

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

*Te Whare Wānanga o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui*



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL  
STUDIES

*Te Kura Mahinga Tangata*

Sociology and Social Policy

# SOSC 415

Contemporary Issues in the  
Sociology of Ethics & Morality

## Course Outline

CRN 11356: 30 POINTS: TRIM 1+2/2010

*Teaching dates: 1 March 2010 to 15 October 2010*

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR: DR RHONDA SHAW

Room 1022, Murphy Building

Tel: (04) 463 6134

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LECTURE: TUESDAY 3 – 5PM: OLD KIRK 301

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SOSC 415 (2010)  
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF ETHICS  
& MORALITY

**COURSE CO-ORDINATOR AND LECTURER**

Dr Rhonda Shaw  
Level 10, Murphy Building, MY1022  
Telephone: 04 463 6134  
E-mail: [rhonda.shaw@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:rhonda.shaw@vuw.ac.nz)  
Office Hours: by arrangement.

**CLASS TIMES AND LOCATION**

Lectures: Tuesday 3 - 5pm in Old Kirk Building 301

**PROGRAMME LOCATION**

The Sociology Programme is located in the Murphy Building. The staff studies are on level 10 and the School Office is on level 9. Additional information will be posted on the School notice boards on level 9.

**ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF CONTACT**

Dr. Rhonda Shaw is responsible for the administration of SOSC 415 as the course co-ordinator. If you have an urgent query, and the course co-ordinator is not available, leave a message with the administrators at the school office.

**WEBSITE**

The School's website is at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs>. On the same page you will find *Sociolog*, <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacs/about/sociolog.aspx>, a chronicle of reflections written by Sociology, Social Policy, Social Science Research staff and postgraduate students

**COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Additional information related to SOSC 415 will be communicated via Blackboard or e-mail.

## OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION

Head of School:	Dr Allison Kirkman, MY1013 Tel: 463 5676 E-m: <a href="mailto:allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz">allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz</a>
International Student Liaison:	Dr Hal Levine MY1023 Tel: 463 6132 E-m: <a href="mailto:hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz">hal.levine@vuw.ac.nz</a>
Maori and Pacific Student Liaison	Dr Trevor Bradley, MY1101 Tel: 463 54328 E-m: <a href="mailto:trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz">trevor.bradley@vuw.ac.nz</a>
Students with Disabilities Liaison:	Dr Russil Durrant, MY1120 Tel: 463 9980 E-m: <a href="mailto:russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz">russil.durrant@vuw.ac.nz</a>
School Manager:	Carol Hogan, MY918 Tel: 463 6546 E-m: <a href="mailto:carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz">carol.hogan@vuw.ac.nz</a>
School Administrators:	Monica Lichti, Alison Melling, Heather Day, MY921, Tel: 463 5317, 463 5258, 463 5677, E-m: <a href="mailto:sacs@vuw.ac.nz">sacs@vuw.ac.nz</a>

## COURSE CONTENT

What kinds of contributions can sociologists make to debates about ethics in the contemporary context? What makes sociological investigation of morality and ethical issues distinct from philosophical concerns? Is there a place for a separate field within the discipline of sociology that deals specifically with questions of ethics and morality?

In this course, these and other questions will be considered in light of recent debates about altruism, reciprocity and gift-exchange relations. This will entail examining the impact of recent medical, technological and scientific advances, as well as everyday forms of routine giving, on our bodies, ourselves and our relations to others.

This course is divided into two sections. Part I introduces students to a variety of theoretical approaches that place the question of ethics and moral life on the sociological agenda.

Part II deals with substantive issues in moral theory and ethics in light of recent discussions about giving and exchanging bodily fluids, tissues and organs. This part of the course is designed to put the theories discussed in Part I to the empirical test. In 2010, the substantive issues we will discuss

include blood donation, gamete donation, surrogate pregnancy arrangements, organ donation and transplantation, breastfeeding and human milk banking, love, sex and the erotic, and rituals governing present-giving in contemporary consumer cultures. Local debates and New Zealand literature will be referred to where relevant and wherever possible.

