



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

**PHILOSOPHY 403
METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY
2009 TRIMESTERS 1 and 2
2 March to 15 November 2009**

Course Coordinator: Dr. David Eng
Room: Murphy Building (MY), MY 716
Phone: 463 5699
Email: david.eng@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: By appointment

Lecturer: Prof. Max Cresswell
Room: MY 721
Phone: 463 6902
Email: max.cresswell@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: Thurs: 1:30-3:00

Lecturer: Dr. Ken Perszyk
Room: MY 718
Phone: 463 7410
Email: ken.perszyk@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: By appointment

Lectures: Thurs: 10:00-11:50
Venue: New Kirk 202
Tutorials: There are no tutorials for this course

Course Delivery

The course is divided into six-week blocks that each focus on three current issues in metaphysics and epistemology. The first six weeks (with Max Cresswell) will focus on the topic of World Time Parallels. The next six weeks (with David Eng) will on the issue of Extended Epistemic Agency. In the final six weeks (with Ken Perszyk), the course will look at the issue of Free Will and Responsibility.

Communication of Additional Information

Additional information or notices about this course will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Content

World Time Parallels (1st 6 weeks)

Common sense might tell you that what could have happened but never did is not as real as what did happen. But is common sense, here, a good guide? What did happen but is not happening now happened at another time. Similarly one can analyse what could have happened but never did as happening in another possible world. This section of the course investigates the parallel between (possible) worlds and times.

Extended Epistemic Agency (2nd 6 weeks)

The traditional view is that our epistemic agency does not extend beyond what is in our head. A number of philosophers have recently argued for an extended agency view based on the idea that our reliance on artefacts and others is not fundamentally different from our reliance on ordinary memory. We will explore the plausibility of these arguments and the nature of our epistemic agency by taking a close look at our reliance on memory, artefacts and others.

Free Will and Responsibility (3rd 6 weeks)

This section of the course will explore the contours of contemporary debates about free will and moral responsibility. We will examine Robert Kane's account of libertarian free agency; classical compatibilism and John Martin Fischer's "semi-compatibilism"; Derk Pereboom's "hard incompatibilism"; and Manuel Vargas's "revisionism".

Learning objectives

Students passing the paper should have acquired a reasonably detailed understanding of some of the central 20th and early 21st Century debates in metaphysics and epistemology, such as the parallel between (possible) worlds and times, the nature of our epistemic agency, and free will and responsibility.

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 is a 30-point course. One point typically equates to 10 hours of work over the semester. Thus, 300 hours of work spread over the two trimester period is recommended. Students will be expected to do weekly reading and to write three essays. This includes 2 hours of lectures per week.

Readings

Essential texts:

For the first two sections on World Time Parallels and Extended Epistemic Agency, articles will be posted on Blackboard and/or put on reserve in the main office. The section on Free Will and Responsibility will use *Four Views on Free Will* (Great Debates in Philosophy) by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas.

Assessment requirements

The overall grade is based entirely on three essays, an essay for each of the three six-week blocks. The three essays are each worth one third of the final mark. The essay topics will be posted on Blackboard at the beginning of each block.

Each essay should be approximately 3500 words.

Due dates:

Essay 1 is due by 5pm on Monday 13 July.

Essay 2 is due by 5pm on Monday 7 September.

Essay 3 is due by 5pm on Monday 2 November.

Penalties

Extensions will only be granted for serious documented reasons (e.g. illness or injury). Extensions must be obtained from Sondra Bacharach (or Nick Agar, if Sondra is unavailable) prior to the due date, unless unforeseeable circumstances prevent this.

Late essays will be penalised by five points per week (e.g., from 80 to 75 for an essay that is submitted after the due date but up to one week late).

Mandatory course requirements

There are no mandatory course requirements other than to obtain an overall passing mark.

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.