

100 YEARS OF PPE

1920-2020



An introduction to PPE at Somerville

Oxford was the first institution to offer degrees in PPE, initially known as 'Modern Greats'. The first PPE students began their course in 1920. More than any other course at any other university, Oxford PPE has dominated British public, and especially political, life.

Somerville adopted the new subject immediately. The first two PPE undergraduates were Rachel Montague (Mrs Ryan) and Mary de Selincourt (Lady Morris), 1920-23; and in 1921 Somerville appointed its first Tutor in Economics and Political Science, Miss Dorothy Rhodes. For some time the College was unable to provide teaching across the whole range of the three subjects (external teaching was one of the course's attractions to some undergraduates) but the degree came fully into its own in 1949 with the appointment as Fellows of Philippa Foot (Philosophy) and Margaret Hall (Economics), Shirley Williams being one of their early pupils. Mary Proudfoot (Politics) was appointed in 1958 and Elizabeth Anscombe (Philosophy) in 1964. Julie Jack and Lesley Brown succeeded as Fellows in Philosophy in 1969 and 1970 respectively, and Judith Heyer as Fellow in Economics in 1975.

According to the University website, 'PPE was born of the conviction that study of the great modern works of economic, social, political and philosophical thought would have a transformative effect on students' intellectual lives, and thereby on society at large. This conviction remains as firm today as it was then. As the world has evolved, so has PPE. The course brings together some of the most important approaches to understanding the world around us, developing skills useful for a wide range of careers and activities.'

This is a challenging vision but we are confident that a review of Somerville PPE alumni more than justifies the high claims for the degree.

For further reading on the history of the Oxford PPE school see <https://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/files/ppe100yearsreportpdf>, including featured Somervillians, Alix Meynell (1922), Nina Bawden (1943) and Lucy Banda-Sichone (1978).

1948

Shirley Williams (née Caitlin)

The following comments are based on Shirley Williams's memoirs *Climbing the Bookshelves* (2009).

As one of the stars of her generation of undergraduates, Shirley vividly recounts her extra-curricular life, whilst ostensibly reading PPE. After her first year, however, she was told that acting, politics and her social life took up too much of her time.

'Somerville was an intensely competitive college, dedicated to demonstrating that women were intellectually as able as men... I enjoyed politics and in particular political philosophy, but with modern philosophy I could not come to terms... Contemporary Oxford philosophy was dominated by logical positivism. I found it clever, arid and devoid of interest. When my thoughtful and patient tutor, Philippa Foot, looked intently at her sofa and asked me why it could not be both red and green all over, the question irritated me. It obviously couldn't be both. What more was there to say?'

She enjoyed economics more. *'I was fortunate in having a wonderful tutor... Margaret Hall was elegant, brilliant, vibrant and occasionally frivolous. She wore scarlet suits and very high heels, and had a mind like a razor, precise, sharp and effective. She exemplified what I wanted to be – an outstanding professional, an attractive woman, and a wife and mother. She understood that for me economics was not an interest but a tool. When I was carpentered for failing to maintain the standards of work required of a scholar, it was she who interceded for me. It was she, too, who wrung from me a reluctant promise to spend more time on my weekly essays.'*

Williams was elected Labour MP for Hitchin in 1964. She served as a Government minister 1967–70 and in the Cabinet 1974–79 as Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection, then as Secretary of State for Education and Science and Paymaster General.

In 1981, dismayed with the left-ward movement of the Labour Party, she was one of the 'Gang of Four' rebels who founded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1981. She became the first SDP MP, 1981–1983. She then served as President of the SDP and supported its merger with the Lib Dems. She served as Leader of the Lib Dems in the Lords 2001–2004 and as an active member of the House until her retirement in 2016.

1950

Rosemary Moore (née Filmer) (1950)

I hesitated about contributing to this, as PPE had virtually no influence on my further life and career. I became interested in religion while at Oxford, and went on to take a theology degree at King's College London. I taught first in grammar and later in primary schools, and after taking early retirement I did a PhD on 17th-century Quakerism.

Nevertheless, I do not regret taking PPE. History would have been more useful, given the direction my interests took afterwards, but PPE is an excellent general education, which was why I chose it in the first place. It was different from anything one did at school – economics was not taught in schools in the 1940s. I soon found that I loathed economics and never properly understood it, but politics was very much to my taste, especially my special subject in local government. I loved philosophy, and the discussions with fellow students and tutorials with Philippa Foot. Philosophy is actually practically useful, for it teaches the art of straight thinking and how to spot the errors in arguments. Does anyone else remember that apocryphal essay subject, “I have a pain in your leg.” Discuss.?

1951

Irene Anderson (née Burlin) (1951)

I came to Somerville in 1951 – six years after the end of the European War and two before the Queen's Coronation. Many goods were still rationed, some until 1954. Oxford was full of men who had been in the forces. Having done a maths entrance I was told I would not be given a place to read Maths (!); but I found a home in PPE, where the seven of us, all women, became a close-knit group and were fortunate to be taught by Margaret Hall and Philippa Foot, sometimes Iris Murdoch. A friend and I had digs in the second year with Mrs Viola Garvin, widow of J L Garvin: a real privilege, and a glimpse into a

previous age. I emerged from Oxford with never-ending curiosity about people and society, spent a year in a factory, and then went into social work and, later, social research. While bringing up children (a social worker and a criminologist) I was a school governor and a magistrate. My life has been lived far from Somerville, but good memories, gratitude and an enquiring mind remain, and I am glad to be in touch with its modern incarnation.

1952

Isabel Roberts (née Ferguson) (1952)

My first reaction to your request was a painful realisation that I am the only survivor of the four 1952 intake. We were life-long close friends.

We found linguistic philosophy challenging. Gilbert Ryle's lectures were sell-outs in Schools. He strode onto the platform, gown flapping, opened his bag and invited us to unpack words. This rigorous approach was beneficial to Barbara Williamson and me as we sat for 35 years each as lay magistrates. She was also involved in Oxford City Council politics and was a university careers officer, deputy head of the service when she retired.

Isaiah Berlin shook Deborah Jackson and me with his first essay request: "There is no such thing as natural rights." Discuss.' Waving his arm at the bookcase he said, 'sawdust – go away and think.' His account of the Bolshevik Revolution and the need in a democracy for political parties with members willing to pound the streets influenced my lifetime membership of the labour party.

My first job was at Nuffield College (a hothouse for PPE dons!) working for Margery Perham. Young aspiring African politicians sought her encouraging advice as they struggled for independence.

My husband's job took us back into the Manchester orbit. I agreed (with trepidation as Economics had not been my strong point) to stand in for a teacher on study leave. I taught for 22 years. There is nothing like teaching at A-level to understand a subject. My hero is Keynes – 'my' book *Economic Consequences of the Peace*.

Carole Rosen was a singer and broadcaster. She was a wonderfully sociable networker who kept our whole year in touch.

Looking back I think PPE made us aware of how the fledgling Welfare State was developing and where we could find a niche to support it.

1953

Doreen Boyce (née Vaughan) (1953)

It was Janet Vaughan who encouraged me to read PPE and it shaped my life. PPE opened a door for me to professional opportunities just as they were opening up for women. It led to a career in higher education, public service and business.

PPE introduced me to the vocabulary of public policy and commerce. It taught me ways of thinking about complex issues, which was invaluable as my professional responsibilities grew.

I greatly enjoyed the challenge of philosophy with Philippa Foot but economics became my focus, tutored by Margaret Hall. Having grown up overseas I had a poor grounding in English history and I found politics tedious. In retrospect I wish I could have dropped it altogether.

My first teaching job was as part-time lecturer in economics at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. There I found out how much more there was to learn! But the tutorial system at Somerville had taught me how to go on learning.

I studied Money and Banking and Economics of Developing Nations as special subjects at Somerville. Years later I was to become Lead Director of a major American bank and President of a foundation with a fortune to invest in economic development.

Ann Craine (1953)

I was attracted to PPE by politics and my father's interest in economics, though maths was my main academic interest at school. Once at Oxford I threw myself into the Labour Club – to the detriment of my academic work. On coming down I worked first as a social worker helping very deprived families. I got very frustrated and turned back to my maths

roots, teaching it in a girls' grammar school in East Ham. So much for using my PPE? Well, no.

Politics was still a passion and when Shirley Williams began a Young Fabian group of under-30s I joined as a founder member and office holder and decided to begin a group critiquing the work of the then National Assistance Board. In doing so I met the man who was to be my husband, another PPE-er. The group went on to produce a pamphlet. I then wrote another pamphlet on the barriers to labour market entry for women and did so with Frances Stewart. I helped found the Comprehensive Schools Committee pressing for the end to the 11-plus, worked jointly with my husband – an LSE professor – on many of his endeavours, stood as a Labour council candidate. It was a family atmosphere that I suppose naturally led my daughter to take PPE at Somerville. She is now a development economist – Rachel Glennerster. So PPE still lives on in the family.

1954

Judith Marquand (née Reed) (1954)

I arrived at Somerville in 1954 as a mathematics scholar, intending to read PPE. I was particularly intrigued by Philosophy, but there were more jobs in Economics, so I chose Economics special subjects. I wanted to join the Civil Service, but after three years of graduate work at Nuffield College and Radcliffe/Harvard, I was already married (to a contemporary historian cum politician). Academic jobs seemed more child-compatible. I taught Economics, first at Manchester University and then at LSE.

My children were born in 1962 and 1964. In 1964 a Labour government which took economic planning seriously was elected. I joined the new Department of Economic Affairs part-time as one of George Brown's 'irregulars' – and stayed with the Government Economic Service until 1992. My most exciting post was at DoE, where, just after the Stockholm Conference of 1972, I headed a new division: Economics and Statistics of Environmental Protection. I particularly enjoyed international work with OECD and the European Commission. Nearly 50 years later, our work on the 'polluter pays principle' is at last being taken seriously.

I was always curious about the residuals which the economists' equations did not explain. At the MSC after 1979, I thought hard about what was wrong with the increasing

reliance on the market. A Simon Senior Research Fellowship at the University of Manchester in 1986-7 enabled me to write *Autonomy and Change: the Sources of Economic Growth*. The book argued that ‘the old model of human beings as creatures whose behaviour could be fully understood by observing their response to external stimuli has failed’ (p. 197). Fact was not separate from value; people were more than ‘atomistic individuals’. I emphasised the importance of the learning process for individuals and for organisations. After good reviews, the book sank without trace.

When I returned to the MSC/Training Agency, USSR and the Eastern European countries were changing fast. I sat on CEDEFOP, the European Commission’s forum for training policy questions. As each country’s thaw progressed, it was invited to CEDEFOP meetings. In the Training Agency, I formed ‘BREVET’ to further this work; we arranged meetings with our East European counterparts. When I left the Civil Service in 1992 for the University of Sheffield, my colleagues from BREVET invited me to undertake two successive EU-funded projects in Poland. I most wanted to work in Russia, but there was no funding until 1994. I then led a series of projects in Siberia until 2007, mostly with the University of Tomsk, but also including Tomsk Regional Ecological Committee, three other universities in Siberia and Omsk Ecological Committee. I wrote a book about this: *Development Aid in Russia: Lessons from Siberia*, published in 2009.

In 2003, Russia had joined the Bologna Process. One of my Tomsk colleagues had responsibilities for implementing this in Siberia. I was curious to know what this was. My curiosity led to a further book: *Democrats, Authoritarians and the Bologna Process: Universities in Germany, Russia, England and Wales*, published in 2018.

An interdisciplinary approach derived from PPE permeated all my work in Russia – where it was totally unfamiliar – and all my writing.

1956

Jane Khin Zaw (1956)

I was immensely privileged to have Philippa Foot as tutor in moral philosophy; she thought my work showed ‘considerable promise’. However Elizabeth Anscombe, another philosophy tutor, handed back my essay for her with the comment, ‘Your thinking is very muddled’. That put me down a peg! I enjoyed logic especially. However apparently a small

mistake in a logic problem in my Finals lost me a First so I only got a second-class degree. I loved the interactive discussions with the rest of the school, especially with the Nagels. Tom Nagel became a distinguished professor of philosophy at New York University. I thought I'd like to read for a doctorate in philosophy but was overtaken by a religious vocation. Attached a photo of me after I became a Carmelite nun.

Judith Heyer (née Cripps) (1956)

My days as an undergraduate at Somerville were transformative. Having led a very protected life beforehand, once I got to Somerville I plunged into student groups supporting refugees from the Hungarian revolution. Later in the year I joined the Labour Club and got involved in debates between the right and the left. They were exhilarating and I learnt a lot from them. I also went on the CND marches from Aldermaston which were huge and exciting events. I left Oxford very politicised, wanting to be active in some meaningful way. A friend suggested volunteering at the Anti-Apartheid offices in London. That was where I developed an interest in Africa and started my adult life after going down.

