



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

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
PHIL 404: Value Theory
2010 FULL YEAR**

Course Delivery

The course is taught in one two hour session each week for eighteen weeks from the week beginning 1st March to the week beginning 16th August. The class takes place between 1.10 pm and 3 p.m. on Tuesdays in Murphy (MY) LT617.

The course is taught by Nick Agar, Simon Keller, and Ramon Das.

Nick Agar is the course co-coordinator.

Nick's office hours are by arrangement. His room number is Murphy 601, his extension number is 5046 and her e-mail address is nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz

Simon has office hours between 10-12 on Mondays. His office is Murphy 720 and his extension number is 9638. Simon's e-mail address is simon.keller@vuw.ac.nz

Ramon has office hours between 9 a.m. and 10a.m. on Tuesdays. His room number is Murphy 608, his extension number is 5038, and his e-mail address is ramon.das@vuw.ac.nz

Communication of additional information

All the 400-level courses are on the *Honours 2010 BlackBoard* website.

In addition, PHIL 404 has its own *BlackBoard* site. Course outlines, lecture notes, readings, and all additional information for the course can be found on the PHIL 404 site.

Students should submit their essays through *Honours 2010 BlackBoard* website, and not through the PHIL 404 *BlackBoard* site.

Course content

First six weeks: Neuroethics (Nick Agar)

The term neuroethics refers to two areas of inquiry opened up by recent advances in our understanding of the human brain. The new knowledge and techniques that come from neuroscience permit us to modify our minds in various ways. The first set of questions concerns the value of such interventions. For example, how should we think about direct interventions in our brains that made us happier? Does the use of

psycho-pharmaceuticals or neurosurgery threaten the value we place on happiness? The second set of questions concerns our conceptions of ourselves as free, rational, and moral agents, in sum our conceptions of ourselves as human beings. Studies guided by MRI's and other sophisticated technologies seem to be revealing our self-conceptions as naive and flawed. We will use as a guide Neil Levy's book *Neuroethics: Challenges for the 21st Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Middle six weeks: The Ethics of Special Relationships (Simon Keller)

We appear to have special ethical obligations as a result of our particular relationships with others; a parent has a greater obligation to care for her own children than to care for other children, for example. This part of the course will look into the nature and importance of such obligations, asking especially whether they raise a problem for the widespread view that morality is fundamentally impartial. We will read articles by such authors as Bernard Williams, Michael Stocker, Peter Railton, and Alasdair MacIntyre. Simon will make these and other readings available.

Final six weeks: Political philosophy, theory and practice (Ramon Das)

In this section of the course we will read Amartya Sen's new book, *The Idea of Justice* (Allen Lane, 2009), along with a selection of other related recent literature. We will contrast Sen's non-ideal theoretic approach to political philosophy with the dominant ideal-theory approach associated with John Rawls.

Learning objectives

Students will be expected to attend lectures, take part in the discussion and keep up with the reading. Those who pass the course should have an enhanced capacity for critical analysis and a deeper understanding of some contemporary issues in the areas to which they have been introduced.

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 2010 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 20 hours per week to this course. This includes 2 contact hours a week for 18 weeks.

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 24 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 either padding your essay or have not focussed narrowly enough on a 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/avcacademic/Publications.aspx