## **COURSE DELIVERY**

One two-hour seminar per week will offer students a broad, general introduction to each topic area. Each session will involve an introduction to the general topic area under discussion, and a participatory discussion involving close readings and analysis of weekly articles or essays. The weekly seminar is designed to encourage students to critically reflect on issues in light of their own experiences and reflection, and in relation to the literature.

Students should note that the course is divided into two parts. In the first part of the course we will look at social theory that examines the relation between sociology, morality and ethics. A key objective in this part of the course is to address the place of ethics in sociology and related disciplines and to discuss the significance of social science and ethnographic research in the emerging field of bioethics. In conjunction with this material we will look at debates around the gift relation. During Trimester 1 students will write a short précis of course readings each week. Part II of the course begins during Trimester 1. Part II will deal with substantive issues in and around the nature of contemporary gifts and gift-gifting, and the exchange of bodily fluids, tissues, and organs. Before the Mid-year break, students will have started their Research Essay assignment. The lecturer will be available for consultation at this time. Please note that lecturer office hours can be negotiated for SOSC 415 students.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course aims to introduce students to some of the key ideas and developments in the sociological study of morality and ethics. Until recently, this has been a relatively marginalised area of inquiry in the discipline of sociology, so students will be encouraged to read widely and to think beyond the confines of disciplinary boundaries.

The course will also encourage students to apply complex and sophisticated theoretical ideas to concrete empirical cases, events, and examples.

The overall aim is to build student confidence in applying analytic skills to applied and real-life situations. To this end, assignments are designed to assist you to develop your skills in

- close reading and summarising arguments
- relating everyday life and theory
- understanding key terms and ideas and expressing them clearly (in short comments, essays and in seminar presentations)
- developing and clarifying research problems and proposals
- solving problems and assisting others in solving problems.

By the end of the course students will be familiar with contemporary literature in the sociology of ethics, as well as material on gift-giving, reciprocity, and altruism from a variety of social science and humanities' disciplines. Students will be able to identify and apply various theoretical approaches and frameworks to specific issues. Where appropriate, students will also be able to outline the implications of these for social policy development.

Traditions covered in Part I will include material from sociology and social psychology (e.g., Simmel, Schwartz, Gouldner, Schmidt, Piliavin, Komter, Titmuss, Bauman); from anthropology (e.g., Mauss, Sahlins, Levi Strauss, Godelier, Strathern, Weiner, Bourdieu); from continental philosophy (e.g., Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Foucault, Lingis, Marion); and feminist theory (e.g., Irigaray, Cixous, Rubin, Vaughan, Diprose).

The work of key theorists who deal with the substantive issues discussed in Part II will also be discussed (e.g., Titmuss, Scheper-Hughes, Fox and Swazey, Lock, Cheal).

## **COURSE ASSESSMENT**

Lectures are not compulsory. However, class attendance is an integral part of the learning process. In lectures you will learn about and discuss important ideas. Through formal and informal discussion you will be supported in exploring ideas and developing your assignments.

This course is 100% internally assessed (there is no final examination). Your final mark will be made up of three components:

- **40% Précis: 8 précis worth 5% each (approx. 500 words). Due date (Friday each week from 12 March until 4 June 2010, see below)**
- **40% Research Essay: Due date (Friday 15 October 2010)**
- **20% Seminar Presentation (Trimester 2)**

**PRECIS (8 x 500 words: worth 40% of final mark)**

**Due date: 4pm Friday EACH WEEK FROM 12 MARCH UNTIL 4 JUNE 2010**

**NB: there are none due on Friday 2, 9 or 16 April (Good Friday followed by mid-trimester break)**

On the Friday before each Tuesday seminar, you are required to submit a 500 word précis of the assigned readings for the upcoming week. Your précis should briefly account for two or three of the most compelling ideas in the text(s). It should not take the forms of a book review, nor must it account for each and every idea raised by the assigned text(s). Rather, your précis should reflect your sense of what is most important in the text(s), and what you would most like to discuss in class. At the end of each précis, please suggest one or two critical or interpretive questions for further discussion. These questions may pertain to your reading of the text itself, but they may also suggest connections between texts and/or reflections on the themes discussed. More information about this aspect of the coursework will be made available at the beginning of the course, in the first lecture.

