



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME PHIL 409: TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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

Stuart Brock (Course Coordinator T1) MY701 (04) 463-6970 Stuart.Brock@vuw.ac.nz Office Hours: By Appointment	Jay Shaw MY 613 (04) 463 5233 x8936 Jay.Shaw@vuw.ac.nz Office Hours: MW 11:00-1:00	Sondra Bacharach (Course Coordinator T2) MY711 (04) 463-5178 Sondra.Bacharach@vuw.ac.nz Office Hours: By Appointment
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Class times and locations

Lecture time: Friday 12:00-1:50
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. Students will also be expected to email an evaluation of the reading of the reading on the Wednesday before class.

Communication of additional information

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

Course content

The course will be split into three modules. A summary of the content to be covered in each module appears below.

Module 1: Fictionalism

Sometimes we talk as though there are numbers, holes, dragons, unicorns, etc. when we don't believe there are such things. Quine accuses philosophers who talk in this way of doublespeak. Fictionalism is a strategy for answering Quine's charge. In this part of the course we will explore the following questions: What is fictionalism? What motivates philosophers to be fictionalists? What should we be fictionalists about? What are the problems associated with fictionalism?

Module 2: Knowledge, Belief, and Doubt

This module will focus on Knowledge, Belief and Doubt. Regarding knowledge, the following will be discussed: (a) Gettier's counterexamples to the analysis of knowledge as justified true belief, (b) post-Gettier counterexamples to the standard analysis of knowledge, (c) the causal no-relevant alternatives approach of Goldman, (d) solutions to some of the problems of knowledge raised by contemporary philosophers, and (e) sources of knowledge. Regarding belief, this course will focus on the views of some contemporary philosophers, such as Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein.

Module 3: Computer Art

This module will focus on philosophical issues relating to art and computers. The following questions will be discussed: What is computer art? Is there such a thing? If so, do the concepts we usually employ to talk about art, such as 'meaning', 'form' or 'expression' apply to computer art?

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:

Module 1: Fictionalism

A set of articles will be made available on blackboard.

Module 2: Knowledge, Belief, and Doubt

Jay Shaw, 'Knowledge, Belief and Doubt: Some Contemporary Problems and their Solutions from the Nyaya Perspective,' Asian Studies Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, 2007.

Module 3: Computer Art

Dominic Lopes, *A Philosophy of Computer Art*, Routledge (2009).

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and 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.

Recommended Reading:

A list of recommended readings for each module will be posted on blackboard. Students will be expected to locate these readings in the main library for themselves. 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 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