
Alexandru Volacu

STUDENT VISITOR – TRINITY TERM 2015



My name is Alexandru Volacu, I am a PhD Candidate in Political Science and a Teaching Assistant at the National School of Political and Administrative Studies, in Bucharest, Romania.

I was a Visiting Doctoral Student at the Department of Politics and International Relations (and also affiliated with the Centre for the Study of Social Justice) at the University of Oxford during Trinity Term in 2015.

While I come from a political science background, I primarily work in political philosophy, focusing on theories of distributive justice. The time spent at the Department was extremely enjoyable and productive, on a number of different aspects. First of all, I managed to attend a considerable number of academic events, *i.e.*

conferences, workshops, seminars, public lectures etc., which I highly recommend you make one of your top priorities as an Academic Visitor.

The Department of Politics and IR at Oxford is consistently ranked amongst the top three political science departments in the world on both educational and research criteria, and the very high academic level of these events reflects this status, as top global scholars working on basically every political science sub-field are speakers in such events on a weekly and even daily basis. Aside from this type of lectures, especially if you are a young researcher, you might also want to take up the opportunity to attend the workshops and seminars organized by various faculty members within the Department, usually on a weekly basis (*e.g.* the DPIP Political Theory Research Seminar or the CSSJ Workshops).

While many of these events are publicised on the departmental website, it is also helpful for an incoming visitor to get in touch with some of the current graduate students or Post-docs (or with her mentor or members of the administrative staff, who are always very prompt and helpful in their replies), as they usually have a broader picture of the events scheduled to take place that term within a specific area of study and can point you in the direction of those that best fit your interests.

Forging relations with people working on similar topics is also a very important aspect of academic life and there are plenty of opportunities to do so at Oxford, especially during (and after) weekly workshops and seminars. Both young researchers (JRFs, Post-docs, PhD candidates or MA students) and established scholars generally respond in a friendly and helpful manner to inquiries and are eager to engage in discussions on topics of relevance for your research, so do not be afraid to seek them out and interact with them.

Finally, especially if you want to focus on research activities during your stay, the electronic and printed bibliographical resources offered by the University and the Bodleian Libraries are quite impressive, granting access to basically any book or article needed for your research.

My advice, as a former visitor, would be to try and strike a balance between the many opportunities provided by the department during your stay, from attending academic events to socializing with colleagues in the community and to pursuing your own individual research, since each of these are only parts of the wonderful and unique experience that attending the DPIR at Oxford as an Student Visitor can offer.