Although my main interest in Oxford centred around extra-curricula political activities, I found the PPE course stimulating and interesting. I have vivid memories of tutorials with figures like Philippa Foot, Elisabeth Anscombe, Charles Taylor, Paul Streeten and Humphrey Cole. I also remember lectures given by people like AJP Taylor, John Hicks, Roy Harrod, and several of the major analytical philosophers of the time. All of this was heady stuff.

The student body at Somerville was relatively small when I was an undergraduate. Most of my friends and associates were at other colleges. I remember Somerville being very supportive though, with Janet Vaughan at the head and people like Dorothy Hodgkin and Antoinette Pirie strong role models as far as I was concerned. Janet always supported non-conformism which meant a lot to me.

When I was volunteering at the Anti-Apartheid and CAO offices in London I met a lot of political figures from African countries who were in London negotiating their independence. They wanted help with briefings and press statements. I was one of the obvious people to provide it. That led to me enrolling at LSE to do a PhD on African agriculture in Kenya, and then living in Kenya, first as a member of Nairobi University's IDS and then in the Economics Department where I lectured for ten years or so. I left Kenya in the 1970s after the death of my husband as the situation was getting difficult politically. I was lucky that the Tutorial Fellowship in Economics at Somerville came up just at the right time. Once in Oxford I decided to go on an exploratory trip to India to

see how I could bring my African experience to bear on rural development in India. I settled on studying a set of villages in the South. Those villages have been the focus of my research ever since.

What I gained from studying PPE has been central to a lot of what I have done since. It has enabled me to develop as an economist with a serious interest in the social and political. Logic and philosophy have been foundational too.

1957

Heather Lynn (née Green) (1957)

I greatly enjoyed my time at Somerville, though looking back reading PPE has had only a peripheral effect on my career. I married an Oxford classicist immediately after going down: he was then articled to an accountancy firm being paid £300 a year, so one of us had to earn some money. I got a job in a new technical college teaching English and Social Studies. Once he was qualified we had three children.

I went to school in America, my father having gone after the war to work at the then new United Nations. School finished at 2.30pm: I got an after-school job in the local public library and enjoyed the work. So once the children were old enough, I got a part-time job at Aston University Library and joined the one-day-a-week Post-Graduate Librarianship course at the then Birmingham Poly. By the time I qualified three years later, I was running a Resources Centre at the Social Sciences Research Council's Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, which subsequently moved to Warwick University and became the Economic and Social Research Council's Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations. I worked there and in the main University Library until I retired.

Was my post-Oxford outlook affected by PPE? I remain as I started, a left-leaning internationalist, a sadly unfashionable position now.

1958

Bridget Dommen (née Meade) (1958)

Although at school I revelled in the study of history, I chose PPE thinking it would bring wider learning, more relevant to the modern world.

It most certainly did: from formal logic, ethics and utilitarianism, to de Tocqueville, the US constitution, and suffragettes, as well as interest rates, Keynesianism and regression curves: looking back it's hard to believe we covered such a range of subjects.

I spent my working life in social administration and planning, mostly in the developing world and Switzerland.

There is no doubt that the discipline of rational argument, the study of cause and effect, the necessity to observe the real world – implicit in the teaching of all three of P and P and E – have helped me, in both professional and personal activities, to see more clearly the issues to be dealt with and to argue more coherently the policies I defend.

But for me perhaps the most useful lesson of PPE was 'politics is the art of the possible'; to get something done, abandon super-rationality and be open to compromise.

Margaret Jay (née Callaghan) (1958)

Baroness Jay of Paddington is a Life Peer and Labour Party politician. Baroness Jay was also formerly a BBC television producer and presenter. Baroness Jay, the daughter of former British Prime Minister James Callaghan, was appointed a Life Peer in 1992 and acted as an opposition whip in the House of Lords. After Labour's 1997 election victory she became a minister in the Department of Health and in 1998 Minister for Women and Leader of the House of Lords with a seat in the Cabinet. Baroness Jay remains active in the House of Lords as a Privy Counsellor and has chaired the Select Committee on the Constitution. Outside parliament she is a Trustee of Europaeum and a Senior Fellow of Somerville College.

Julia McNeal (née Gaitskell) (1958)

Reflecting on my years at Somerville, in addition to the importance of certain people I met whose ways of thinking continue to inspire me to this day, I believe the impact of PPE was to reinforce an appreciation for words and the power of reason, that was part of my upbringing. The work I undertook after leaving Oxford, before eventually undertaking an art practice, all involved analysis and writing, starting with a training in Broadcasting and ending as a research and administrative staff member of a law centre. There was also period in the mid 1960s when I was heavily involved in campaigning for racial equality. But even after I completed an art degree, and changed paths, words continued to play an important role, especially as I came to focus on ceramics and the techniques of print-on-clay, when I began to use texts to make what could be seen as ‘archaeological’ objects of the present day. It was not political art, not didactic, indeed many texts were deliberately illegible. But the choice of topics and the treatment, ironic or straight, at one level reflected political values which I still espouse. Although my interests evolved, I still have a box of metal plates deeply etched with words, from *Guardian* articles to mastheads and slogans, which in some way triggered the objects I made.

Frances Stewart (née Kaldor) (1958)

After a spell in Whitehall, I became a lecturer in the Department of Economics, University of Nairobi, where Judith Heyer (a Somerville friend) was working. This stimulated a lifelong interest in developing countries. On return, I started a doctorate at Oxford, associated with Queen Elizabeth House (QEH). I was soon appointed Senior Research Officer at QEH, and a Fellow of Somerville. I remained at QEH for the rest of my working life, becoming director in 1993 and then director of The Centre for Research on Inequality and Human Security until retirement.

Over the years I have worked on a range of topics – first, on appropriate technology writing *Technology and Underdevelopment*, then on Basic Needs (*Planning to Meet Basic Needs in Developing Countries*). During a Sabbatical at UNICEF, Andrea Cornia, Richard Jolly and I produced *Adjustment with a Human Face* (1987). Supported by the UNICEF publicity machine, this book was quite influential, drawing attention to the harsh, poverty-creating austerity then demanded of developing countries. In the 1980s, I joined a group working on UNDP’s first *Human Development Report* (1990) and have contributed to most Human Development Reports since then, recently co-authoring *Advancing Human Development: Theory and Practice*. In the 1990 report I found that almost every country with very weak performance had suffered from violent conflict, yet economists rarely studied the

question. For the next 20 years, I analysed countries in conflict, producing several co-authored books, including *War and Underdevelopment* and *Horizontal Inequalities: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*.

I have been President of the UK Development Studies Association and of the Human Development and Capability Association; and Chair of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy; I was awarded the Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought by Tufts University and the Mahbub ul Haq award for outstanding contributions to Human Development by the UNDP.

PPE fundamentally influenced my approach to almost every topic. Above all, it contributed to the view that a multidisciplinary approach is needed for understanding societal problems, and this informed all my research and teaching, including developing an M.Phil in Development Studies at Oxford, which like PPE has three disciplinary components. Moreover, I continuously draw on what I learnt in philosophy and in politics, as well as economics.

1959

Cassandra Phillips (née Hubback) (1959)

I was always sure that PPE was what I wanted to read, having enjoyed combining Maths with History and English at A-level. I was also sure go-ahead Somerville was where I wanted to do it, especially as I concentrated on economics with Lady Hall as our brilliant tutor. I suppose it's not surprising that much of what we learnt 60 years ago is now completely out of date, but the fundamental thing PPE gives you is the foundation for keeping up with much of what's going on in the world, with the skills to work in a wide variety of careers.

After Somerville I went straight into a job as a government economist, and also married my Oxford boyfriend. That was followed by combining two children with some teaching (British Constitution). The family then twice moved countries following my husband's career, but each time my PPE training helped me pick up new work. In Kenya I taught geography in a convent (I hadn't done any geography since O-level, but the nuns rightly thought an Oxford degree would be enough). I also learned to fly small planes, practising aerobatics during free periods. And then in Switzerland I started working for the

headquarters of WWF, and had a fantastic time with them (out-posted when we moved back to England) working on the international treaties for the conservation of whales and of Antarctica, right up to retirement 25 years later.

1961

Diane Goldrei (1961)

Although I loved modern languages and history, my A-level subjects, I was set on doing non-school subjects at university and at Oxford PPE was the obvious choice. I was taught by the unforgettable Iris Murdoch and Philippa Foot but despite their best efforts, Philosophy remained a mystery. I enjoyed Politics most of the three subjects as it was the closest to History. On graduation, I spent a year in Rome on a Council of Europe scholarship, and then became a reporter on the Daily Mail, during the brief reign of an editor who aimed to attract a younger, more educated readership.

I then joined the first PR team at the University of Sussex, where student protests were attracting unwanted media interest. I felt I'd found my metier interviewing top academics for our campus magazine, and went on to join the Open University, finally becoming the first PR (or as we were then called, Information Officer) at Queen Mary College, University of London. After a long spell at QMC during which time I also brought up three children, I joined the BBC's Corporate Affairs Department. I ended up in the BBC's Editorial Complaints Unit, where we watched programmes and talked to programme-makers in order to assess whether guidelines had been breached. I started training as an Iyengar Yoga teacher before retirement, and was able to test my teaching skills on BBC colleagues in the lunch hour. I still practise and teach yoga (on Zoom during the past year) and enjoy keeping my languages going. I value my links with the College and above all, my Somerville friends.

Cressida Wasserman (née Gaitskell) (1961)

For nearly 25 years, I have been living in New York City, one of the most liberating cities in the world for people of my generation. I still work full-time for the City of New York – no age-discrimination here – and until Covid-19 upended all our lives, I had also had a remarkable and enriching social life.

About a decade ago, through a strange quirk of fate, a swing dance friend rekindled my interest in Philosophy. On many occasions since, in discussions on Virtue Ethics and Stoicism, I found myself talking about Philippa Foot and her book *Natural Goodness* that was published in 2001 when she was over 80.

At the time I was at Somerville, Philippa had not gained the international stardom that was to come – she hadn't even published her famous 'Trolley Problem' article that made such a strong impression. But I like to think she would have enjoyed as much as I did the immortalization of her brilliant 'thought experiment' into the witty comic fantasy *The Good Place* (Season 2, 2017). The need to make ethical choices based on sound reasoning is never out of date!

1962

Ann Oakley (née Titmuss) (1962)

I didn't know anything about either PPE or Oxford when I applied, back in 1962. I was the first person in my family to go to university, and I think I thought of it mainly as a legitimate reason for leaving home. But the political atmosphere of that home when I was growing up was very much one of an interest in social/economic subjects, so PPE was an obvious choice.

The transformative aspects of doing PPE at Somerville were more to do with the ethos of Somerville, the sheer fun of being at Oxford, and the quality of the debate about absolutely everything that went on all the time than about the taught curriculum itself. In my time, the three subjects didn't appear to have much to do with one another. But I did love being an Oxford undergraduate – flying around on my bicycle, going to some amazing lectures, learning to think for myself. Janet Vaughan, then the Principal, was an extremely inspiring role model. In my last year I did two new options – modern social institutions,

and sociological theory. I was one of the first students to do sociology at Oxford, and I knew at my first tutorial that this was the subject for me.

Harriet Maunsell (née Dawes) (1962)

I always wanted to read PPE, because I wanted to work in industry and thought studying Economics would help me to understand how it worked. To my surprise, it was Philosophy which I really enjoyed, I was lucky enough to be taught by Philippa Foot and Elizabeth Anscombe. It was also the era when women were first admitted to the Oxford Union, and I was one of the first to join, although I thought the debates were rather bombastic. In my year, there were nine of us reading PPE but, for various reasons, only five of us took Finals; and there was an unnerving moment when I think most of us failed Prelims, in a year in which a significant number, perhaps about 40% reading PPE, failed Prelims.

After leaving university, I joined industry, and after a few years they suggested I could become a lawyer. I thought that was an excellent idea – and found my liking for linguistic philosophy was useful. I studied while I was working. Later, I transferred to private practice, joining what was then Lovell White and King in 1977, to work in pension law, which was developing fast, just then. In 1980 I was elected the first woman partner, and was immediately involved in recruitment. In the mid-1980s I helped to set up the Association of Pension Lawyers and was its first chair; my PPE experience helped me to think through and articulate what we wanted to achieve. I left Lovells (now Hogan Lovells) in 1997, and became chair of the last pension regulator, the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority, in 2001, where it was really interesting to be part of the changes which led to the creation of the current Pensions Regulator. I then had a number of other roles, including non-executive director of the Serious Fraud Office, a committee of a large insurance company, a school governor, board member of an orchestra, and churchwarden.

