

**SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS**

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME**

**PHIL225: Metaphysics**

**2009 Trimester 1**

2 March to 1 July 2009

**Course Coordinator:** Dr Cei Maslen  
**Room:** Murphy Building, MY 707  
**Phone:** 463 6524  
**Email:** Cei.Maslen@vuw.ac.nz  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays 2.10-3pm during teaching weeks,  
and by appointment.

**Lecture Times:** 11-12.50, Mondays and Thursdays in trimester 1 (March 2<sup>nd</sup>-  
June 4<sup>th</sup>)

**Lecture Venue:** New Kirk 203 (at least until further notice)

**Course Delivery**

The course is taught by Dr Cei Maslen. There will be two lectures per week and no tutorials. The time and date of the final examination will be set by the university later in the trimester. It will be during the mid-year examination period (from Friday 12 June to Wednesday 1 July 2009.)

**Communication of additional information**

Any additional information or notices about this course will be posted on the course BlackBoard website (<http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz/>).

**Course content**

PHIL 225 is an introduction to central problems in metaphysics. The aim is to answer some fundamental questions about the nature of time, space, and free will, such as the following: What are space and time? Do the past and future exist or does only the present exist? Are time and space real? Is there a fourth dimension of space? Does time really flow? Could time go backwards? Did time have a beginning? Can we have free will and control over our actions, even if there is inherent randomness in the world?

A schedule of classes and readings is attached to this course outline (subject to change). Please refer to this while preparing for each class.

**Learning objectives**

Students passing this course will have gained familiarity with most central topics of metaphysics. They will also have acquired detailed knowledge of the Relational and Substantial theories of time, the Eternalism vs. Presentism debate, Newton's bucket argument, Kant's lone hand argument, McTaggart's argument, Zeno's paradox, the Fatalist

argument, the Dilemma of Divine Foreknowledge, the Consequence Argument for the incompatibility of free will and determinism, Kane's account of free will, Frankfurt's account of free will, and recent discussions of the Principle of Alternate Possibilities. More generally, the course provides the opportunity for students to strengthen their skills in argumentation, logical analysis, writing, and individual research (see below).

### **Graduate attributes**

As with all PHIL courses, learning objectives of this course contribute to the attainment of specific attributes in the areas of logical and critical thinking, conceptual analysis and rational and ethical decision-making. Please consult the Programme Prospectus 2009, p. 7, for more details or our website <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/phil/degrees/index.aspx>

### **Expected workload**

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 15 hours per week to PHIL 225. This includes 4 hours of lectures per week.

### **Essential texts:**

Please purchase both of the following:

(1) Robin Le Poidevin, *Travels in Four Dimensions: The Enigmas of Space and Time*, Oxford University Press, 2003 (\$44.95).

(2) PHIL 225 Course reader available from the Student Notes Centre, Student Union Building.

Textbooks can be purchased from Vicbooks located on the top floor of the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. Course readers (Student Notes) can be purchased from the Student Notes Shop in the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from the shop the day after placing an order online.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays)

10.00 am – 1.00 pm Saturdays.

Phone: 463 5515

### **Recommended Reading:**

See the schedule of classes and readings (attached).

### **Assessment requirements**

The assessment will be based on one essay, five in-class quizzes, and a final exam, as shown below.

(a) **One essay, around 2500 words**, worth 30% of total course marks, **due by Monday May 11<sup>th</sup> at 11am.**

WHERE TO HAND IN YOUR ESSAY: You must submit your essay electronically via *Blackboard*. Please consult *Blackboard* for instructions. Make sure you save your file as a Microsoft Word document. If you have trouble using this function, make sure you see me *before the due date*. As a back-up you must also submit a paper copy of your essay to me in

class or to the Philosophy Department office (MY 518), prior to the due-date.

ESSAY TOPICS are already posted on the course BlackBoard website and will also be handed out in class.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR ESSAY: If you get stuck, or don't know how to begin then come to see me in my office hours or make an appointment to meet with me at your convenience. I am also happy to look at rough drafts, provided that you give me some advance notice. See the handout "Assessment criteria" (at the front of your course reader) for general advice on writing a philosophy paper. Model papers written by previous students in my classes are also available on request. I highly recommend P. Martinich, *Philosophical Writing*, Blackwell, 1996.

HOW I MARK YOUR ESSAY: See the handout "Assessment Criteria..." (at the front of your course reader, and on the BlackBoard website) for a summary of the criteria that I use in marking essays.

(b) **In-class quizzes**, together worth 30% of total course marks. These are short-answer tests, taking the first 20 minutes of class time. The dates will be as follows (unless I inform you otherwise): Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup>, Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Thursday April 30<sup>th</sup>, Thursday May 14<sup>th</sup>, Thursday May 28<sup>th</sup>. There will be five quizzes, but only your best four quiz marks will count towards your final mark. The quizzes will be on material from the previous lectures and you will be given review questions in advance

(c) **A Final Exam**, worth 40% of total course marks, during exam period. This will be a three-hour, closed book, registry-administered examination. There will be a short-answer section and a short-essay section, and review questions will be handed out in class prior to the examination. The date of the examination is set later in the trimester by the Registrar but will fall within the date range of **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June to Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009**.

Preparing the essay will help students to gain in-depth knowledge of some of the course material and also provide opportunity for strengthening skills in argumentation, logical analysis, writing, and individual research. Preparing for the quizzes and the exam will help students to gain a solid understanding of the course material.

### **Penalties**

Students will be penalised for late submission of essays – a deduction of 5% for the first day late, and 2% per day thereafter, up to a maximum of 8 days. Work that is more than 8 days late can be accepted for mandatory course requirements but will not be marked. However, penalties may be waived if there are valid grounds (for example, illness [presentation of a medical certificate will be necessary] or similar other contingencies). In all such cases, prior information will be necessary.

### **Mandatory course requirements**

Each PHIL 225 student must at least submit the essay, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)

### **Statement on the use of Turnitin**

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the

School and subject to checking by Turnitin. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party.

### **Academic integrity and plagiarism**

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

### **GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

This website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates.