



# Master in Public Policy (MPP) Optional Summer Reading

Many congratulations on receiving your offer to the MPP programme!

In the months leading up to the start of the MPP, you may be thinking about embarking on some preparatory reading. No doubt you will have many other demands on your time, but it can help to get into the mindset for studying, familiarise yourself with different disciplines, and even get ahead in the disciplines for which you feel least prepared.

This guide provides some indicative readings that can help you prepare. We have organised this list according to the six MPP core courses. For each course we have identified a few books that are of a lighter nature, something that could easily be enjoyed as 'holiday' reading. These are labelled **'holiday reading'**.

We have also identified some technical (yet still accessible) books for each course. These are designed for more in-depth preparatory studying. These are labelled **'more technical read'**.

There is no obligation on you to buy these books or read them in full. We have provided them merely as a guide to help structure any pre-programme reading. Perhaps you might pick one or two, maybe in areas that interest you or in which you think you need to brush up. Perhaps you might dip into some. So no pressure, no obligation. We have provided links to Amazon in case you wish to purchase one or some.

It is also a good opportunity to get into the habit of reading actively (as opposed to passively or recreationally). Below you will find some tips on how to practice active reading for academic study. This will help to translate your reading throughout the year into more effective argumentation and find your analytical and critical 'voice'. So continue scrolling down, and we hope you find this material useful.

**Kind regards,**

**Dr Simon Bastow | MPP Programme Director**

***School of Public Policy***

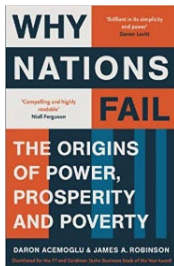
## Some Tips on Practicing 'Active Reading'

This programme is intensive, and throughout the programme we'll be asking you to get to grips with a large body of literature—with several different literatures, actually. It might seem overwhelming at first, but there are some simple techniques you can use to help you to get more out of whatever it is you're reading, and to get through it faster. Here are five tips:

Here are five tips:

- 1. Try to have a good idea about why you are reading something and what you hope to find out.** Ask yourself what it is you think you know about the subject, and what you don't know and are looking to find out from the text. If you can establish a set of rational and emotional expectations right off the bat, you are more likely to engage with whatever it is you're reading.
- 2. Get an overview of the 'big picture' before you begin your reading in depth.** Give yourself a few minutes to find the essential argument in the first or last pages of a book ... or the back cover! The contents page may also help you decipher the narrative flow.
- 3. Think creatively about how to record, and remember, what you've just read.** After you finish a book chapter or article, see if you can write down a 'strapline' for it—a summary that captures the essence of what the chapter or article was saying—using no more than 140 characters. Can you encapsulate the argument in a 2x2 matrix? Can you render it graphically?
- 4. Write or speak your notes in your own words.** After you read a text, put it aside and try to compose your notes independently, without looking back at what you had jotted down while you were reading. You may occasionally want to write out a quotation verbatim, but copying large amounts of text is passive behaviour. Try to avoid this.
- 5. The 20:1 rule: For every 20 minutes you spend internalising a text, try to spend at least 1 minute externalising it.** If you spend a couple of hours reading two chapters of a book, find a way to spend at least 6 minutes talking to yourself (or someone else) about what you have read.

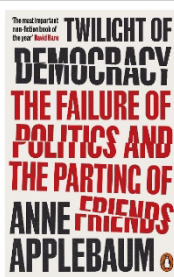
# PP401 - Political Science for Public Policy



Daron Acemoglu & James Robinson (2013), *Why Nations Fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty* (Profile Books) [HOLIDAY READ]

- a rich and diverse book with a strong central message that political institutions are key.
- dip into chapters or read straight through – beware that it might not fit into beach bag!

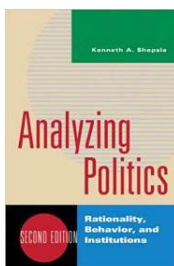
Watch [James Robinson TEDx talk](#) on Why Nations Fail. Daron Acemoglu on the [same topic](#).



Anne Applebaum (2021) *Twilight of Democracy: The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends*, (Penguin) [HOLIDAY READ]

- A readable and expansive discussion of political nationalism and the rise of right-wing authoritarianism.
- What lies behind the re-emergence of nationalism in many democratic countries?

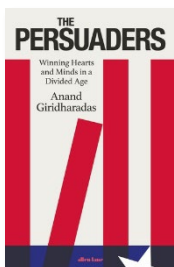
Watch [Anne Applebaum](#) reflect on how the war in Ukraine has been going and what we can expect in the future.



