Hello Freshers!

Congratulations on making your offer to study Economics here at Cambridge. My name is Sonny and I’m a second year economist and the economists and I are just going to give you an idea about the course you’re embarking upon this year as a fellow Downing college economist. As you all (hopefully) know by now, first year economics is divided into five modules: Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Quantitative Methods (Maths & Stats), Political and Sociological Aspects of Economics and British Economic History.

Micro is very different from what you’re used to at A-Levels or IB. The approach is very mathematical and whilst there are similarities in content, most of what you’ll be learning and focussing on, especially in the 2nd term is new. Macro is totally different from anything you did in A-Levels and very little of what you learnt will be applicable. Having said that, regarding both modules, it’s your analytical skills and logical thinking that’s important. In total, you will have 1 supervision per fortnight on each of the two modules so essentially you’ll be alternating from micro to macro each week.

Quantitative Methods is your mathematics and statistics and supervision-wise you’ll also be alternating from maths to stats week after week. What we can say about this module is that lectures aren’t great at teaching you maths; you don’t get that personal attention you will have had with a teacher but don’t worry. If you have any issues, help each other out or ask one of the 2nd years!

The last two modules are your essay-based modules. Again supervision-wise, you’ll be alternating between History one week and Politics the next. If you have very little experience writing essays then again don’t worry – you certainly aren’t and won’t be the only one. You’ll develop a whole new set of skills that will become important later on and gives the course a breadth that basically no courses besides economics can offer. Like a Historian, you too will have to go through reading lists and do your own research before you start planning and writing your essays.

So what does your timetable look like? You’ll have around 3 lectures every day and 6 supervisions per fortnight and if scheduled properly can be split into 3 a week. It may not seem like much but first year economics is certainly intense but the sheer breadth of the material you will delve into will make it as much rewarding as it is challenging. Lastly, please do not worry about preparing for the course over summer. Enjoy your well-deserved summer break and come back rested and ready for October. Myself and the other economists look forward to meeting you all!

Sonny

P.S. You are all automatically members of the Mathias society – Downing’s own economics society.