



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

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
Trimester 2, 2009**

**PHIL228: ETHICS AND GENETICS
CRN 10177**

TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates: 13 July to 16 October

Study week: 19 to 23 October

Examination/Assessment period: 27 October to 15 November

COURSE INFORMATION

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: Nick Agar
Room: Murphy Building, MY601
Phone: 4635046
Email: nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: by arrangement

Lectures: Tuesday, 1.10 – 4pm
Venue: HMLT 001

Additional Information: Any additional information or notices about this course will be posted on Blackboard

Course Delivery: The course will consist in 12 three hour lectures. There will be plenty of opportunities for student participation.

COURSE AIMS:

PHIL 228 course explores a variety of issues that arise in connection with the modern scientific revelations about the alterability of human and nonhuman nature. We will begin by exploring the moral and scientific underpinnings of the Transhumanist movement. The transhumanists are a group of increasingly influential thinkers who think that we should be using available technologies to transcend our humanity by radically extending our life spans and enhancing our intellects. We then turn to the debate provoked by research into human stem cells. Does the prospect of a regenerative medicine that might cure hitherto poorly treated diseases justify the moral costs involved in conducting research on human embryos? The final topic is the debate

over the genetic modification of food. Will GM feed the hungry and reduce humanity's burden on the environment – or are they another tool for the rich to exploit both the poor and nature?

COURSE CONTENT:

The exact content of PHIL 228 is detailed in a separate handout.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students who pass the course will have acquired a good understanding of some of the central ethical issues connected with the prospect of scientifically modifying human and nonhuman nature.

ESSENTIAL TEXTS:

All of the reading materials for this course will be posted on “Blackboard.”

ASSESSMENT:

PHIL228 will be assessed on the basis of one essay (30%), three short answer tests (the best two marks to jointly contribute 10%) and an exam (60%).

- (i) **Essay:** The essay should be approximately **2,500-3,000 words**. The due date for the essay will be **Friday 11 September 2009**. It is worth 30% of your total course marks. **You must submit your essay electronically via Blackboard** (please consult *Blackboard* for instructions). **This electronic version will be sent to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism website, and is the version that will be graded.** However, as a back-up **you must also submit a hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Department office (MY 508).**

Essays submitted after the due date will be accepted but they will receive less extensive written comments. There will be no grade penalty for late essays. The final date for the submission of any written work for this course is October 23. No essay can be accepted after this date.

- (ii) **In-class tests:** The dates of the short answer tests are as follows:
Tuesday 4 August,
Tuesday 15 September, and
Tuesday 6 October.

The tests will take up the **final hour of the lecture**. Their purpose is to evaluate students' awareness of the literature covered in the course.

- (iii) **Exam:** The final piece of assessment is a **three hour, closed book**, registry-administered exam **worth 60%** of your total course marks. The date of the examination is set later in the trimester by the Registrar but will fall within the date range of **27 October to 15 November 2009**.

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in assessment procedures.

Workload

The University's guideline for a 200-level 1 trimester 22 point course is 15 hours per week, including class time.

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>

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

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>

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.