These short assignments may be handed in at any time up to the Friday of each week. The final précis is due on Friday 4 June 2010. Extensions will only be given for illness (with a medical certificate) or bereavement.

**RESEARCH ESSAY (5000 - 6000 words: Worth 40% of final mark)**

**Due date: 4pm Friday 15 October 2010**

This assignment is a substantive research essay designed to put the theories in Part I of the course to the empirical test. Students will choose topics in consultation with the lecturer. It is recommended that students consult Chapters 6 & 7 of Emerson, L. (2005) *Writing Guidelines for Social Science Students* (Second edition), Thomson/Dunmore Press: Victoria, Australia, for pointers about how to produce a literature review. More information about this assignment will be made available to students in Trimester 2.

## **SEMINAR PRESENTATION (Worth 20% of final mark)**

**Due date: Trimester 2 in-class, date to be arranged with course coordinator**  
20% will be assigned to your seminar presentation. These will commence in the second trimester. Dates for seminar presentations will be arranged at the beginning of the course. Students will also be required to select one topic from the second part of the course for discussion in a seminar presentation. Ideally, the seminar presentation will form the basis of your substantive essay. The aim of the exercise is to see how well you can explain, clarify, or resolve issues using theories you have been learning about in lectures and from your reading.

## **MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

To meet mandatory course requirements you must:

- Submit 8 weekly précis assignments of the assigned readings
- Submit the research essay
- Complete the seminar presentation

## **EXPECTED WORKLOAD**

You should expect to spend, on average, 12 hours per week, including class contact hours, on meeting the requirements of this course.

## **EXTENSIONS ON DUE DATES**

Assignments are due on the dates stated. If for some serious reason you don't think you can get work in on time, see your course co-ordinator in advance of the due date and discuss the problem. Extensions of time are not permitted except for illness, or bereavements.

## **COURSE WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURES**

If you decide for ANY reason at ANY stage to withdraw from SOSC 415 (or any other course) please see the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences office on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Murphy Building for an Add/Drop Course form. Failure to do so may have consequences for enrolment, student grants, allowances, loans, etc., i.e. you will get credited with a fail, not a withdrawal on your record if you do not act promptly.

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

## ASSIGNMENT BOX

Assignments must be placed in the assignment box on level 9 of the Murphy Building by 4 pm on the due date.

**They MUST NOT be placed in individual staff pigeonholes, or under staff office doors, or handed to the lecturer.**

This is to ensure that all work is properly recorded when submitted, and to avoid problems that have arisen in the past, when work has 'gone missing'.

At 4 pm the Office staff will empty the box, date-stamp work and record its receipt, before handing it to the appropriate markers.

**Students must always make and keep a photocopy of the assignment before handing it in. Faxed or e-mailed assignments will not be accepted.**

Unless students have followed this procedure, we will accept no responsibility for pieces of written work claimed to have been handed in.

### Identifying your Essay or Assignment – Cover Sheet

Please include the School's Assignment Cover Sheet (a sample of which can be found at the end of this Outline) as a front sheet when submitting your assignments. This ensures that you have provided essential information. You may wish to have a front page of your own on your assignment, but the top sheet must be the School's Assignment Cover Sheet. Further copies can be found at the School's Administration office on level 9 of Murphy building, and also on the School's assignment box (level 9 Murphy, beside the lifts).

## GRADES

Sociology and Social Policy follows University policy in giving letter grades for all internally assessed work instead of giving numerical marks. The following table sets out the range of marks within which each letter grade is assigned. Your final grade and marks for the course will be an aggregate of the grades you achieve during the course.

PASS:	A+	85% or over
	A	80% - 84%
	A-	75% - 79%
	B+	70% - 74%
	B	65% - 69%
	B-	60% - 64%



	C+	55% - 59%
	C	50% - 54%
FAILURE:	D	40% - 49%
	E	Below 40%

All the instructors are requested to make sure that each student is informed about the above system of assessment.

