



NEW COLLEGE

Dear Student,

Preparatory reading for the Classics course at Oxford and New College.

Undoubtedly you will have other things on your mind at the moment, but before very long you will need to be thinking ahead to what you will be reading in October.

A new version of the Mods course was introduced in 2025. It retains the structure of the old Mods to the extent that you will still study a philosophical and a non-philosophical special subject (in Trinity Term of your first year and Michaelmas Term of your second), but the major changes are in the literary texts to be studied in your first two terms. Details of the new syllabus can be found here: <https://www.classics.ox.ac.uk/paper-descriptions-first-public-examination-mods-0#/>

If you already have an A level or equivalent, in the eventual Mods exams you will be required to translate passages from all the prescribed texts in that language (in Greek, *Odyssey*; *Bacchae*; *Lysistrata*; *Verae Historiae*; in Latin, *Adelphoe* and *Menaechmi*; *Catullus*; *Ovid's Metamorphoses*; *Seneca's Letters* and *Tacitus' Annals*). If you are applying to pick up that language from a base lower than A level, you will read a reduced selection from those same texts. You will, however, only be required to write essays and commentaries on two of the set texts in each language, and it is those two texts in Greek and two in Latin on which your first two terms will concentrate. In New College our plan is to begin in Michaelmas with the *Odyssey* and the selection from *Catullus*, on which you will spend four weeks each: the *Odyssey* tutorials will be given in New College, and my colleague Dr Barnaby Taylor at Exeter will be complementing that with *Catullus*.

In preparation for your arrival, therefore, you would be best advised to begin acquainting yourself with these texts, in Greek and Latin where possible. Those with A level Greek should read *Odyssey* 9–12; those with lower than A level Greek will eventually be required to read *Odyssey* 9 and 11 in Greek, and to be familiar with books 10 and 12 in English, so it would be desirable to make as much headway as possible with these as you can, in English at the very least. There are commentaries on books IX–XVI by A. Heubeck and A. Hoekstra (Oxford, 1989), a commentary specifically on book IX by Egbert J. Bakker (Cambridge Green and Yellow, 2025), and on the whole poem by Irene De Jong (Cambridge, 2001). The *Catullus* prescription for those with A level Latin will be the whole corpus; for those without, it will be a reduced prescription in Latin (which will, however, include poem 64) and the remainder in English. If you find yourself with extra time on your hands, or energy, you could do a lot worse than make inroads into the *Bacchae*, which you will be studying when you return after Christmas (the whole play for those with A level Greek; for those without, the first 861 lines in Greek, and the remainder in English). The best commentaries are by E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 2nd edn 1960), Richard Seaford (Aris and Phillips 1996), and William Allan and Laura Swift (Cambridge Green and Yellow, 2024).



Many of you will, in any case, already be making a start on these texts on the New College pilgrimage to Candili, Evia, later in the Summer; in any case I look forward to meeting you myself at the beginning of the new term.

Best wishes,

Professor J. L. Lightfoot

Professor of Greek Literature

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