



Murray Edwards  
College  
University of Cambridge

From Dr Anna Barford

Murray Edwards College  
Cambridge  
CB3 0DF

Porters' Lodge: 01223 762100  
Email: [ab423@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ab423@cam.ac.uk)  
[www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk](http://www.murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk)

## Dear Student

We, Dr Anna Barford and Dr Poul Chrisoffersen, are delighted to have made you the offer of a place to study Geography at Murray Edwards College. We look forward to welcoming you in October.

Anna will be supervising you for your first year human geography papers. You may know some of Anna's work already, as she was one of the team that put together worldmapper (<http://www.worldmapper.org>) – a set of maps very popular with school geography teachers. Anna's Geography webpage is <http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/barford/>

Poul is a Glaciologist based at the Scott Polar Research Institute, which is part of the Department of Geography. Poul researches ice sheet dynamics, glaciers interaction with the ocean, and the cryosphere's response to climate change. Poul does research in Greenland, Antarctica and Canada. His webpage is here: <http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/people/christoffersen/>

Before you arrive in Cambridge, it is important that you keep your geographical interests alive. Please read as much as you can, e.g. gaining a thorough knowledge of current affairs from newspapers and general interest magazines such as *The Economist* and *New Scientist*. There is also a very good website which gives detailed academic commentary on news items, and which is constantly changing, called [theconversation.com](http://theconversation.com). It's a good site to visit. Further, Oxford University Press publishes a series entitled *A Very Short Introduction to...*; many of which are relevant to geography, such as *Capitalism*, *Citizenship*, *Geography*, *Globalisation*, *Climate*, *The Ice Age*, and *Global Warming*. Some of you may also be familiar with Ted Talks – over 1,000 YouTube mini-lectures on a wide range of topics including global issues, science and technology, and business. These are well-worth watching and you can find the list at <http://www.ted.com/talks>.

In addition to the above suggestions, there are some very good books written for a non-academic audience which provide excellent background for a variety of geographical topics, a few of which are listed at the end of this letter. We would like you to choose one of these which you have not read before, **read it before you come to Murray Edwards** and **write a book review**, of about 1,000 words. The aim of a review is to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the book, through exploring the way its content is explained, interpreted and analysed. A review can be either positive or negative, depending on your assessment. Please consult this very helpful guide to reading for and writing a critical review, which can be found here, courtesy of UCL: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe-writing-centre/critical-reading-and-writing/critical-review>

Please feel free to choose any of the books on the list. You should send your review to Anna at [ab423@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ab423@cam.ac.uk) between October 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, as an email attachment. Please make sure that the name of your document is called 'surname-book-review.docx', where your surname is given; that way I won't confuse the different reviews. I look forward to reading these and will probably pass them on to all of you, so that you have recommendations for later reading.

[tutorial@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk](mailto:tutorial@murrayedwards.cam.ac.uk) | 01223 762100 | Murray Edwards College, Huntington Road  
Cambridge, CB3 0DF United Kingdom

Charity No.1137530 | VAT No. 732133275



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- *Nickel and Dimed* by Barbara Ehrenreich,
- *Hard Work* by Polly Toynbee.
- *Injustice – why social inequality persists* by Danny Dorling, and
- *The Spirit Level – why equality is better for everyone* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (all the above are relevant to first year economic and social geography)
- *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond (historical geography),
- *Eruptions that Shook the World* by our colleague Clive Oppenheimer (physical geography),
- *Song of the Dodo* by David Quammen (ecology and biogeography),
- *Two Mile Time Machine* by Richard Alley (on what ice cores tell us about climate history).
- *A History of the World in Twelve Maps* by Jerry Brotton
- *A Message from Martha: the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon and its relevance today*, by Mark Avery, on the need to re-forge our relationship with the natural world
- *Wild Hope*, by Andrew Balmford, powerful stories of successful conservation

There ought to be something for everyone in this list. You are not expected to buy any of these books; they should be widely available in public libraries.

We look forward to meeting with you in October,

Anna and Poul

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