I've been involved with Somerville for many years, first on the alumni association, and then on the Development Board. It's been fascinating to be alongside the debates on admitting men and on starting to fundraise professionally.

1964

Sunethra Bandaranaike (1964)

My decision to read PPE at Oxford was made easy by a dear Sri Lankan friend who was then in our diplomatic service, who assured me that it would give me the background I need, as I wanted to pursue a career as a diplomat. After obtaining the degree I changed my mind, and started as a research assistant at the Overseas Development Institute and the Minority Rights Group, both based in London. My degree in PPE stood me in good stead both in getting the jobs and in the work I did.

Back home, I worked in the Prime Minister's office, coordinating a major programme to ensure self-sufficiency in food. On a daily basis, I had to work with farmers, village based organisations, civil servants and politicians. I was able to take all of this in my stride and function efficiently and give leadership to the programme thanks to the broad-based knowledge I acquired through the PPE degree and my experience in Oxford.

Two decades ago, I set up a charitable foundation committed to enhancing the lives of the differently abled young persons in Sri Lanka and to helping them break barriers in society due to marginalisation and social stigmatisation.

Sue Griffin (née Watson) (1964)

My professional life concerned the early years sector, developing the skills of people who work with young children – designing national qualifications and training courses, writing training materials, articles and books. This often involved writing about theoretical and academic material in ways accessible to early years practitioners, making it relevant to daily frontline practice.

Alongside that, I was a magistrate for over 30 years. When chairing family court, I sought to make legal procedures clear to often distressed parents.

In both these strands, I tried to adhere to values of fairness and seeking to widen opportunities, particularly for women. Childcare is an essential enabler for women to be able to pursue life outside the home; good-quality early care and education is vital to children's futures; legal decisions about children must make their interests paramount.

I think that reading PPE helped to lay foundations for this, developing the ability to think clearly (thank you, Philippa Foot) and to distil essentials from various sources; it also played a part in reinforcing principles of social justice. Being a Somervillian gave me the confidence to advocate for valuing the knowledge and skills required in early years practice, and to preside in court.

Susan Hoyle (1964)

Sad to say, I chose PPE because the boyfriend chose it. He wanted to be PM (didn't happen), while I had no ambitions: without him, I would have read History. But despite the dismal E, I loved PPE—eminent scholars like Philippa Foot equipping me to question the world. *And* I made several lifelong friends, and met both my husbands. However, I probably should have taken up Somerville's suggestion of a DPhil on Sri Lankan politics.

My zig-zaggy CV bespeaks a baby-boomer PPE wife-and-mother graduate: civil servant in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; part-time Open University social-sciences tutor; history lecturer at a teacher-training college; PhD student (twice, neither thesis finished); policy analyst at the Women's Institute HQ; director of the pressure group Transport 2000; PR Manager with British Rail; Director of BR's Quality Management programme; and then freelance writer on transport. In retirement, Domestic Comrade and I lived on a narrowboat, bought five Cornish acres with pigs and hens, and are now giving TLC to a Tudor house; I ran a knitting group, helped support Sunethra Bandaranaike's (PPE, 1964) charity for disabled children, read books, and write local history and fiction. Preparation for Providential Eclecticism!

Emma Rothschild (1964)

PPE at Somerville in 1964–1967 was exhilarating, and it changed my life. The most important thing was friendship, and Kate Mortimer and Mary Kaldor have been my closest friends ever since. But I have never thought as intensely as I did – or as we all did – during and after the philosophy tutorials with Miss Anscombe. I remember going to sleep with my head full of some problem or other, waking up thinking that the problem was about something different, and talking to Kate – I remember where we were sitting – about what she thought had happened in the night. Philippa Foot became a lasting friend and inspiration. I also remember where I was in Somerville when I first thought that I

had maybe, possibly, discovered something, only to explain it to Lady Hall, who said gently that she thought that this had already been discovered (by Herbert Simon.)

The renown of PPE was as a practical subject, even for those of us, young women in 1964, who had not the faintest conception that we were being trained to go out and govern India. For me, it was almost the opposite. PPE was an opportunity to try different things, and to put off making choices. Latin or Mathematics, in the first year? Politics, Philosophy or Economics? These were mysterious subjects. I had done history for the entrance exam (the Italian Risorgimento, in those innocent times when England was a profoundly European country.) On the train going to the interviews, I tried to read Plato, John Kenneth Galbraith, and (oddly) Gerard Debreu. In 1967, I started to do a PhD in economics, with the firm intention of becoming a philosopher. My first academic job was in politics, and I have been a professor of history ever since. Somerville and PPE made me able to be eclectic – to be a magpie, trying different possibilities – and I am endlessly grateful for the years of excitement, for the conversations, and for the friendship. Sunethra Bandaranaike and I had dinner together not so long ago, and it was as though we had seen each other only days before. I talk to Mary Kaldor all the time – about life, and even, after all these years, about philosophy, politics and economics.

1965

Suchitra Bhakdi-Punyaratabandhu (1965)

From childhood, I had dreamed of following in my father's footsteps as a Thai diplomat. PPE seemed a logical choice in preparation for a diplomatic career.

Never having attended school in England, I was unprepared for the rigours of producing three essays a week. The weekly tutorials were intellectually challenging, bringing focus to my endeavours. I am forever grateful to have been tutored by Professors Anscombe and Foot (Philosophy), Mrs Proudfoot (Politics), Lady Margaret Hall (Economics). My undergraduate days were enriched by membership in Oxford societies, and serving as Somerville JCR President.

My goal of a diplomatic career was never realized. After completing a PhD in Political Science at U.C. Berkeley, I joined the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) in Bangkok, teaching public policy, organization theory, and research

methodology, as well as being Editor of the *Journal of Public Administration*. At NIDA, I served as Director of the Research Institute, Dean of the Graduate School of Public Administration, Vice-President for Administration, and President of the Academic Senate. I have also served on many Thai government and state enterprise committees, and was a member for three terms, including Chairperson for one term, of the Committee for Development Policy, ECOSOC, United Nations.

1966

Barbara Goodwin (1966)

At school, my history teacher said, ‘Go to Somerville – read PPE’. That was her own ambition, thwarted by the World War. Best advice ever! I had the great good fortune to be tutored by Elizabeth Anscombe in her room *wallpapered in silver foil* and Philippa Foot, who sat with hands pressed to her head, thinking deeply. Moral philosophy fascinated me but it reflected the concerns of logical positivists and analytical philosophers: are moral statements verifiable? does ‘ought’ imply ‘can’? Mary Warnock’s university classes explored more interesting, practical questions.

The individual PPE courses were stimulating, but there was little attempt at integration then. Revising for Finals, I eventually understood how the three disciplines fit together. As, primarily, a political philosopher, I tried to make this explicit. At Brunel, I introduced a general module on philosophy of social science, against opposition from departments existing in their separate silos. The attraction of the University of East Anglia was its PPE degree. There, I co-taught modules on the Philosophy of Social Science and Public Choice with economists and philosophers. Public choice is my dream subject: it combines rational choice theory, philosophical foundations and political/moral questions such as ‘should kidneys for transplant be sold on the open market?’

My research reflects the PPE approach to practical matters: how can random distribution (lotteries) improve democracy and promote social justice? where does moral responsibility lie in complex, bureaucratic organisations? Thank you, Somerville, thank you, PPE, for this lifelong interest.

1967

Judith Mitchell (née Bainbridge) (1967)

Unusually for the 1967 year group I came to PPE from double maths and physics, excited at three new subjects to study. I remain glad that at that time we did indeed study all three, plus two special papers. Our moral tutor Lady Hall sent me out and about to several colleges including Queen's, Christ Church, Worcester and, my favourite, BNC with Vernon Bogdanor. Arriving as a commoner, I was startled to receive a Shaw-Lefeyvre scholarship in my final year.

After college I married and having poor (though improving) health for some years gradually took various voluntary jobs and found that this approach to life suited me. I spent 25 years at Conservative Central Office (five General Elections) exchanging economic statistics for psephology. I have served as trustee for several charities (medical research, art education, a historic building etc)

Widowed in 1993 I began to attend Methodist Central Hall Westminster, spending several recent years as the large multinational congregation's senior lay person. Philosophy might have been more helpful in my Christian studies if PPE had introduced us to Aristotle but Russell's tome still on my bookshelf filled the gap.

Ruth Rettie (née Levitt) (1967)

I started reading physics at Somerville in 1967 but switched to PPE which sounded much more interesting. My tutors included Philippa Foot, Elizabeth Anscombe, Julie Jacks, Lesley Brown, Lady Hall and Mary Proudfoot. I mainly focused on philosophy, which I loved, and went on to complete a BLitt and BPhil, before teaching philosophy in Sierra Leone.

After doing an MBA at Strathclyde, I joined Cadbury and then Unilever but left after 12 years to join Kingston University so that I could spend more time with my two daughters. Whilst working at Kingston I did a PhD in sociology at Surrey University and was fortunate enough to win two RCUK grants researching behaviour change in the context of climate change, eventually becoming a professor.

I am enjoying retirement which gives me time to read, exercise, socialise and be with my family. As well as being really interesting, PPE was very useful at various states of my

career and I am very thankful to my tutors who taught me how to think critically, creatively and constructively.

Alison Wolf (née Potter) (1967)

I had never heard of PPE until my headmistress told me about it – and that I should apply. Being fairly ignorant and moderately biddable on anything to do with university entrance, I duly did, and owe her an enormous debt of gratitude.

PPE definitely transformed the way I think. It hurt my brain, and of course there were topics I found grindingly boring, but I have been living ever since off the intellectual capital I accumulated. That, and the ability to write fast to deadlines.

Looking back I am stunned by the quality of the people who taught me. If I tell anyone who knows about philosophy that I had one-to-one tutorials with Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot and Julie Jack, and classes with Derek Parfit, they look at me in astonishment and envy. Philippa Foot was, I think, the most terrifying, because she could make you go over your thought processes in the most insistent and polite way, and the most devastating. But it was absolutely worth it. And I also had other amazing tutors, in part because Somerville was so good at sending PPE students all over the university for both compulsory and optional papers: a lot of my economics and politics teaching was at other colleges.

Post Oxford, I rather fell into policy analysis while living in Washington DC (where my husband was working for the World Bank), and stayed with it on our return to England, moving into a regular academic job while keeping up involvement with think tanks and government. I've carried out, or been part of, three governmental reviews on vocational and higher education and training, am advising the current government on skills policy, have a chair in public management at King's College London, and am also a cross-bench peer – and the current President of the Somerville Association.

1970

Susan Senior (née Nello) (1970)

While at Oxford I specialised in Philosophy, but spent most of my subsequent life as an academic Economist. We were lucky in our tutors: Lady Margaret Hall, Mary Proudfoot, Philippa Foot and Leslie Brown. I used to love cycling to Mary Proudfoot's house in Norham Gardens and later I had a strong reminder when my children started reading the novel by Penelope Lively.

After Oxford I worked on the Soviet Union and Central-East European Economics for two years at the Directorate of Economic Intelligence in London. I then went the College of Europe in Bruges and the European University Institute in Florence where I obtained a PhD in Economics. Two of my supervisors were from the University of Siena and through them I achieved the near impossible task of obtaining a tenure position in an Italian university. I worked at Siena University for over 35 years, writing various books and articles, and teaching courses on Economic Policy, the Economics of the European Union and Agricultural Economics. A very good student of mine, Davide Rossi, participated in an Erasmus exchange with Oxford (Pembroke), and took six exams in PPE, doing very well in all of them.

1971

Mary Saunders (née Dauman) (1971)

I wanted to be a journalist. Aged 16, I was reading *The Economist*, and persuaded my parents to change from *The Daily Telegraph* to the (pre-Murdoch) *Times* for less bias. PPE seemed an obvious choice of subject, although I knew little about philosophy.

My main memory of PPE – rushing from one lecture to another on my bicycle at opposite ends of town for the opportunity to hear top academics such as A.J. Ayer. I was fortunate to have A.H. (Chelly) Halsey as my tutor in Modern Social Institutions, and Bill

(later Lord) McCarthy as my tutor in Labour Economics and Industrial Relations. These were my favourite subjects, alongside moral and political philosophy.

Part of my studies, together with a voluntary education project in my gap year, led me into teaching; however, the journalism bug returned. I joined BBC radio, followed by Newsround and other factual children's TV programmes. After freelance jobs in film and theatre, I worked as a fundraiser for Shelter and other charities before joining Oxfam staff. I now volunteer for Oxfam in several ways.

I am a trustee of two charities: one supports rural children's education in the OPT, the other works for sustainability within the community.

I have visited several countries because of their interesting recent political history. My studies certainly fuelled interest in this type of travel.

1972

Liz Tran (1972)

1950s Vietnam was inhospitable for bookworms; books were scarce and expensive. I had only my siblings' textbooks and the encyclopedia which had cost my father a week's wages. When I started correcting my seniors and force-feeding them with my encyclopedic knowledge, my delighted parents took this as a sign that I was the child who would fulfil the wildest dream for them and their ancestors: an Oxford degree.

PPE at Somerville was all I had dreamed it would be – intellectual and social excitement limited only by the irregular need for slumber, and afterwards the best Passe-Partout Everywhere. The confidence and analytical rationality I gained made me a fund manager, as well as the agony aunt of choice for family and friends.

A treasured photo is from 1975, of me standing between my parents in front of the Sheldonian. My father's proud smile shows no shadow of his traumatic evacuation by helicopter from the US Embassy in Saigon only months previously. For his remaining four decades, lived with the pain of too much loss, the photo would help him to Accentuate the Positive.

1973

Aileen Simkins (1973)

Aileen Simkins worked in the Department of Health, Home Office and Office for National Statistics. PPE was a particularly valuable background for her last post, on economic statistics and measurement of wellbeing – finally unifying philosophy, politics and economics in a practical development.

1974

Olwyn Hocking (1974)

Studying PPE at Somerville laid all-round foundations: for work, volunteering, personal enquiry and interaction with society. The subject blend developed ‘mental muscles’ to be curious and open minded, zoom in to analyse, step back to understand context and perspective. Non-academic life was a huge education too! – opening my eyes to a world about which I had no idea. Seeing the contrasts between private schools/overseas travel/ career assumptions and my part-time bar/shop work and small northern comprehensive, I felt lucky to be free from burdens of expectation and pressure to compete.

Three years of happily absorbing all that learning was followed by the fun of stretching jobs, family and volunteering: journalism (JCR newsletter revival, newspapers, broadcast, online) then new adventures in my 50s, advising Ofcom and exploring the thrill of proofreading/editing (mainly academic works, leading to joining the stupendous team creating the Scottish Parliament’s ‘Hansard’), in parallel with volunteering (charities, individual mentoring, community groups). Highlights included raising £400K to save a local cricket club and co-founding a social enterprise to tackle the digital divide, providing vital support during lockdowns – plus serving on the JCR committee!

The learning has never stopped; it feels even more vital as we grapple with recent traumatic upheavals and the urgency for greater progress tackling global warming. A PPE background helps give confidence to be a contributor, rather than a bystander.

Deborah Loudon (1974)

I came up to Somerville in 1974 having opted for PPE because of an interest in politics and some half-formed thoughts of a political career. I realised pretty quickly, not least from observing the committed political animals around me, that I lacked the single-minded commitment to a cause that politics seemed to require and concluded that being unable to choose a political party to commit to, then or now, probably meant I should think again.

To me Oxford in the mid-seventies, rather like the country as a whole, seemed stuck in a downbeat period whose style no one has yet tried to revive. The first five traditionally male colleges had opened their doors to women that year but I felt then, as now, that I did not want to be part of the first cohort in an experiment and I have never regretted choosing Somerville. I fully supported the later moves to make all colleges co-educational but some small part of me is still startled to see men representing Somerville on University Challenge.

For me the revelation of my time at Somerville was Philosophy, largely because of the teaching and pastoral care provided by Lesley Brown. I cannot claim to have been one of her best pupils but the teaching I received from her, and from the other excellent tutors she sent me to in other colleges, gave me a way of thinking and approaching arguments that I found consistently useful in my civil service career, which focussed first on criminal justice and later on defence. I left the civil service as a Director after thirty years and then spent a decade working as a head-hunter and filling many senior posts, a number of them in Oxford. Since 2012 I have been back in Oxford because my husband is the Rector of Lincoln College and it has been fascinating to get a different perspective on college life.

1975

Shahnaz (Nazee) Batmanghelidj (1975)

I read PPE to follow in my uncle's footsteps. Politics interested me and I thought I would go back to Iran which I never did. I did well in Economics at school but had not realized how hard Logic and Philosophy might be! Fortunately, the elegant Lady Margaret Hall in her red Chanel suit interviewed me and I was accepted.

I have very fond vivid memories of my PPE tutors. Our generation benefited from accomplished women who showed us that we could compete. Judith Heyer was my main tutor and had just joined the Somerville faculty. She discouraged me from staying in my comfort zone at Oxford and prodded me to branch out to the US. Frances Stewart could be intimidating but was fundamentally great fun and ignored my poorly constructed essays. Wish I had mastered Julie Jack's philosophy class, but she made it fun and asked me to think slowly and logically – still trying!

Mary Proudfoot gave tutorials in her large house where we biked to for tea and biscuits and to hear her insights into sociology and income issues of the era. She represented the old guard. I ventured out of Somerville for Peter Sinclair at Brasenose who sadly recently died due to Covid. He pushed me very hard in International Economics, a subject I sort of did well in. Having been taught by him became a rite of passage for the male PPE crowd. With mostly single sex colleges at the time, being a PPE student put one on a somewhat equal footing with the men, particularly at Balliol!!

What did PPE do for me? I remained a reader and learned to be a critical thinker. Although I am not a talented writer, at least I became a quick study. PPE is particularly relevant in today's partisan and non-tolerant culture. Where else would you learn to see two sides of an issue? I went to Princeton for a graduate degree and then Harvard for my MBA. I spent most of my career in finance. I lacked my friend, Jill Rutter's brilliance, but a PPE degree blessed me with a veneer of intellectual sophistication.

I learned to wow dinner partners with a bit of knowledge on different subjects. How else to shock a former Federal Reserve Governor of Atlanta than that I too had an opinion on endlessly low interest rates impacting savers. PPE has served me well!

Nadine Majaro (née Pilgrim) (1975)

It seems like a long time since I was at Somerville, but Jill Rutter's frequent appearances on television have a wonderful way of taking me straight back to tutorials with her. The 1975 intake, of which we formed part, arrived at a crossroads for the PPE academics at Somerville. We benefited from tutorials with the wonderfully experienced Lady Margaret Hall and Mary Proudfoot, both soon to retire, and with Judith Heyer and Francis Stewart, who had both fairly recently joined the college bringing their newer perspectives. I gave up philosophy after the first year (though I had enjoyed logic) and sometimes wish I had persevered with this for longer.

Apart from studying (which I did efficiently rather than thoroughly!) I spent considerable time on music and drama activities. The need to juggle two different subjects and a range of time consuming extracurricular activities certainly taught me how to prioritise and organise myself. This lesson proved to be vital as I moved through my career as an accountant at PricewaterhouseCoopers, combining that with bringing up two boys, one of whom later became a Somervillian.

Jill Rutter (1975)

I came up to read PPE in 1975. Getting a place at Oxford to do PPE saved me from doing a Law degree. I came for the Politics, discovered I loved Economics, really wanted to study the Political Economy of the EU when I left, but after getting ill during Finals and spending the summer thinking I would end up with an aegrotat, opted for a job at the Treasury. Political economy in action, rather than in theory. I ended up spending 19 years in the Treasury, working in a mix of jobs in private office (Geoffrey Howe and John Major) in local government and development finance and best of all tax policy, with timeouts on local government finance reform (OK, the poll tax) at Department of the Environment and a couple of years working in No. 10. In between I fitted in a Harkness fellowship at UC Berkeley and nine months working on tobacco control for an NGO in Washington. My last Treasury job was as press secretary to the Chancellor – great working for Ken Clarke, appalling for Gordon Brown after the 1997 election. I resigned and worked for six years in BP, in London, Milton Keynes, Madrid and the Ruhr.

I reapplied to the civil service and joined the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as Director of Strategy and Sustainable Development – a fantastic job which I absolutely loved. But after five and a half years, I joined the newly founded Institute for Government initially on secondment and then permanently. I led their work on arm's length bodies, policy making (including the project I always wanted to do on how to 'make

tax policy better' and latterly Brexit – trying to make sense of the process of the UK leaving the EU to a bemused public. That gave an opportunity to indulge my love of doing radio and more recently podcasts, and overcome my hatred of appearing on TV, but most crucially working with some of the most fun and brightest young colleagues you could hope to meet. For the last 18 months I have continued doing Brexit, but based at UK in a Changing Europe at King's College London, while doing other work, most notably on net zero, at Institute for Government. Seems a bit like full circle, to finally get to apply my PPE special subjects of International Economics and Western European Government. If only I had spent a bit more time studying the political economy of the EU.

1976

Sarah Chambers (1976)

I knew very little about PPE before coming up to Somerville and it is hard to see how writing entrance exams in French and Russian literature demonstrated that I was equipped for such subjects. But the tutors put their faith in me, and I loved every minute of my studies. Though I did give up philosophy after the first year because my head hurt from all those unanswered questions.

Judith Heyer in particular instilled in me a particular interest in economics, and I somehow didn't mind that there were more questions than answers in that subject too. As soon as I graduated I joined the Civil Service, living the 'Modern British Government' that I had studied in my third year, but also making good use of economics, as I joined DTI and spent much of my career grappling with competition and consumer policy, and economic regulation. A highlight was becoming CEO of the postal services regulator and giving evidence under the glare of the TV cameras to various Parliamentary Select Committees.

I have now left the Civil Service and am working in a number of roles in similar fields, as Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel, Commissioner at the Electoral Commission, Panel Member of the Pensions Regulator and various other such jobs. Still dealing with politics and economics, and becoming a bit more philosophical as I grow older.

Hilary Cook (1976)

I never thought of studying PPE as a route into the City. Back in the 1970s the City was pretty much a closed shop – certainly to women – with no obvious career path. More simply, I adored studying economics and found philosophy something of an intellectual challenge – as my tutors, including the hugely inspirational Mary Warnock, listened patiently as I frequently argued myself round in a circle.

Post Oxford, with the backing and support of my Somerville economics and moral tutor Judith Heyer, to whom I owe so much, I gained a Fulbright scholarship to study Leisure at the University of Utah – one of the leading American universities in the philosophy and economics of this subject. My journey from there to an analytical role in the City then seemed a natural route, as all changed in the 1980s, with a growing appreciation in the ‘Square Mile’ of the intellectual rigour that a degree in PPE brought.

Come the 2000s, and working as a Director in Barclays, I was offered a position heading up their media side, offering third party investment advice via as many forms of media as my team could find. This included multiple trips to the BBC for radio and TV – and sharing a studio with eg John Humphries, as I endeavoured to explain to the nation the implications of events in the financial world. And here those agonising philosophy tutorials came in very useful indeed. I had learned to argue concisely and explain clearly, while compared to facing the extraordinary intellect of my PPE tutors, no radio or TV interviewer could easily faze me.

Those communication skills honed all those years ago in college rooms continued to benefit my career, as I concluded it working at Invesco Perpetual, with a remit to explain to clients what our UK fund managers were investing in and why. Here I was fortunate to meet regularly with the chief executives of many of the UK’s largest companies – including, very topically, Pascal Soriot of Astra Zeneca.

I am now retired from full time employment, with more time to indulge in another passion learned at Somerville – the sport of rowing.

Fiona Driscoll (1976)

I had always wanted to study at Oxford and PPE was a unique opportunity that resonated with my interests in politics and people. I remember preparing for interviews by avidly watching Weekend World with Peter Jay.

In my day, there were still a small number of colleges that admitted women and I attended Somerville, an all-female college. To put it delicately, the culture was still a long way before the MeToo movement! This may explain my lifelong interest in equal opportunities and diversity, which led to me chairing The 300 Group, City Women's Network and now Women on Boards.

Did PPE help shape my career? I think it gave me a foundation on which to develop analytic frameworks, a strategic interest in whole system thinking and a fascination with consumer and citizen interactions.

My early career was based in the consulting and marketing industries, including CEO roles for Saatchi & Saatchi, and WPP. This built on some core tenets learned, particularly philosophical concepts and their interface with economic models.

Latterly I switched to a portfolio career as a NED focusing on the public sector and healthcare, including Wessex Academic Health Care Network, King Edward VII's Hospital, Nuffield Health and UKRI, promoting innovation and disruption to change systems to be citizen centric and impact driven. I work closely with Ministers and Mandarins, and particularly the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury, supporting transformation and major programmes, including as a Member of HMT's Major Programmes Review Group. My early interest in political systems has come full circle.

My memories of Oxford are of a beautiful city full of fascinating people, both tutors and students. I was heavily involved with the Oxford Union which certainly balanced lecture theatre and library with politics in real life! Most importantly, I made some close 'PPE' friends and we're still supporting each other, albeit virtually, to this day.

