



**School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations
Te Hunga Aro Whakamuri**

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
Trimester 2, 2009**

**PHIL 215: Conspiracy Theory
CRN 8662**

STAFF

The Philosophy Programme's office is located in Murphy Building (abbreviated as MY) Room 518 and the direct phone number is (04) 463-5368.

Course Coordinator:	Stuart Brock	Lecturer:	Marc Wilson
Room:	MY 312	Room:	EA 501B
Phone:	463-6970	Phone:	463-5225
Email:	Stuart.Brock@vuw.ac.nz	Email:	Marc.Wilson@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours:	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:00-12:00pm	Office Hours:	By appointment

TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	13 July – 16 October
Study week:	19 October – 23 October
Examination period:	27 October – 15 November

Students who enroll in this course should be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the formal examination period stated above.

CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

Lectures:	Wednesday, 9:00-10:50 Friday, 3:10-4:00
------------------	--

Venue: Hunter Building, HU119

COURSE DELIVERY

Wednesday lectures will involve the presentation of course content. Friday lectures will be conducted in a seminar style. In some cases, the Friday lectures will be in question and answer format with an invited guest speaker (one of the main researchers whose work has been discussed in lecture). On other Fridays, students will be required to apply the skills they have been taught in class to the analysis of a particular conspiracy theory.

Attendance is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. Students will also be encouraged to participate in discussions online through the blackboard course page.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

COURSE CONTENT

This course examines philosophical and psychological issues pertaining to conspiracy theories. Questions addressed in the course will include: What is a conspiracy theory? What (if anything) is wrong with conspiracy theories and conspiracy theorists? What are the social, political, or psychological conditions most conducive to the development and maintenance of conspiracy theories? What are the 'functions' of conspiracy beliefs? This course will assist students in appropriately assessing the validity of conspiratorial theorising.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students passing this course should be able to:

1. distinguish conspiracy theories from other closely related theories of social phenomena;
2. evaluate the evidence in support of conspiracy theories; and
3. understand the conditions required for the development and maintenance of conspiracy theories.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

During the twelve teaching weeks of trimester, there will be three contact hours a week. Independent working hours during teaching weeks should average at twelve hours per week. During such periods, students will be expected to read nominated papers for lecture, research for the essays and revise for the exam. Independent work during other periods should equal roughly 40 hours in total.

READINGS:

Students must purchase the PHIL 215 course books. There will be two course books, the first of which is available now. There will also be additional readings accessible from the Blackboard course page.

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer. After week two all undergraduate student notes will be sold from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order 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. Customers will be contacted when they are available.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS:

The assessment will be based on the following: two essays (worth 30% each) and one final exam (worth 40%).

ESSAYS. Students are required to write two essays: one on the material covered in the first half of the course, and the second the material covered in the first half of the course. Each essay should be between 2500 and 3000 words. Each essay will count for 30% of your overall assessment. Essay questions and instructions will be posted on blackboard on or before August 13.

The first essay will be due on September 11, 2009 and is designed to partially assess how well students have met the first two learning objectives. The second essay will be due on October 16, 2009 and is designed to partially assess how well students have met the last learning objective. Essays should be submitted by 10:00am on the due date.

All essays must be submitted in two ways. A copy of the essay must first be submitted digitally via blackboard (select 'assignments' icon in the course menu). Make sure you save your file as a Microsoft Word document. The title of your file should follow the following format: last name, underscore, first name, dot, doc (for example: brock_stuart.doc). A hard copy of the essay must then be submitted to

the lecturer at the start of class on the dues date. The hard copy will not be graded unless there is a problem with your blackboard submission. In such cases, students will be required to re-enter an identical copy to blackboard at their earliest convenience.

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.

Late essays will only be accepted if the student has a legitimate excuse for failing to get it in on time. Requests for an extension should be made *before* the due date, and should be directed to the course coordinator. If the reason is medical, a doctor's certificate must accompany the request. An excuse will count as legitimate only if it can be demonstrated that you could not reasonably have been expected to hand the essay in on time given your circumstances. The course coordinator will decide what is reasonable in these circumstances.

FINAL EXAM: Students should also sit a two-hour closed-book exam that covers material from the whole course. The exam will account for 40% of your overall grade. It is designed to assess how well students have met all three of the learning objectives. Information about the examination rules and timetable can be found at the following web address: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/timetables/exam-timetable.aspx>. The examination period for second trimester 2009 runs from 27 October to 15 November.

PENALTIES

Late assignments will not be accepted and there will be no make up exam for those who miss the in-class test unless the student has a legitimate excuse (see above for more detail).

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is recommended but not required. It is the student's responsibility to catch up on missing material if they have missed a lecture. The lecturer will *not* cover material discussed in lectures on an individual basis.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are no mandatory course requirements for PHIL 215.

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>

As noted above, student work provided for assessment in this course will 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. 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.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

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>

The AVC(Academic) 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. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/Publications.aspx>