



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

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
PHIL 307: THEORIES OF EXISTENCE
2009 TRIMESTER 1
2 March to 1 July 2009**

Lecturer: Dr J L Shaw
Room: 613, Murphy Building Level 6
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Email: jay.shaw@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Lecture Times: Wednesday and Friday 1.00 pm – 3.00 pm
Venue: Hugh Mackenzie (HM) LT 104

Additional Information:

Any additional information or handouts will be announced, circulated in the lectures or via Blackboard.

Course content:

In this course we will discuss concepts of existence in modern and contemporary western philosophy. This paper will investigate the theories of existence in philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Frege, Russell, Moore, Quine, and existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre. Topics include singular and general existence, existence and essence, particular and universal, existence and predicate, existence and description, and the nature of human existence. See separate handout entitled 'Reading List and Course Outline'.

Learning objectives:

By the end of the course, students should:

- (a) Be familiar with some of the systems of western philosophy such as idealism, realism, and existentialism;
- (b) Have an understanding of theories of meaning and existence;
- (c) Be aware of metaphysical presuppositions of some of the contemporary philosophers such as Frege, Russell and Quine;
- (d) Be able to compare and contrast the arguments of philosophers.

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 on 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 18 hours per week to PHIL 307. This includes 3 hours of lectures and a one-hour tutorial per week.

Readings:**Essential texts:**

Textbooks can be purchased from Vicbooks located on the top floor of the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. Books of Reading are distributed from the Student Notes Shop on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to 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

Assessment requirements:

One three-hour Registry-conducted examination, carrying 40% of the final assessment, and two essays, each carrying 30% of the final assessment. The final examination is open-book and the mid-year examination period is from Friday 12 June to Wednesday 1 July 2009.

Final Essay: The first essay will be due on 1 May, 2009 and the second one will be due on 5 June 2009. An essay may not exceed 3,000 words. Overlaps between exam and essay topics are to be avoided.

Optional Essays:

Students are encouraged to write two essays during the course. These essays are optional and not part of the final assessment. They will be commented on and returned to the candidates with broad letter grades. The optional essays should be submitted on the following dates: 10 April 2009; 15 May 2009.

Method of Submission:

All final essays are to be submitted digitally in Blackboard.

Directions for submission via Blackboard:

- click on the 'Assignments' icon in the course menu (to the left of the page).
- select 'View/Complete Assignment' for the relevant assignment.
- click the 'Browse' icon, and then select your essay.

- then click 'Submit'.

Penalties:

Students will be penalised for late submission of essays – a deduction of 2% for the first day late, and 1% 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.

Return of assignments:

In-class tests, essays will be held in the main office of the Philosophy Programme (MY 518) and will be made available for pick-up *roughly 2 weeks* after the test. They can be picked up between 2.00 – 3.00 pm. Essays will have made available on Blackboard *roughly 2 weeks* after submission.

Essay Topics:

1. Plato on existence
2. Aristotle on categories
3. Kant on possibility, actuality and necessity
4. Existence and predicate
5. Existence and being
6. Frege on existence and identity
7. Russell on existence
8. Existence and singular terms
9. Existence and traditional logic
10. Definitions of existence
11. Existence and essence
12. Universals and resemblances
13. Existentialism and humanism
14. Existentialism and freedom
15. Heidegger on inauthentic and authentic existence
16. Sartre on bad faith.

Mandatory course requirements:

All students enrolled in the course will be entitled to sit the final examination hence there are no mandatory course requirements.

Attendance:

Students are advised to attend lectures and take an active role in discussion, although attendance is not a requirement for terms or assessment.

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.