Helen Goodman (1976)

I have two guilty secrets from my time as a PPE student at Somerville. First I dropped politics and concentrated on philosophy and economics, because I thought politics was a subject for amateurs and secondly, I was a Liberal.

So I became a Labour MP and government minister.

I really enjoyed being a student. I enjoyed the academic work and I was fortunate in having excellent dons – Lesley Brown, Mary Warnock (who was running a Royal Commission from her study!), Alan Ryan and Andrew Glyn – a Marxist from a banking family. I also enjoyed the politicking – the students union (not The Union – which the Left frowned on) and the JCR. One of my proudest achievements was achieving the best, ie the lowest rents for undergraduates, the year I did the negotiations. And I appreciated the opportunities a women's college offered.

I didn't dive into politics straightaway. In 1979 only 3% of MPs were women – it was a theoretical but not practical possibility, like being an astronaut. I spent 16 years in the Treasury which gave me a ringside seat on the operation of government. But I found it a deeply, deeply sexist institution and I grew increasingly frustrated with the ivory tower atmosphere. I wanted to do something practical. A brilliant opportunity arose with the fall of the Berlin Wall when I went to work in the Prime Minister's office in Prague. After the birth of my second child I left and had a spell in the voluntary sector.

I was selected to stand in Bishop Auckland – before Brexit a very safe Labour seat. It's fantastic – a real slice of Britain with hill farms in the Pennines and an industrial heartland on the former coalfields. As a Minister my biggest job was putting the Child Poverty Act on the Statute book. But even in Opposition I found ways to make law – closing the secret tax loopholes in the Caribbean and introducing Magnitsky sanctions.

One of the best pieces of advice I ever had was from Judith Heyer – 'the more you, do the more you find you can do.'

The photo is me in a park visiting a project for disabled children.

Robin Mednick (née Henry) (1976)

My moral and economics tutor at Somerville, Dr Judith Heyer, was phenomenal. She charted my two-year course in PPE, connected me with incredible tutors throughout Oxford and nurtured my love of economics. She once said, 'Don't worry if you are not pleased with the essay you write every week, we will only use it as a takeoff for discussion. Don't be discouraged – after the term is over you will have time to think about what you have read, and everything will fall into perspective.' Her words still echo in my mind today reminding me always that things do gain perspective with time.

I was fortunate to have Dick Smethurst teach me a course on 'Money'. His passion for teaching and his ability to simplify complicated issues helped me navigate the financial world through the course of my career.

With this strong PPE foundation, I have spent many years in the world of international development, founding a charity, Pencils for Kids, and helping the country of Niger. We have focused on education for girls and income generation for women in agriculture. We are now creating a school for horticultural technicians to train thousands of women farmers in Niger.

1977

Alexandra Schaapveld (1977)

As a Dutch girl with a French school education, what an excitement to study PPE at Oxford! A whole new world of impressive lectures, weekly tutorials, endless hours in the Bodleian but also of half-blues in volleyball and ballroom dancing, and introduction to port and madeira while dining in all male colleges. And last but certainly not least, Somerville has given me friends, friendship to last a lifetime.

I came across many brilliant minds in Oxford, but am especially thankful to Professor Judith Heyer, the tutor who taught me the understanding of economics and awakened my interest in development across India and Africa. After my three years at Oxford I went on to do a master's in Development Economics at the University of Rotterdam in The Netherlands.

I subsequently joined an international bank: ABNAMRO where after 25 years my career as a banker ended as Head of Global Clients, many of which in developing countries. For the last ten years I have been a non-executive, and chair audit committees on Boards in France, The Netherlands, the UK and Malaysia and I invest in early stage companies in Europe and Africa.

I am a proud mother of four and at the present moment grandmother of five little ones under the age of three!

Jessie Sloan (1977)

I read PPE many years ago, 1977 to 1979, when the earth was cooling, correspondence was by letter, and Somerville was still exclusively for women. The subjects were new directions for me, having a BSc in geology from a Canadian university when I arrived. It was a terrific scramble to get up to speed after so many years of science, but the experience had lasting effects on my interests and career.

PPE enabled me to reshape my background in geology to pursue a career in public policy in Canada around resources, energy, and environment. As with most bachelor's degrees, much of the content of PPE at the time was not applicable to later endeavours, but a few topics in moral philosophy, microeconomics and trade proved very useful. Also

helpful were the drills in madly swotting up from a state of abject ignorance to being ready to write in a week.

I can identify the most important lesson, imparted by Peter Sinclair of Brasenose, who emphasized the need to be aware and wary of assumptions, a point ever more salient in this era of utter recklessness about assumptions. The experience of living in community of women was also valuable. I spent my career in male-dominated subjects and workplaces, and the conviction that intellect and character could be disentangled from gender helped. I am grateful.

Kati Whitaker (1977)

Having graduated in PPE (mainly politics and philosophy) I had initially chosen to train as a lawyer and so went to law school followed by Articles (training contract). However, it was during that time that I became increasingly aware that journalism might be a way of pursuing my interest in International relations (first triggered by my undergraduate studies). I was lucky enough to land a producer contract in the BBC World Service current affairs department. This signalled a change of direction which led me into a very satisfying career in broadcasting. Over the last 40 years I have been a news reporter, a Radio 4 magazine programme presenter and a reporter in current affairs from all over the world, notably Africa; over the last 10–15 years I have turned to documentary making through my own production company, Kati Whitaker Productions Ltd.

I have no doubt that there has been a direct link between the interest my degree spawned in politics and the way my career has evolved. It has been a particular joy and wonderful sense of circularity to have returned to Oxford on numerous occasions to record interviews. Returning to the Middle East Centre, for example, to record interviews about the Oslo accords for a series I made on diplomacy was a wonderful reminder of the many happy hours I spent working there on one of my special papers. I also recall my excitement at interviewing Baroness Mary Warnock, my old moral philosophy tutor for another programme. I felt the connection to Oxford and particularly to the PPE school just as keenly all those years on.

The slightly unexpected bonus from my degree was also the way the rigour of the philosophy training remained with me both directly when I was working on moral/ethical issues (a frequent activity when I was working in the BBC religious affairs department) but also indirectly in my approach to any subject.

I have no doubt that my degree has been a formative moment in my life. I am so glad that I was able to study PPE and am grateful for the enjoyment it gave at the time as well as the lessons it has given me in perpetuity.

1978

Pauline Allen (1978)

I am happy to be reminded of my years studying PPE at Somerville in the late 1970s.

Apart from the enjoyment of a full social and politically engaged life in Oxford, I learnt many things which have been useful in my career. The foundations of political theory and moral philosophy, in particular, have been fundamental in my writing and research.

After a detour into corporate law in the 1980s, I went back to studying and eventually made a career in academia. My PhD work at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine was on the legal and economic aspects of the NHS internal market. I am now co-director (with Professor Kath Checkland of Manchester University) of one of the national Policy Research Units, funded by the National Institute for Health Research from 2011 to 2023. My research interests include socio-legal theory, institutional economics, organisational theory, governance and the structure and organisational economics of the NHS.

In addition to researching these issues in the United Kingdom, I am collaborating with colleagues in China. I am Visiting Professor of Health Services Organisation at the Medicine and Health Management School, Tongji Medical College, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, Hubei Province, China.

In 2018 we launched the Centre for Health Economics in London (CHIL).

Joanne Alston (1978)

After reading PPE, I edged towards a career in international development. In my 20s, I taught commerce at a Tanzanian secondary school with Voluntary Service Overseas, studied more and then worked as an economist in Fiji. After some travel, I surprised myself by becoming a civil servant at the Department of International Development (DFID) working and living in different countries for two decades.

PPE at Oxford gave me an excellent grounding and deep interest in politics and economics – quite a change after double maths and physics at A-level. I particularly recall with warm affection Somerville's Dr Judith Heyer; although her economics tutorials in my

first year could be rather exacting, Judith opened a window to life beyond the UK which laid the foundation for my future.

I've managed aid programmes and done policy and research work. I particularly enjoyed leading DFID's environmental and climate change agenda, raising developing countries' interests across Whitehall. Working with different governments, NGOs and international organisations and spending time with people in different countries has been exciting and a privilege. I now advise on international development, mentor women across the public sector and take a great interest in politics and public policy.

Libby Ancrum (1978)

At the age of 12 I decided I wanted to go to Oxford. At the time I was living on the prairie in Saskatchewan and attending a tiny village school but with the naivete of youth it never occurred to me that it was a rather fanciful idea. At the time PPE was a rare subject combination at British Universities. In retrospect, I am delighted that I studied all three subjects and kept all three.

Although I have primarily worked in the field of Economics, I have always felt that Politics and Philosophy provides a 3D understanding of the rapidly changing field of Economics. The second half of my career has been in education – I have been particularly keen to encourage young women into studying Economics. I have very fond memories of my Oxford tutors, particularly Judith Heyer, Julie Jack and Bridget Rosewell, although it was also fun to be tutored outside of Somerville at various 'men's colleges'.

After leaving Oxford in 1981, I briefly worked for BT in London before winning a Commonwealth Scholarship to Hong Kong University to start a research degree in Economics. On the way there I spent a long summer in India with Serioshi Palchoudhuri (also Somerville PPE) staying with her family in Calcutta. I retired from formal teaching in 2019 which enabled me to spend a fascinating time with my husband David (also PPE) in Bangladesh working on the support of Rohingya refugees. I do feel that studying PPE all those years ago has given me a perspective and insight that I would not otherwise I have had.

1979

Isha Ray (1979)

I left India for the first time ever to come to Somerville to read PPE. It was an extraordinary time to be in a women's college: all the student leaders were women, and debates about marriage and feminist thought and sexuality were common, showing me that feminism was far from the homogeneous 'thing' I used to think it was. And reading PPE in this environment seemed to make total sense – development economics with the great Judith Heyer was also centered around ideas and analyses of history and inequality; philosophy with the wonderful Lesley Brown was at once a set of readings and at once an examination of the self in the world. I was always surprised when I heard that PPE 'runs' Britain: how could it do that when every tutorial left me with more questions than answers?

I've carried that blend of philosophy and economics into my career as Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, where I work on water, energy and development for under-resourced communities. I've carried that breadth of thinking into the policy work I continue to do for UN Women and UNESCO. PPE trained me to understand that economics with philosophy forces you to make your worldview transparent and not shelter behind your model, and philosophy with economics forces you to ask what your worldview really amounts to (and for whom) when the policy rubber hits the road. In my twenties, reading PPE, I didn't really 'see' that. But I do now.

1980

Elizabeth Francis (1980)

I feel grateful for having been given the chance to take PPE, an experience that I have drawn on through two, very different careers. Taking papers in Politics and Economics for Finals, I became more and more drawn to Sociology and I went on to do a DPhil in

Sociology at Somerville. But I have always been glad that I studied Economics with Judith Heyer. Judith's research in Kenya and India inspired my own research in Kenya and South Africa and I went on to teach the Sociology of Development at Essex University and then at the London School of Economics. PPE developed in me a cast of mind towards interdisciplinary thinking that I have held onto ever since.

14 years ago, I changed direction. Having my own children led me to think about inequalities in childhood in the UK and I decided that I wanted to do something more immediately practical. I retrained as a Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist and I now work in the NHS, doing clinical work and teaching trainees. I still very much draw on what I learned through PPE. The lives of many of the families I work with are shaped by a complex mixture of social deprivation, family instability and poor health and I am involved in debates in the profession about how to respond to these complexities in our clinical work. And as I'm married to a PPE tutor, the Economics tutorials continue.

Anne Locke (née Hill) (1980)

I'd imagined politics and economics would explain world hunger and unemployment. Undergraduate PPE didn't quite manage that, but certainly working with world-class tutors and lecturers gave me a framework for asking better questions.

At my interview, a dynamic trio of tutors sat with their legs tucked under them on sofas, at least some of them smoking, while I perched uncomfortably dressed in my best skirt and Margaret Thatcher-style bow-tied blouse. There were echoes of the interview scene in BBC2's 1979 serialisation of *Testament of Youth* (which inspired a generation of early 1980s Somervillians), where Vera Brittain dressed in a satin evening gown for hers.

PPE-ists are fortunate to meet such a range of distinguished tutors: in college with Julie Jack, April Carter, Lesley Brown and Judith Heyer and outside with people such as the rather daunting Abisi M Sharakiya of Wolfson. I shared tutorials on labour economics with the Eagle sisters, identical twins who both went on to become Labour MPs, and remember hearing of a young William Hague making waves in OUCA.

I joined the Civil Service in 1987 and worked mostly in the Department of Trade and Industry, on subjects such as competition and trade policy that I'd first heard of when studying economics. Later I became interested in archaeology and heritage, and worked on cathedral buildings for the Church of England, an organisation where a grounding in philosophy and politics has proved most useful.

1981

Sandie Dunne (1981)

My memories of Somerville and PPE are mixed. I came from an immigrant working class background so was something of a fish out of water back in the 1980s, but I was encouraged by my tutors Lesley Brown (philosophy) and April Carter (politics), with fond memories of tutorials, demonstrating when Thatcher came to college, joining radical feminist collective on Cowley Road and wearing trousers to high table! More importantly I met my lifelong partner Beatrice Prevatt at Somerville.

My work reflects my passion for politics and psychodynamic approaches to greater understanding of how people and systems work and include national policy roles, organisational development consultancy, coaching and academic teaching. My passion for life long learning continued with an MSc in Social Analysis, an MA in Consultation and the Organisation, using psychoanalytic approaches, and more recently my Professional Doctorate in Leadership and Organisational Development, with a focus on race: the absence of black and people of colour in leadership roles in public sector organisations. I am also a Policy Fellow, Centre for Science and Policy, University of Cambridge.

More recently my work is focussed on NHS Leadership and Lifelong Learning supporting their journey 'Building Leadership for Inclusion', as an OD partner with the European Climate Foundations' Global Strategic Communications Council tackling climate change, and as Trustee on the Board of The Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

1982

Catherine Royle (1982)

I had an idea that if I studied PPE I might find out how the world worked – and I might meet some interesting people. So I was successful on one count. I was shocked to

find myself the only person in my cohort who hadn't studied economics before – and Judith Heyer was probably equally distressed at my ignorance. We both gave a sigh a relief when I passed Prelims and could give it up. It wasn't my only experience of diving in the deep end. I took an option in Latin American politics and found myself at St Antony's with a bunch of students who mostly spoke Spanish, or knew South America. This time it was Alan Angell who had to cope with the novice.

Cut to a few years later and imagine Dr Angell's face when he went to Chile and there I was in the British Embassy as the junior diplomat in the political section. That was my first FCO posting, and I did a few more in my 28 years. I served as Ambassador to Venezuela, and spent the last three years of my diplomatic career in Afghanistan. I now work for NATO.

1983

Patricia Terry (née Garratt) (1983)

The moment I found out I had been offered a place to study PPE at Somerville is still one of the most vivid and happy memories of my life; I knew I had been given an incredible opportunity. I arrived expecting to focus on Politics and Economics but found that it was Philosophy which fascinated me the most. Far from being the slightly intangible subject I had expected, I found it logical and clear.

I always thoroughly enjoyed my tutorials with Julie Jack and her great sense of humor. One of the many privileges which studying PPE at Oxford brings is the opportunity to debate enormous questions with leading experts in that field. I happily recall cycling down to Brasenose to discuss Philosophy of Religion in a magnificent old book-lined room overlooking the Radcliffe Camera. You could not hope to find a more quintessentially Oxford experience outside of an episode of Inspector Morse.

The degree proved to be excellent preparation for my ten years in investment banking. More than anything, it taught me to question everything and to step back and see the bigger picture. This has been invaluable in every area of my life, from my time in the City, through my second career as a teacher and now with the charities I work with.

I am proud to see that Somerville consistently tops the tables in terms of student satisfaction and that PPE remains one of the most sought after degrees. I count myself incredibly fortunate.

1984

Antoinette Jackson (1984)

I went up to Somerville to study in 1984 thanks to the Inner London Education Authority's (ILEA) PPE scheme. This scheme encouraged pupils from state schools that did not normally make Oxbridge applications, to apply read PPE. Without the ILEA scheme it would not have occurred to me to apply to Oxford. Somerville provided an incredibly supportive environment for someone who arrived with no prior insight into how Oxford actually worked.

Once there, I found I particularly loved the wide-ranging scope of Politics and Philosophy and the challenge they provided to my critical thinking. I chose Social Policy as one of my options, cementing a lifelong interest in how social policy and public services can improve an individual's life chances and quality of life.

My first job was a graduate trainee post at Reading Borough Council. I was inspired by the real difference local councils made for their communities and ended up building my career in local government. I became Chief Executive of Cambridge City Council in June 2009, a post I held for 11 years.

If ILEA still existed, I would like to think that they would see my career in public service as a good return on their 1984 investment.

Catherine Reid Jones (née Reid) (1984)

I came to Somerville to study PPE thinking that I would somehow become a political powerhouse and leave qualified to make the world a better place. Alas I'm not sure that happened – but I did leave able to come up with a well-researched point of view on pretty much any subject within two and half days of hard work. It is this skill and the confidence

to put my perspective across that I am very grateful for when I look back at my time studying PPE. It has equipped me well through a career that has varied from labour market policy advisor at the CBI, through many years as a strategic planner within the world of advertising and marketing to my time now as a Director of a major London institution navigating the financial crisis that Covid-19 has unleashed on the world. Along the way I have also trained and worked in garden design and horticulture, had two children and stayed married to my best friend from Oxford – a fellow PPE graduate.

Debbie Starrs (née Jeffrey) (1984)

My parents left school at 16, and I never expected to go to university. I loved Economics A-level, enjoyed debating, and had a wonderful teacher who persuaded my parents that not only university, but Oxford, was within reach.

I was terrified arriving at Somerville, certain a terrible mistake had been made, that I would be uncovered as a fraud and sent packing. I was lucky to live with two other PPE-ists in Vaughan, who became and remain lifelong friends.

Judith Heyer was a brilliant tutor, who reassured me that I had a right to be at Somerville, and I quickly found my feet. Looking back, much of my time seemed spent in the PPE Reading Room – filling in little paper order forms and waiting for obscure books to appear from the depths of the Bodleian – I imagine the system is vastly more sophisticated today.

After Oxford, I joined a global management consultancy, applying both economics knowledge and political skills to help clients improve their businesses. Negotiating skills, philosophical argument and nimble thought processes learnt from the tutorial system also turned out to be valuable bringing up two children!

1985

Rachel Glennerster (1985)

Dr Rachel Glennerster is the Chief Economist of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and member of the FCDO Executive Committee.

Prior to her appointment at the FCDO, she was the Chief Economist of the Department for International Development (DFID) and from 2004 to 2017, she was Executive Director of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a research centre in the Economics Department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that seeks to reduce poverty by ensuring policy is informed by scientific evidence.

Dr Glennerster's work has spanned reform of the international financial system, debt, promoting innovation, education, health, financial regulation, and women's empowerment in Russia, Africa and South East Asia. In addition to FCDO, DFID and MIT, Dr Glennerster has held positions at the International Monetary Fund, Her Majesty's Treasury and the Harvard Institute for International Development.

Clare Latham (1985)

PPE was the perfect choice for a magpie mind like mine, encouraging me to jump from contemporary moral philosophy to political theory; from Aristotle to world trade. I was lucky enough to be tutored by experts in several colleges, and also found time to set up a college society, co-chair the Somerville ball, learn to cox, design posters and become involved in student politics, I made good use of both the college sewing machine and IBM computer (which filled a room). But I didn't learn to focus in any specific area.

Needless to say my unwillingness to specialise hasn't changed. I've been a central banker, fund manager, economics consultant and a chief of staff, acquiring two master's degrees in the process. Now, after a diploma at the Inchbald, I'm starting out as a garden designer. I get to use my creative side, and am expected to know a bit about a lot of things. PPE set me up for life, just not in the way I imagined all those years ago.

Caroline Walsh (1985)

I was originally accepted to Somerville to read Classics ('Greats' as it was then) but after spending a year in Israel before university, I was much more interested in politics and philosophy by the time I arrived in Oxford and, after the first term, changed to PPE.

PPE was the perfect degree for me, and I studied a wide range of subjects from Philosophy of Religion to Marxism and, obviously, Middle East Politics. I wrote my dissertation on feminism in political parties, and remember travelling round the country to interview women MPs which was fascinating. My only possible regret is that I was so involved in extracurricular activities that my studies often took a backseat in the first two years!

After university, I studied law at the College of Law in London and then moved to Israel where I have been working as an Israeli lawyer and English solicitor for the past 30 years. I am married to Professor Paul Frosh and have three children, the oldest of whom is about to start university herself.

1987

Sally Prentice (1987)

PPE was an obvious choice for me: economics was my favourite A-level subject and I was fascinated by politics and current affairs, sitting down to watch *Panorama* every Monday evening at 8.10pm!

My memories of PPE are eclectic: cycling down the Cowley Road to buy *Blueprint for a Green Economy*; finding Denis Healey's autobiography *The Time of My Life* invaluable in writing Finals essays in Modern British Government; and debating with Dr Martin Holmes, a Thatcherite and Eurosceptic, in tutorials. I wrote a dissertation on Women and Trade Unions alongside studying Labour Economics and Industrial Relations, two subjects that have fundamentally changed since the 1980s.

I feel immensely fortunate to have been taught Public Economics by Dr Dieter Helm. Studying economics gave me confidence to think critically about public policy issues, to scrutinize budgets and ask challenging questions: skills that I've used every day since.

For 20 years I was a senior councillor in Lambeth with responsibility for education, children's services and regeneration. Alongside politics, I worked for The King's Fund, Age UK and Relate. I am studying for an MSc in Grantmaking, Philanthropy and Social Investment at City University and in late 2020 I joined the charity Carers Network as Chief Executive.

Darina Yusof (1987)

I actually wanted to study Chemical Engineering but was given a full scholarship by the Malaysian Government to read PPE. Coming from a science-focused educational background, Politics was a complete war zone for me and an easy 'drop' after the first year. Logic was my strongest subject 30-plus years ago and the learnings there remain relevant and valuable in my day job as Country Chief Risk Officer for Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Berhad. I struggled for hours to comprehend the simplest of ideas propounded in the later works of Wittgenstein. Today, my attitude remains, 'If tenacity helped get into the head of Wittgenstein, no complex banking formula is beyond me!'

PPE at Somerville College with Dr Judith Heyer meant looking beyond the obvious and entitled beauty of Oxford. It required an acceptance of the diversity of who we are and what we can bring into our community at large. Challenge can come from so many different aspects. Somerville and PPE showed me that hard work, continual learning and a little luck can open the doors to a multitude of opportunities. I remain ever grateful...

1989

Cressida Heyes (1989)

I studied PPE at Somerville between 1989 and 1992. This was a transformative time in the political world, and we all (students and tutors) had plenty to discuss, even as we watched the curriculum, with its emphasis on the Soviet Union and a divided Germany, or British politics of a pre-neoliberal era, being overtaken by the redefinition of nation states and the downfall of our own Prime Minister. I approached all three disciplines as a novice,

and of everything I learned at Oxford, the most general skill of being able to find my way in a sea of new information and ideas with very little structure is probably the most enduringly useful. I was most gripped by Philosophy and Political Theory, and it was really in tutorials with Lesley Brown and James Logue that I worked out how to express an abstract idea and how to follow through on an intuition—or ditch it!

I planned to become a Whitehall civil servant, and was accepted through the fast-track process, to start in London after graduation. So until quite late in the day I wasn't planning to become pursue an academic career and become a philosopher, and it was a chance success in a scholarship competition that put me on a postgraduate path. I've made a career in interdisciplinary feminist philosophy in North America, where intellectual traditions are less revered and professional advancement more open to someone with my projects, but the ideas and the people I encountered at Somerville have stayed with me. I have donated my books to the College library, enjoying the idea that current Somervillians can encounter alumni through our intellectual lives. Finally, I have always loved the city of Oxford, which is close to where I grew up and where my parents still live, and the extraordinary beauty of the buildings and surrounding meadows still transfixes me every time I return.

1990

John Adams (né Chetham) (1990)

I am nonbinary and use the pronoun 'they'. After graduating in PPE from Somerville in 1993, I worked for management consultant Datamonitor in London for two years and then went through the College of Law in London to study the law conversion course and legal practice course. I did my training contract with Shakespeares Solicitors in Birmingham and was recruited into the banking and finance litigation department of DLA (now DLA Piper) when I qualified in 1999. Brian and I met there, married a year later and have two children.

I've been caring for my severely disabled husband and raising our children since 2003. I fit in writing and book blogging as best I can, something that is crucial to provide a life outside caring. My novels are on Smashwords as author John C Adams and my book blog is 'John C Adams Reviews'.

My kids are adults now. Richard works for UK airline Cargo Logic UK in management, and Midnight is going to the Met Film School in London this September to study a degree in film directing.

Notwithstanding the pressures of caring, I feel blessed to have two amazing children. And I love writing and blogging very much.

1992

Caroline Garnett (1992)

I was fascinated by politics as a teenager and encouraged to apply to Oxford by my teachers and parents. Having attended an open day, and reviewed stats on state-school entrants, Somerville was my first-choice college.