Ken Shepsle (2010) *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*, (Norton & Company) [TECHNICAL READ]

- Explains how 'rational choice' methods can help structure our thinking about political institutions.
- Shepsle provides us with a set of critical tools for analysing any political problem. We'll be applying—and adapting—these tools together in PP478. But be warned: these are not the only set of critical tools out there. Let the debate(s) begin!

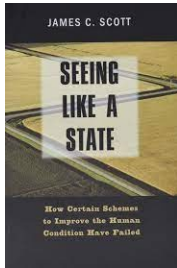
Watch [Ken Shepsle](#) explain what it takes to be a great leader.



Anand Giridharadas (2023) *The Persuaders: Winning Hearts and Minds in a Divided Age*, (Vintage Books) [HOLIDAY READ]

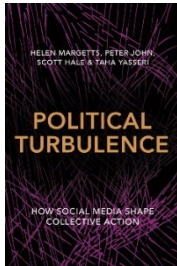
- The author takes us inside today's culture wars and explains how our societies have lost the ability to resolve the disagreements that divide us.

Watch [Anand Giridharadas](#) try to persuade us to buy his new book.



**James Scott (1998), *Seeing Like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*, (Yale University Press)  
[TECHNICAL READ]**

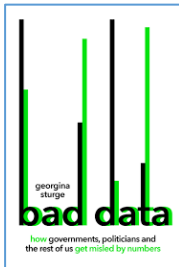
- another rich and expansive book that examines modern state-making
- read the first chapter and then dip into others (or read the whole book!)
- why do large programmes of State-making and social reform so often end in failure? And what are the lessons for State in the making?



**Helen Margetts et al. (2016), *Political Turbulence: How social media shape collective action*, (Princeton University Press)  
[TECHNICAL READ]**

- fascinating analysis of the impact of digital and social media on conventional paradigms of the modern State and democracy
- explore opportunities and limitations for successful collective action through social media

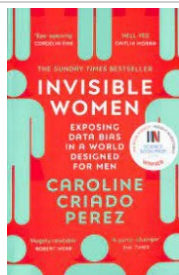
# PP402 - Quantitative Methods for Public Policy



## Georgina Sturge (2022) *Bad Data* (The Bridge Street Press) [HOLIDAY READ]

- Back to the data: Another cautionary tale, beautifully illustrated with—big surprise—lots of data

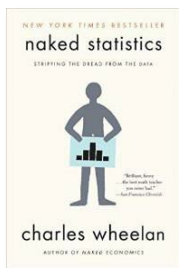
Check out [Georgina Sturge's](#) gorgeous graphic using data to illustrate where refugees to the UK have been coming from since the early '90s



## Caroline Criado Perez (2020), *Invisible Women: Exposing data bias in a world designed by men* (Vintage) [HOLIDAY READ]

- First things first. Before you start (or re-start) running regressions, it's worth taking a harder look—an uncomfortable look—at the data you'll be crunching. Where do your numbers come from? Might they be biased in some fundamental way?

Watch [Caroline Criado Perez](#) expose the gender data gap.



## Charles Wheelan (2013) *Naked Statistics*, (Norton & Company) [HOLIDAY READ]

- Grounded in theory, but eminently readable. Take it to the beach!
- If you like the way Wheelan undresses statistics, you should [see him strip down economics](#).

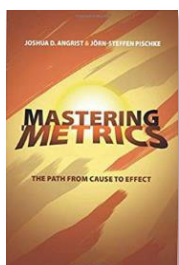
Watch [Charlie Wheelan](#) tell the story of how he came to write this book.



## Scott Cunningham, *Causal Inference: The Mixtape*, (Yale Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

- Accessible and very readable introduction to econometrics
- With interactive elements
- A popular primer amongst the lawyers who join the MPP

Watch Prof Scott Cunningham talk about [Causal Inference](#).

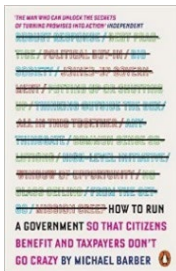


## Joshua B. Angrist & Jörn-Steffen Pischke (2014) *Mastering 'Metrics': The Path from Cause to Effect*, (Princeton University Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

- This book's chapters cover the key elements of econometrics. It's a bit more technical than the previous selections. Don't worry if some of the material is too challenging. You'll get there!

Watch [Joshua Angrist](#) defending econometrics, and here's his [instructive cartoon](#) explaining how to master it.

# PP403 – Public Management



Michael Barber (2016), *How to run a government: So that citizens benefits and taxpayers don't go crazy*, (Penguin) [HOLIDAY READ]

- interesting and engaging on practical challenges of delivering change in public services
- written by an expert who has worked at the heart of British government and in many other countries
- his mantra is that public services is all about DELIVERY!

