

## Maria Kasmirli Testimonial by David Potter

Starting an A-level course in Philosophy was a daunting and somewhat alien task inasmuch as that the skills involved in both dialogue and writing/constructing arguments were far removed from any of my studies at GCSE. Within a very short space of time, I can honestly say that I loved my Philosophy course; the topics were interesting and the atmosphere in the classroom during discussion was tangible. I put all of this down to my Philosophy tutor, Maria Kasmirli. Maria engaged every single one of us, her students, in debate, argument and contemplation. She did this with verve, enthusiasm and a clear passion for not only the subject, but for teaching too.

Being a 16 year old and having to do research and tasks for myself (as opposed to being in a school classroom environment) I was somewhat lost at times; Maria was always at hand to guide me as to where I could find resources and also as someone I could find support in. She would always stay behind after each session to talk to any one of us who had questions to ask or to discuss further, the topic of the session. It is in these post-class discussions that I really developed my skills in philosophical analysis and debate. Maria saw my enthusiasm and helped me to refine my newfound abilities in debate.

Maria invited me to Keele University, where she taught adult night classes in Philosophy, to help develop my skills in an even more difficult and advanced academic environment. She would re-assure me that I could 'hold my own' so to speak, and encourage me to participate in the discussions with highly intelligent adults. These discussions coincided with what I was studying at college and so I could utilise the 'higher thinking' arguments I'd devised at Keele into my A-level studies. Despite having time off to undergo a life-saving operation, I left college with a B in A-level Philosophy; I give a lot of the credit to Maria.

Maria would give me encouragement and tell me that I should pursue Philosophy at degree level. So, I applied for Keele University to study Philosophy and English Literature. I left Keele after three years with a 2:1 in Philosophy, narrowly avoiding a 1<sup>st</sup> Class degree by 4 marks. This then stood me in good stead to be accepted onto a PGCE and then to become a teacher; which I am today.

I feel that Maria was a great inspiration and influence on the way that my career path went; her constant encouragement, support and dedication to me as her student went far beyond that of a tutor. She urged me to participate in the night classes; she gave me advice outside of the classroom on how I could improve my essays and she invested a lot of her own time in ensuring that I could access resources and research materials for my exams. Maria is a truly professional, inspiring and a very conscientious teacher. I like to think that in some of my own practise as a teacher, I have taken on some of her traits, especially in the way that she went beyond the 'call of duty' to ensure that I was successful in my studies.

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