I thrived at Somerville and Oxford, particularly enjoying studying philosophy and political theory, political activism, and socialising in Somerville Bar (amongst others). My degree taught me to both think and write logically and creatively, which has been invaluable in my working life. I had the benefit of studying several options at Somerville with Lesley Brown and Lois McNay, and also working with different tutors from across the university.

Somerville was women-only when I applied and went mixed while I was there. This was controversial at the time, but my experience was that the college generally retained its alternative, liberal, less stuffy character.

After qualifying as a Chartered Accountant I went on to work for different charities in the UK and in Africa. I am now back home in Cardiff, working as Head of Finance at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales. I am studying for a Psychology degree with The Open University. Even though I am 30 years on from studying PPE I am still using the study skills I developed then. I have also found more of an overlap than I expected with philosophy, which is particularly enjoyable.

1994

Dan Mobley (1994)

To the endless irritation of family and friends, I have always loved arguing about politics and ideas. So PPE was the perfect degree for me: furious debates with tutorial partners, the privilege of learning from truly great tutors (Lois McNay, Lesley Brown and the much-missed James Logue, among many others) and the joy of spending days reading political philosophy or trying to put ideas into action in student NGO campaigns (rather more cerebrally and timidly than our descendants in Extinction Rebellion). I enjoyed it so much, I returned for an MPhil in International Relations.

As well as lifelong friendships, studying PPE at Somerville led me into a happy decade in the civil service, at the Treasury and the Foreign Office and then onto the private sector in 2008 with emerging markets bank Standard Chartered in Johannesburg and later Mumbai, before returning to London with drinks giant Diageo in 2017. As Global Corporate Relations Director at one of the UK's biggest companies, dealing with politicians, journalists and NGO partners around the world means I still get to put the skills I learnt from studying PPE to good use every day.

1995

Hazel Gray (1995)

I started PPE with a keen interest in politics, but no background in any of the three subjects. I became fascinated by economics after my first undergraduate lecture when I left the hall pondering on the connections between the economic theory we had just been introduced to and the economy I witnessed around me. I remained motivated by the desire to explain how real economies work and to explore the simultaneous creation of wealth and poverty. Many of the theorists I read during the three years at Somerville remained with me and have shaped my career in research. I am grateful to have studied

development economics with Judith Heyer and to have taken courses in South Asian politics with Nandini Gooptu. After Somerville, I studied an MSc in the Political Economy of Development at SOAS and then went to work as an ODI Fellow for three years at the Ministry of Finance in Tanzania. I returned to undertake a PhD at SOAS in the Department of Economics. My research focusses on comparative processes of economic change and industrialization. After finishing my PhD, I taught at the Department of International Development at the LSE and then moved to Scotland to take up a lectureship at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh where I am currently the Director. Reflecting on the many memories of my time studying PPE, one that comes back to me now is a vivid recollection of the PPE Reading Room, and a certain moment of the afternoon when a lull would fall, and all the students would be asleep on their books.

Helen Rice (1995)

I loved reading PPE, especially in the second year where I had superb tutorials at Somerville with the late James Logue on the brain-bending topic of Philosophy of Mind. I am not sure I can say how studying PPE shaped my career, because I don't think I really have a 'career' as such. But I can tell you that, as a person, there is probably not a day that goes by without me drawing upon some aspect of not so much what we learned (I have a terrible memory) but the skills, techniques and devices it taught me. Just today I was in a poetry workshop where the topic of 'cause' was being discussed and people were talking as if 'cause and effect' was an unproblematic phenomenon! I enjoyed dredging up some half-remembered Hume and Kant and making it really confusing for everyone. And I can spot a straw man or a logical fallacy at 20 paces.

I live in Sheffield now and work as a freelance researcher, pet sitter, transport escort for kids with special needs and musician-comedian-writer-performer. I am also writing my first poetry pamphlet reflecting on my recent experiences of becoming a step mum to four kids. I think PPE was the perfect subject for me to do at Oxford and send good wishes to all those who are studying it during this difficult time.

1996

Stefan Dobrev (1996)

I was fortunate enough to be able to choose my subject at University purely out of interest and not as a function of a career aspiration. Having lived as a teenager through the tumultuous early days of democracy and reform in Eastern Europe, I could not help but care for the interplay between politics and economics, and yet had the geeky inclination to believe there must be an underlying logic to it all. So when I heard of PPE, I was sold. It was a good thing Oxford took me, because I would have probably not wanted to study anywhere else. The individuals I could debate with into the night, amongst fellow students and tutors alike, eccentric but always exceptional; the ease of being welcomed, personally and intellectually, in Somerville and in student societies; the light-hearted seriousness of it all – only much later did I appreciate how special it was. Meeting my wife there then turned out to be the real stroke of luck.

Like many of us, on graduation I joined a consulting firm with the coveted partnership firmly in my sight. But life is what happens while we are busy making plans, so what was supposed to be a side project for Nestlé turned into a 20-year career in the food industry, spanning innovation, strategy, M&A and entrepreneurship. The red thread that runs through it all – the human side of economic behaviour, as grasped in a PPE degree.

Joe Taylor (1996)

I had a year out before arriving at Somerville, having deferred entry. During that year I started working in the music business, which instantly became my passion. By the time I got to Oxford, my head was full of record labels and release dates and I couldn't remember much about anything else. So I focused on philosophy. I learnt a lot about how to think and argue, and explored my interest in ethics, religion and aesthetics (my thesis was a defence of pop music against Roger Scruton). But more time was spent at Oxygen, the radio station, than studying.

I still work in music today but it's no longer an obsession – more like a fun hobby that also pays the bills – and I can't pretend my studies have impacted it much. But I'm also an activist in Extinction Rebellion, and my degree has certainly fed into what feels like the

most important thing I could be doing with my life. I'm fascinated by politics and economics nowadays, and wish I'd studied more.

1997

Omar Davis (1997)

'Are fascism and Stalinism both forms of totalitarianism? Discuss.'

Noughth Week, Freshers' Week, Year 1. For someone who did Sciences and Maths for A-level, that was a bit of a shock! (Let's call it Shock 1.)

'And how many words are typical for an essay?' I ventured nervously.

'Oh, 3,000-5,000,' came the reply

Shock 2.

'And you only have to do one other essay this week!'

Shock 3.

You get the idea.

From there on, things got easier and as I look back on my time at Oxford now, I cannot imagine doing any other degree. The basic grounding in analysis and the way I formulate thought in the working world to this day, at least for me, can be clearly linked to my time at Oxford and the study of PPE.

I am an investment banker living in London now, and have been for over 20 years (currently I work for Bank of America). I provide advisory and capital raising activities for clients all over the world. It is a lot of time on a plane (or at least it used to be) – from Tokyo to Timbuktu, from Calgary to Cape Town and all points in between. I meet a more varied set of people from different cultural backgrounds than I could ever have imagined and again would observe that the PPE degree I read (more focused on Philosophy and Economics in my case) and the broad reading it required (along with of course vigorous discussion in tutorials) have proved to be of invaluable use to me in finding ways to make bridges with the people that I meet.

In a trust- and relationship-oriented business like the one in which I work, I cannot think of anything more useful.

I would highly recommend the degree to anyone and everyone – its uses and benefits are almost limitless.

1997

Raj Nihalani (1997)

I applied to read PPE while I was living in Hong Kong. This was a time of transition, with the sovereignty over Hong Kong transferring from the United Kingdom to China on 1 July 1997. I was fascinated by the opportunity to learn about the world through these different lenses, and to observe and understand the changes that were taking place in Hong Kong from a broader perspective.

The PPE degree offered an incredible array of learning, with courses ranging from Development Economics to Philosophy of Religion. I am very grateful to have been exposed to so many different disciplines, and to have been given the freedom to delve into new areas as I discovered them. I think studying PPE has given me the ability to look at problems with a very wide lens, and to seek solutions which are simple, actionable and sometimes even 'Logical'.

I have spent much of the last 20 years since I completed my PPE degree working in the financial services. I moved back to Hong Kong in 2006 to help set up an Asian presence for Marshall Wace (a UK-based hedge fund) and have spent the last nine years as a Managing Director at Tybourn Capital Management, an Asia-based global growth investment firm.

Katerina Potamianos (1997)

I remember matriculation day, feeling like an imposter that somehow bluffed her way into Somerville. I kept quiet during my first tutorials but as the first year progressed, I was able to find my footing and relax into the most enriching and rewarding learning experience.

I vividly recall sitting on a comfortable sofa, in the quarters of some of the world's leading academic minds, conversing about International Relations, Economics and Sociology. I never quite got over the fact that, as an undergraduate, I got to have private audiences with such distinguished professors. I also recall hours of cycling around town, collecting books from the various libraries that stocked my subjects, and long days spent in the awe-inspiring PPE Reading Room, handwriting my essays.

Apart from helping me grow on a personal level, my degree has opened doors throughout my career. I have worked as a consultant for Accenture and Barclays, and am now based in Greece where I lead development projects in Real Estate and Tourism. At every step, it is my PPE degree that has caught the attention of recruiters and, more recently, investors.

It is a privilege to be part of the PPE community in its centenary year.

1998

Heather Grabbe (1998)

Having pursued a career in academia, think tanks and public policy largely concerned with the EU and European politics, it seems strange now that I almost never heard the words 'European Union' during my degree course. We studied the Soviet Union (which collapsed just after Finals in 1991) and the politics of France, the UK and US; yet the PPE curriculum of that time barely acknowledged the EU's existence. The dominant political questions of the day were about the policies of Reagan and Thatcher, which most of us feminist lefty Somervillians opposed. I remember tutorial discussions about whether Gorbachev's reforms were merely window dressing to fool the West. When the Berlin Wall fell and Tiananmen Square turned bloody in our second year, there were few opportunities for PPE undergraduates to learn about Central Europe, East Germany or Chinese domestic politics. There was no sense that the EU might play an important role in the aftermath of the Cold War.

I loved philosophy and still find fascinating the range of questions from Aristotle to Wittgenstein, from ethics to chaos theory. Lesley Brown and James Logue were encouraging tutors who pushed us to seek our own answers to ancient and seemingly intractable philosophical questions, which seems almost hubristic now.

PPE taught me invaluable skills that I still use every day: how to review rapidly a large body of material, draw your own conclusions and spot the right questions to ask. This training was vital when I moved into policy making in the European Commission, following a decade of academic and think tank research. In my current role of lobbying the EU for the Open Society Foundations on human rights, democracy, and the digital and climate transitions, I often use that PPE essay crisis method of surveying a wide field of issues and weaving points into a coherent narrative. I've stayed connected to academia, now as a Visiting Professor at University College London and the Catholic University of Leuven, valuing the depth of serious research beneath the froth of politics.

1999

Elise McAuley (1999)

'PPE is a sound choice if you are not sure what you want to do as it will provide you with many options.' Good advice, well received. And besides I imagined that in retrospect Vera Brittain would surely have preferred PPE over Modern History. Her Testament of Youth had made a deep impression and her personal story was an inspiration.

20 years on and to be honest the details of my three-year course of study are very hazy. I am especially thankful to Mrs Brown for her Introduction to Ethics. Although I have read very little philosophy since, a solid grounding goes a long way.

In the end, my Economics credentials were strong enough to lead on to a master's in Development Economics and eventually a position with the Papua New Guinea Department of Trade and Industry as an Overseas Development Institute Fellow. Surely this is not a path I could have chartered for myself aged 18; even if I had been so inclined.

Thank you PPE for your gift of many options. I continue to enjoy the ride.

Ian Mulheirn (1999)

I think my parents told me to read PPE (rather than a science) mostly because I wouldn't stop arguing with them about politics. That, together with the decision to apply

to Somerville, turned out to be one of the best decisions I have ever made. I have many great memories of my time at Oxford – if a little hazy from the first year – and the privilege of discussing fascinating questions with some excellent tutors both within college and beyond. Come the third year, I clearly remember emerging from one tutorial feeling like I'd been let in on a secret about how to think.

The training PPE gave me has been invaluable. I went on to do an MSc in Economics, an experience that was immeasurably enriched by the interdisciplinary grounding I gained at Somerville. Subsequently that breadth has served me well in roles at HM Treasury, running a Westminster think tank, at an economic consultancy and now more than ever in my role as Executive Director for UK Policy at the Tony Blair Institute.

2000

Daniel Tudor (2000)

I look back on Somerville PPE with a sense of both gratitude and shame. It was an extraordinary privilege to be taught by some of the most brilliant people in their respective fields, and yet at the same time I feel I lacked the maturity back then to really make the most of it. I sometimes wish I could go back again. I'd raid the library first and get the pick of the reading list; think deeply about the subject; take the time to prepare a nuanced and clever essay; read it out in the tute with a sense of great self-confidence; and then still have my argument destroyed in about ten seconds by Lois McNay. And I would enjoy it.

