Some Recommended Philosophy Readings
for future students of
Computer Science and Philosophy

General Philosophy (all Philosophy students)
The first year “General Philosophy” course covers topics particularly associated with Descartes and Hume, who also feature strongly in the second year “History of Philosophy” course. The most useful editions are:

René Descartes  
Meditations on First Philosophy, with selections from the Objections and Replies  
(translated by John Cottingham, Cambridge, 1996)

David Hume  

The Introduction to this Hume edition gives a general overview of the development of philosophy over the relevant period, written with first year Oxford students in mind.

Turing on Computability and Intelligence (Computer Science/Philosophy)
In the final term of the first year, those taking Computer Science/Philosophy study an additional text which contributes to the “General Philosophy” examination paper, namely:

Alan Turing and Charles Petzold  
The Annotated Turing (John Wiley, 2008)

You might find it interesting to read this now, but don’t worry at all if you find it difficult and have to stop, since you’ll be much better placed to appreciate it later. The examination requirement – a minimum of one question – is easily covered in the final term. In the meantime, you could usefully read books such as:

Andrew Hodges  
Turing (Phoenix, 1997) – very short, but clear and informative

Ernest Nagel and James Newman  
Gödel’s Proof – a classic exposition, readable and not too formal

Jack Copeland  
Artificial Intelligence: A Philosophical Introduction (Blackwell, 1993)

Douglas Hofstadter  
Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid (Penguin, 1980)

Copeland’s book is an excellent and well-balanced introductory treatment of the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence. Hofstadter’s is a well-known and very stimulating exploration of the power and beauty of recursion. For many more books that could be put here, see the links at the bottom of http://www.philocomp.net/links.htm.

Logic (all Philosophy students)
The introductory logic course is now taught using Volker Halbach’s Logic Manual, published by Oxford University Press (2010). See also http://philosophy.hertford.ox.ac.uk/logic.htm. A useful book for background reading, which used to be the set text, is:

Wilfrid Hodges  
Logic (Penguin, 2001)

Background Reading
Perhaps the best way to prepare yourself for studying Philosophy is to spend time thinking for yourself about philosophical problems in the company of books such as:

Stephen Law  
The Philosophy Gym (Headline, 2004)

Simon Blackburn  
Think (OUP, 2001)

Laurence Goldstein  
The Philosopher’s Habitat (Routledge, 1990)

Bertrand Russell  
The Problems of Philosophy (OUP, 2001)

Edward Craig  

Also look for books by Julian Baggini and Nigel Warburton, who have produced several good introductions. The ideal philosophical preparation for Oxford is reading material that is clear and rigorous, but that also really grabs you, and helps you feel the interest and significance of the sorts of problems that Philosophy present.

Peter Millican, April 2015