Watch a panel discussion with Sir Michael Barber on [how to run a government](#)



Christopher Hood (2000), *The art of the state: Culture, rhetoric and public management*, (Oxford University Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

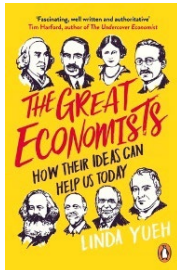
- a classic public management text written by one of the leading public management scholars
- gives you a framework for understanding any aspect of public policy



Christopher Hood & Helen Margetts (2007), *The Tools of Government in the Digital Age*, (Palgrave) [TECHNICAL READ]

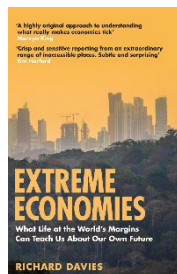
- a superb book to help you think about the toolkit that governments have available to tackle public policy problems.

## PP404 – Economics for Public Policy



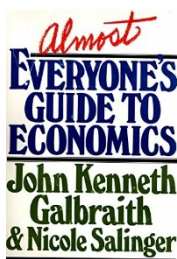
Linda Yueh (2019), [The Great Economists](#) (Penguin) [HOLIDAY READ]

- Yueh explores the thoughts of economists from Adam Smith and David Ricardo through Joan Robinson and Milton Friedman to Douglass North and Robert Solow.



Richard Davies (2020), [Extreme Economies](#) (Penguin) [HOLIDAY READ]

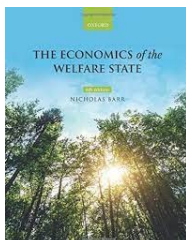
- Richard's book on some of the most extreme environments on earth; these places help us understand topics like money, markets and GDP, and trends including demographics, technology and inequality.



John Kenneth Galbraith and Nicole Salinger (1978), [Almost Everyone's Guide to Economics](#) (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) [TECHNICAL READ]

- An old book but easily accessible second-hand and remains the best introduction to economics.

## PP405 – Public Policy Applications

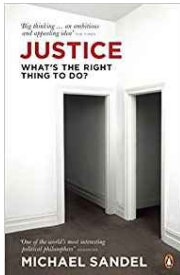


Nick Barr (2020), [The Economics of the Welfare State](#) (Oxford University Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

- Influential textbook written by the convenor of the Policy Applications core course, Professor Nick Barr
- A clear and superb framework for applying economics to all manner of social policy problems



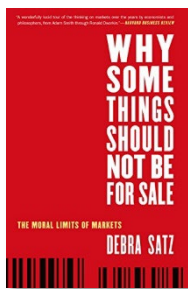
# PP406 – Philosophy for Public Policy



## Michael Sandel (2010), *Justice: What's the right thing to do?* (Penguin) [HOLIDAY READ]

- Provocative and readable introduction to political philosophy
- Helps you to organise the main 'isms' into a practical guide for thinking normatively

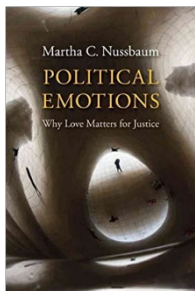
Watch Michael Sandel on [why we shouldn't trust markets in civic life](#)



## Debra Satz (2010), *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets* (Oxford University Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

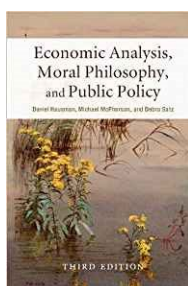
- Some of the chapters get quite technical, but they're worth the effort
- Debra Satz shows us why making public policy is ultimately, and inescapably, a philosophical enterprise.

Watch [Debra Satz](#) apply moral philosophy to a smorgasbord of (but often neglected) policy issues, everything from prostitution to selling your kidneys!



## Martha C. Nussbaum (2013) *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*, (Oxford University Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

- Like Satz's book, this one is beautifully written.
- Technical, yes – but still a page-turner. Just don't be fooled by the title. There is nothing touchy-feely about the analysis here, just the razor-sharp, wide-ranging philosophical thinking for which Martha Nussbaum is deservedly famous.



## Daniel Hausman, Michael McPherson, Debra Satz, (2016), *Economic analysis, moral philosophy and public policy*, (Cambridge University Press) [TECHNICAL READ]

- Chapters are technical but rewarding
- Illustrates beyond doubt that practicing economics is unavoidably a philosophical enterprise

Watch Debra Satz on [why some things should not be for sale.](#)