplines were inseparable, I stumbled upon Tomas Sedlacek's "Economics of Good and Evil" and was unsurprised to discover that before it was acknowledged as a distinct field, economics was entrenched within subsets of philosophy. My curiosity in economics piqued, I concentrated in Economics and World History (Oxbridge Summer Programs) before studying Economics at school. I was particularly intrigued in microeconomics, and spent copious amounts of time discussing George Akerlof's paper "The Market for Lemons" and Joseph Stiglitz's work on insurance markets with my economics teacher. This became the basis of my submission for the EDB Film Competition, where my group's film on information asymmetry in insurance markets swept several awards at the national finals. What I find truly enticing, however, is that these theories are not contained within themselves: during a seemingly unrelated internship at a local litigation firm, I was asked to work on a case regarding misrepresentation by an insurance agent. Discovering these connections independently filled me with an unshakeable excitement; it is the course's emphasis on synergistic interdisciplinary links that I find appealing.

Winning my school's Economics Award has assured me of my capability to cope with the demands of PPE. Furthermore, having excelled in my International Baccalaureate Higher Level Mathematics course, as well as achieved Top in the World for IGCSE International Mathematics, I am confident in my preparation for the quantitative aspects of an Economics course.

As the Administrative Secretary of the Senior Council, I have developed useful organisational and time management skills that have given me the discipline, and consequently, the time to pursue my interests. Volunteering at my constituency's Meet-the-People-Sessions under MP Sim Ann has led me to develop my understanding of Singapore's political system and social policies whilst helping residents first-hand in addressing their struggles. Furthermore, as an editor of my school newspaper, I am constantly exposed to pertinent economic and political issues: in my most recent article "The Middle Kingdom", I wrote about the rise of China as a growing power. I further explored my macroeconomic views on other economies in an essay entitled "Are the advanced economies in for a long period of economic stagnation?" My interests, both academic and social, complement the PPE and affirm my desire to pursue the course in university.