



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME PHIL 403: METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

TRIMESTER 1 and 2 2010
1 March to 17 October 2010

Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 1 March 2010 to 17 October 2010
Teaching dates for first module: 1 March 2010 to 23 April
Teaching dates for second module: 26 April to 4 June
Teaching dates for third module: 12 July to 20 August 2010

Withdrawal dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at
<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

Names and contact details

Cei Maslen (Course Coordinator) MY707 (04) 463-6524 Cei.Maslen@vuw.ac.nz Office Hours: Mondays 10-11am and by appointment	Max Cresswell MY 721 (04) 463 6902 Home: +64 6 356 3993 max.cresswell@mcs.vuw.ac.nz or Max.Cresswell@vuw.ac.nz Office Hours: 2-3pm on Tuesday, and sometimes 1.30-3pm Thursday	Ken Perszyk MY718 (04) 463-7410 Ken.Perszyk@vuw.ac.nz Office Hours: By Appointment
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Class times and locations

Lecture time: Tuesdays 10:00-11:50 in first trimester. Wednesdays 10:00-11:50 in second trimester.
Lecture venue: Murphy 617

Course delivery

There will be one two-hour lecture per week. Students will be expected to have done some set reading for each lecture, and must come prepared to contribute to discussion of the reading.

Communication of additional information

Additional information will be conveyed to students, for example via Blackboard.

Course content

The course will be split into three six-week modules.

Module 1: Causation

In this part of the course we will look at the two main accounts of causation: regularity accounts and counterfactual accounts and at the debate about reduction of laws and causes. We will also look briefly at counterfactual conditionals and laws of nature.

Module 2: Wittgenstein's Tractatus

This section of the course will consist of a careful reading of Russell's *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*. (I-VI), and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Both these works are included in the book of readings. In addition I will be providing a copy of Russell's *On Denoting* (either on Blackboard or by email). I will from time to time be providing information about secondary sources, but it is worth remembering that ultimately it is the primary texts themselves which we are trying to understand. The best introduction to the material is probably still: J.O. Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis: Its Development between the Two World Wars*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1956. Useful on-line material may be found in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and entries in that encyclopedia have extensive lists of references. For the purpose of this course I do not require you to be familiar with any secondary material. The following is a tentative list of each week's material. If there is time left over we may look at the early parts of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.

Module 3: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

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"; and Derk Pereboom's "hard incompatibilism".

Learning objectives

Students passing the course should be able to engage critically with recent research in the field of contemporary philosophy.

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. For more details please consult our website www.victoria.ac.nz/phil/degrees/index.aspx

Expected workload

During the first eighteen teaching weeks of trimester, there will be two contact hours a week. Independent working hours during teaching weeks should average at four hours per week. Independent work during other periods (researching and writing up the essay) should equal roughly 64 hours per module.

Readings

Essential texts: A course reader for modules 1 and 2 is available from the first floor of Vic Books (\$60). (Opening hours for Vic Books are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.)

Some additional articles are available on BlackBoard for module 2, and some articles will be made available on BlackBoard for module 3.

Students will also be expected to do some additional research using the Philosopher's Index, a library database (<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/library/research/databases/p.aspx>).

Assessment requirements:

The assessment will be based on three essays.

Students are required to write one essay for each of the three modules. Each essay should be between 4000 and 4500 words. Each essay will count for one third of your overall assessment. Essay questions and instructions for each module will be posted on blackboard on or before the first lecture for that module.

The first essay will be due on 17 May, 2010. The second essay will be due on 14 July, 2010. The third essay will be due on 1 November, 2010. Each essay is designed to partially assess how well students have met the 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 Sophia Zhao in MY518. 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.

All essays will be submitted to and evaluated by turnitin.com, an online plagiarism detection service, before being graded. Plagiarized essays (no matter what the extent of the plagiarism) will receive an automatic zero. Extreme cases may result in University academic disciplinary procedures being invoked.

Penalties

Late essays will only be accepted if the student has approval from the Philosophy Coordinator of Graduate Studies. Without such approval, the essay will not be accepted.

There will be no penalty for exceeding the word limit, but precision is a virtue in philosophy, and exceeding the word limit is a sign that you are padding your essay or have not focussed narrowly enough on the topic.

Mandatory course requirements

None

Class Representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. His or her name

and contact details will be posted on blackboard. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

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>

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.

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>

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_victoria/avcademic/Publications.aspx