

## Considerations for tutorial selection

### Oxford University and tutorial structure

The Oxford academic year consists of three terms, with eight weeks of instruction in each term. Students normally meet with their tutor once a week, and write one essay per week, or have one problem set due each week. The three terms are Michaelmas (October-December), Hilary (January-March), and Trinity (April-June). The tutorial system at Oxford University is the crucial ingredient of the Oxford University education

- In a typical tutorial session, called a “tute”, the tutor will assign their students a significant amount of reading to undertake each week (sometimes a dozen or more books and an equal number of articles) on a topic related to the general theme of the paper/course.
- After reading through this material, a student will “prepare an essay” (write a paper), which is then discussed with the tutor (and often read aloud) at their weekly meeting. Or, if the tutorial is in the Sciences/Maths, problems sets may be assigned weekly.
- A tutorial typically consists of just the student and their tutor, or perhaps one or two other students

### Studying at Oxford University

Your experience as a liberal arts student is vastly different from the typical Oxford undergraduate. The typical Oxford undergrad

- spends three years (occasionally four) **studying a single subject, and nothing else**
- does not receive grades for individual tutorials
- is required to attend a lecture series offered by the various “faculties” (departments). These lectures may be offered during terms other than when the tutes are scheduled.
- takes exams at the end of their first year and at the end of their third year.
- uses tutorials and lectures to prepare for these exams.

### Choosing your tutorial

A wide variety of subjects are available at Oxford. Some of these are required for the degree in certain fields; others are optional (often known as “options,” “special subjects,” or “further subjects”). Most of the tutorial courses listed in the *Williams College Catalog* are standard sets of tutorials ( “papers”). Their presence in the Williams catalog means that, in the past, Directors have succeeded in securing tutors to teach these tutorials. However, demand, leave patterns, and many other constraints mean that not all of these tutorial subjects can be staffed in all terms.

Courses not listed in the catalog or the *How to Make Preliminary Tutorial Choices* guide can be taken by WEPO students as long as they are “papers” that are regularly offered at Oxford as either a required or optional part of the degree in various disciplines. Normally what we would call independent study courses at Williams are not available in Oxford, although occasionally it has been possible to arrange teaching of special topics. Finding tutors to teach material that varies from the standard degree “papers” offered by the University can be extremely difficult. Consequently, in most fields it is only possible to staff tutorials that are regularly offered Oxford degree papers.

### Resources for choosing tutorials

- *How to guide*
- *Williams College Catalog*

- [www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/course-listing](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses/course-listing) In this context, “course” refers to a course of study (e.g., Economics; Politics; English). When you click on a “course” you should be able to find out about some of the standard “papers” (i.e., tutorial topics) that are available.
- [www.ox.ac.uk](http://www.ox.ac.uk) - to get access to an individual “Faculty” (department). Some faculty pages list the papers taught. There also may be an “Undergraduate Handbook” (typically a large .PDF file), usually under the tab for “current students”. This should lead you to the various papers available to undergraduates.