



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown
Economics Category - Recommended Readings



Economics Q3

Should Oxford lower its admissions standards for the sons and daughters of generous benefactors?

Recommended Readings

Historical Sources

1. John Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education" (1693)

Examines the purpose and principles of education

Argues for education based on character development and rational thinking

Provides philosophical grounding for merit-based approaches to educational opportunity

2. John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" (1859)

Explores principles of individual liberty and social utility

Discusses education as a means of developing autonomous individuals

Offers philosophical framework for balancing individual rights with social goods

3. Michael Sandel, "What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets" (2012)

Examines the ethical boundaries of market principles in non-market domains

Analyzes the corrupting influence of money in areas traditionally governed by non-market norms

Provides philosophical framework for evaluating the ethical dimensions of "donor advantage"

4. John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice" (1971)

Presents the "veil of ignorance" thought experiment for designing just institutions

Argues for fair equality of opportunity as a principle of justice

Offers theoretical basis for evaluating admissions policies from a justice perspective



Academic Research on University Admissions

1. Anthony Lising Antonio and Neal Perea Way, "College Student Access: How Stratification Creates Inequality" (2022)

Examines patterns of social reproduction in elite university admissions

Analyzes various forms of advantage in college access

Provides empirical data on socioeconomic factors in university admissions

2. Daniel Golden, "The Price of Admission" (2006)

Investigates preferential treatment for wealthy donors' children at elite universities

Documents specific cases of admissions advantages

Provides investigative journalism on "development admits" practices

3. Natasha Kumar Warikoo, "The Diversity Bargain" (2016)

Compares admissions practices and meritocracy concepts at elite universities

Examines student attitudes toward various forms of admissions advantage

Provides cross-cultural perspective on merit and access in higher education

4. Paul Tough, "The Years That Matter Most: How College Makes or Breaks Us" (2019)

Examines the role of higher education in social mobility

Analyzes various barriers to equitable access in university admissions

Provides contemporary context for debates about merit and advantage

Oxford-Specific Resources

1. Oxford University, "Annual Admissions Statistical Report" (most recent)

Provides data on Oxford's current admissions demographics

Examines access initiatives and their outcomes

Offers baseline data for understanding current admission patterns



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2. History of the University of Oxford (multiple volumes)

Documents historical patterns of access and exclusion at Oxford

Examines the evolution of Oxford's relationship with wealth and privilege

Provides historical context for current debates about admissions

3. Office for Students, "Access and Participation Plans - University of Oxford" (most recent)

Outlines regulatory requirements for equitable access

Documents Oxford's commitments to widening participation

Provides policy context for admissions debates

4. Oxford University Development Office, "Philanthropic Impact Report" (most recent)

Documents the role of philanthropy in Oxford's operations

Examines how donations are used and their institutional impact

Provides context for understanding the importance of benefactors

Comparative and International Perspectives

1. Jerome Karabel, "The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton" (2005)

Examines historical practices of preferential admissions at elite American universities

Documents how definitions of "merit" have shifted over time

Provides comparative perspective on donor influence in admissions

2. Thomas Piketty, "Capital in the Twenty-First Century" (2013)

Analyzes mechanisms of intergenerational wealth and privilege transfer

Examines education's role in either challenging or reinforcing inequality

Provides economic framework for understanding elite reproduction

3. OECD, "Equity in Education" (most recent)



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Compares educational access across developed nations

Examines policy approaches to educational equity

Provides international benchmarks for evaluating access policies

Contemporary Commentary and Case Studies

1. The Sutton Trust, "Access to Advantage" (most recent report)

Documents socioeconomic gaps in UK university admissions

Analyzes various forms of advantage in the admissions process

Provides data on contextual admissions outcomes

2. "Operation Varsity Blues" Case Documentation and Analysis

Examines recent high-profile admissions scandal in the US

Documents illegal means of securing preferential admissions

Provides cautionary perspective on corrupting influence of wealth in admissions