It was only after I left that I realised how much I learned, in spite of my laziness. Above all, PPE taught me logic – not in the academic philosophy sense, but rather in that of determining whether an argument works or not. It's amazing how much nonsense argument and opinion we are exposed to these days, but three years of PPE is like a vaccine against it. Also, the essay format forced me to learn how to write clearly and quickly. Without these two skills, there is no way I could have become a journalist, or written books; I would have also struggled more in business and in life in general. So thank you Somerville, and thank you to my tutors.

2003

Nils Hägerdal (2003)

After Oxford I worked briefly as an investment banker in London, but found the PPE withdrawal symptoms rather challenging and decided to pursue postgraduate studies in politics. On the advice of Jennifer Welsh I applied widely among universities in the United States, and a master's degree at the University of Chicago eventually took me to Harvard for my doctoral studies. Today, after almost 18 months of fieldwork in Lebanon, I am a postdoctoral researcher at Tufts in Boston studying armed conflict in the Middle East.

PPE instilled some important lessons: question everything, but listen attentively; always keep an open mind, but especially in situations where you have a firm opinion. At Oxford these maxims emerged as I studied political sociology and public economics with a focus on Western Europe, but they have been equally valuable when learning about ethnic conflict, civil wars, and US foreign policy in the Arab world.

2008

David Blagbrough (2008)

I still remember being accepted to read PPE – the letter arrived on a Saturday and I was working at the local fruit and veg stall. My parents called excitedly and offered to drive the letter down so I could open it in my lunch break; I said I would finish my shift first, but did accept the offer of a lift home!

My main memories of PPE are split between (i) tutorials, and (ii) the boathouse and the Oxford Union. I recall one particular tutorial with Lesley Brown where we were comparing a concept in one of Aristotle's works to another (which at least I was suggesting was the same, but I think that the room disagreed). What makes the memory striking is that it was late one Thursday afternoon; I had thrown a dinner jacket on as I had an event immediately after and my tute partner had come straight from blues boxing

training (with associated black eye). Lesley, very kindly, did not comment on anything other than our essays...

PPE taught me to think. It taught me to consider my position on any given subject and interrogate why I hold that view – as well as recognizing competing views and arguments. The freedom involved in the course also (and I by no means got it right straight away) taught me to balance different commitments and demands on my time (and I apologise to any tutor unfortunate enough to read an essay where I had got this balance wrong). Finally, PPE – and Somerville in particular – helped knock some of the rough edges off by exposing me to a wide range of ideas, people, and experiences; for that, I will be forever grateful.

Since graduating, I've spent ten years working in Finance. Currently I'm part of a structured finance team for a global bank, where the ability to solve complex problems by balancing competing requirements is central to every transaction. I'm involved in various access programmes that we support, providing practice university interviews to students as well as working with local schools in East London to encourage university applications.

2010

Sammy Talalay (2010)

I had never studied philosophy, politics or economics before arriving at Somerville, but I will tell anyone that asks that applying (and, of course, being accepted!) for PPE was the best decision I ever made.

It feels slightly fraudulent that my qualification suggests expertise in politics and economics, since I really ended up doing a degree in philosophy, with a bit of history (British Politics and Government since 1900) and government (Modern British Government) thrown in for good measure.

I was very lucky to be taught by some luminaries (Leslie Brown and Peter Millican) and several then-rising stars (Hilary Greaves and Jennifer Welsh), but my real philosophical awakening came in my third year, when my grasp of the philosophical approach finally clicked thanks to tutorials with Lee Walters (now at Southampton) and Daniel McDermott at Keble. I ended up doing a master's in philosophy after graduating and I am

still on the lookout for a niche that allows me to apply the phenomenal toolkit of analytic philosophy to slightly less rarefied topics than modal arguments for theism.

For now, however, I am enjoying my time working in the Civil Service, where I am currently the Parliamentary Clerk at the Ministry of Justice.

Tim Williams (2010)

I came to Somerville armed with a passion for politics and economics that survives today. What a privilege it was to have world experts like Jennifer Welsh listen to my ramblings on International Relations and to learn from Economics tutors like Donna Harris.

Another real joy of PPE was the variety of tutorial locations across the university. Whether it was a trip up the tower at LMH, a grand room at the end of some stone corridor in Jesus or Wadham, or sitting in Gillian Peele's house competing with her barking dog while debating civil service reform; each had a unique wow factor.

Upon graduating, I went into TV. I worked for Sky News for four years before joining ITV as producer of its live horse racing coverage, winning a BAFTA in 2018.

I suppose it's the flip side of what I expected – following sport for work, and blitzing weekly editions of *The Economist* for pleasure.

I'm in no doubt, however, that PPE has equipped me with the analytical and strategic skills, an ability to quickly absorb information and an understanding of the world that has helped my career no end.

How I would love to do it all over again!

2011

George O'Shea (2011)

I got into Somerville on a hope and a prayer – a hope from the Oxford bursary, and a prayer answered by the admissions tutor, who let me reapply after fluffing a maths A-level exam (me, that is, not the tutor).

Philosophy was mind-blowing, politics was fascinating, and economics was hard. But I loved every minute. Together, they taught me my hand might not exist, immigration was actually good, and graphs make the world a better place.

Nine years ago in Vaughan, I met the love of my life, Laura. We're getting married soon. She didn't study PPE but nobody's perfect.

In second year, I confidently told our lovely principal Alice that I'd get a First. I was knocked off my high horse as scraping a 2:1 was harder than I ever expected. I claim that this is because I forgot my calculator in the final Quantitative Economics exam, but the truth is, Alice, I never was any good at QE. Sorry.

Despite the calculator incident, I used my 2:1 to get into the Civil Service as a policy advisor. God help the government because I actually quite enjoy it.

Oh, and if anyone ever spotted googly eyes on the library security camera, that was me. I think Finals got to me a bit.

Youlin Yuan (2011)

I came to Somerville to read PPE after finishing my pre-college education in a Chinese-language environment in Shanghai. The weekly reading lists and essays for PPE came as a great shock to me. I still remember the sense of frustration receiving comments to my first general philosophy essay: I had felt proud about coming up with a novel theory to explain a decade-old philosophical conundrum; however, as the tutor correctly pointed out, my logic was confused and my language was imprecise (to put it mildly). I am very much indebted to all the tutors that taught me at Oxford for helping me transition and, of course, for all the exciting and enlightening discussions.

After graduating from Oxford, I went to study law at Yale Law School and have been practicing as a litigation and arbitration lawyer in Washington, D.C. since 2017. I represent

big tech companies in navigating antitrust and online speech issues, and sovereign states in investor-state arbitrations. What I have learned at Oxford, both substantive knowledge and research and writing skills, is still amazingly relevant to my work, and I feel immensely fortunate in having the opportunity to read PPE at Somerville.

2013

Shyamli Badgaiyan (2013)

Studying PPE profoundly shaped the course of my life. It is only years after graduating that I have come to fully appreciate the influence it has had on my worldview and path.

For one, I am deeply grateful for the sheer breadth, depth and rigour of the degree. I still can't quite describe how it feels to be 19 years old and thrown in a deep sea of knowledge that spans inflation targeting, John Stuart Mill and South Asian history, often all in one week. Some of my most profound memories of PPE are of time spent in solitude with dozens and dozens of books, engaging in ideas I could not fathom existed (and some of which I still don't grasp!) and views I did not know I had the power to articulate. Only after spending a few years in an ever-changing world have I come to appreciate the impact this has had on how I interpret the events around me and find my place within it. To this day, I credit whatever ability I have to be critical, empathetic and creative – whether it is while developing an argument at *The Economist*, engaging with opposing views during my MBA at Harvard or simply discussing the news with friends – to the many readings, red-line comments and debates during our weekly tutorials at Somerville, and conversations in hall afterwards. In a world that faces challenges such as political polarization, climate change, economic and racial inequality, I cannot be more thankful for this foundational training in understanding diverse but intersecting disciplines, engaging with dissimilar views, making robust arguments and crucially, articulating new paths forward.

Perhaps most importantly, I am thankful to the degree for providing me the humility to know how much there is that I do *not* know, but the curiosity to continue learning nonetheless. To this day, I jokingly tell my friends that I would love to 'do PPE again', certain that I would learn just as much the second (or third) time as I did the first. On the downside, the rigour of studying PPE at Oxford has raised the bar for many of my endeavors elsewhere, although I recognize this is nothing but an immense privilege to

bear. With this in mind, I hope to use the opportunity I was given eight years ago to study PPE at Somerville, lead its student body and engage with Somerville's India Centre, to go home one day to pursue a career in public service. In the meantime, I hope to continue to work 'live' in philosophy, politics and economics, through experience at *The Economist*, Goldman Sachs and a Lancet Commission on public health in India.

Alex Rattee (2013)

I have always loved that PPE encourages a childlike inquisitiveness to discover how the world really is, yet also a steely realism that serious work needs to be done if we are to improve it. I spent most of my degree consumed by exhilarating questions about the demandingness of our moral obligations to the global poor and whether there were good arguments in favour of the existence of God.

Discovering the Oxford-based effective altruism community which is all about using evidence and careful reasoning to work out how our resources can help others the most, was a major part of my Oxford experience and helped with the first question. On the second, my view ended up being that the balance of the philosophical arguments was in favour of theism but not overwhelmingly so. There was a wonderful Christian community in Oxford which I am still incredibly grateful for, particularly the Somerville and University Christian Union which I was actively involved in.

After staying in Oxford to complete a master's in philosophical theology, I joined the Civil Service as part of the Fast Stream. I now work as a trade negotiator at the Department of International Trade where most recently I was the lead tariff negotiator on the UK-Japan trade deal. Nothing was better preparation for the cut and thrust of trade negotiations than the experience from tutorials of having to defend hastily written essays from the night before!

2014

Sam Billington (2014)

When I first got dragged into Somerville by an enthusiastic Open Day Helper, I quickly knew that was where I wanted to study PPE. But it was discussing Behavioural Finance with Donna Harris that made me certain. One snowy interview experience later (including discussions about Spice Girls and Obi-Wan Kenobi with future tutors) I found myself in Oxford!

The most enjoyable aspect of PPE for me was the variety. A day including lectures on the French Fifth Republic, Plato's Cave, and UK Monetary Policy, became totally normal. I was one of only a few students who continued all three subjects, and I relished the breadth as well as the depth of my studies.

Much to my tutors' chagrin, I was often found applying skills of analytical and reasoned argument outside of their offices, within the Oxford Union, Somerville JCR, or The Oxford Student. These experiences have given me many good anecdotes, whether it's debating wittiness vs prettiness with Miss Universe, the merits of independence for Oxford with Nick Clegg, or talking football tactics with Harry Redknapp!

When I eventually knuckled down – my Finals experience demonstrated the collegial atmosphere that had been built within my Somerville PPE cohort throughout the three years. While it was a relief to return my 100 library books, a part of me would happily have done it all again.

I now work for an Investment Bank, utilising skills from all three PPE disciplines. Additionally, I am Vice-Chair of School Governors at a school in Hackney, and work with various educational charities, helping others to access the same opportunities that I enjoyed so much.

2015

Ellie Fielding (2015)

I have hugely fond memories of PPE at Somerville and my course mates are still some of my best friends. There's something really special about learning about politics and philosophy in a place that has such a strong history of feminism, intersectionality and empowerment.

I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to discuss concepts about how we should organise our societies in such an environment and with tutors who still hold these values. I really got into the political theory and social policy sides of the course during my time at Oxford: studying PPE at Somerville gave me the confidence and skills to analyse these social issues.

These Somervillian influences have definitely shaped my ambitions to work in the public sector. I currently work as an analyst in Financial Stability for the Bank of England, and alongside my work I am studying for a MSc in central banking and financial regulation.

Isobel Hettrick (2015)

Since graduating in 2018 I have worked for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and at the end of March I will have completed their Graduate Training Scheme. The Scheme has enabled me to work in a variety of roles across the FCA, from supervising Principal Trading Firms to working within the Economics Department. I am currently on secondment at Keefe Bruyette and Woods, working in Equity Research.

Throughout all of my rotations I have been required to quickly assimilate a lot of quantitative and qualitative data and to utilise critical thinking skills. Studying PPE definitely gave me the confidence and experience to do so!

PPE was the obvious degree choice for me, having studied politics and economics at sixth form. My favourite papers were British Political History from 1900 and British Economic History from 1900. I particularly enjoyed studying the same historic events from different approaches. The ability to consider issues and problems from different viewpoints has been very useful in my career so far, as my work often impacts and involves multiple stakeholders.