## **PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSION**

Late submissions for student assignments in all Sociology and Social Policy undergraduate courses are subject to a penalty. The exact deduction will be calculated on the basis of one half mark per day late for each 10 marks, i.e.

Mark out of maximum of:	Then deduct the following marks for each day it is late
10	½
20	1
30	1½
40	2

Where the due date is a Friday, any written work not handed in by 4 pm will be liable to a two-day penalty. To be effective, this policy will be consistently applied in all Sociology and Social Policy courses.

## **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](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx)

## **ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in examinations and other assessment procedures. Please contact the course coordinators, in the first instance, for information on how to make arrangements for this.

## **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>

## COURSE READINGS

There is no single text for this course. There will be course readings assigned, which will be placed on BlackBoard. Hard copies of readings will also be placed in the Sociology Honours cubby hole in the School office on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of the Murphy building, which you can copy. Depending on demand, supplementary readings may be placed on two-hour loan in the library. The following journals will provide you with material that is relevant to many of the issues covered in this course. Please note that this list is not exhaustive. Students are also able to request journal articles through inter-loan if an item is not available in the VUW Library. A small charge for each article will be applied. Books can be inter-loaned free of charge.

### **Journals**

*American Sociological Review*  
*Australian Feminist Studies*  
*Body & Society*  
*Bioethics*  
*Current Anthropology*  
*Current Sociology*  
*Economy & Society*  
*Feminism and Psychology*  
*Feminist Review*  
*Feminist Theory*  
*Health Care for Women International*  
*Hypatia*  
*Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*  
*Journal of Medical Ethics*  
*Philosophy & Public Affairs*  
*Sigs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*  
*Sociology*  
*Sociology of Health & Illness*  
*Social Science and Medicine*  
*The Sociological Quarterly*  
*The Sociological Review*  
*Theory, Culture & Society*  
*Women's Studies International Forum*

The required readings make up the content of the course reading pack. The readings have been organised by lecture/topic sequence and will be made available in advance of the lectures/seminars.

## **SEMINAR PROGRAMME OUTLINE**

### ***TRIMESTER 1 :PART I,***

#### **1) Introduction to course (2 March 2010)**

- Introduction: 'Talking the theory talk and making it walk'
- Timetable for seminar presentations in Part II, Trimester 2

#### **2) Research ethics and social science (9 March 2010)**

- Ethics approval for research projects
- Practical exercise
- Understanding ethics approval frameworks

#### **3) Ethics in qualitative research (16 March 2010)**

- Problems with tick box approaches to ethics
- Ethical dilemmas doing social science research

#### **4) Defining ethics and morality (23 March 2010)**

- An introduction to the terms of debate
- Moral philosophy and ethics

#### **5) The place of ethics in Sociology (30 March 2010)**

- Sociology, ethics, and empirical research
- The contribution of sociology to the study of bioethics

*Mid-trimester break (5 April to 18 April 2010)*

#### **Conference 'The Future of Tissue and Organ Donation'**

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2010//Hunter Council Chamber (8.30am – 5.00pm)

#### **6) Gift-exchange: anthropological & sociological debates (20 April 2010)**

- Defining the gift, reciprocity, and altruism
- The influence of Marcel Mauss

#### **7) Women, exchange, and feminist ethics (27 April 2010)**

- Feminist ethics and social theory
- Kinship, exchange relations, and trafficking women
- Corporeal generosity and women's gifts

**8) Poststructuralism and continental philosophy (4 May 2010)**

- Foucault: aesthetics, ethics and the self
- Bauman: postmodern ethics and the other
- Bataille: loss and expenditure
- Derrida: the paradox of the gift

***TRIMESTER 1: PART II,***

**9) Empirical work on body gifting and donation practices (11 May 2010)**

- Assisted human reproduction
- Sperm donation, ova donation, surrogate pregnancy arrangements
- PGD, cord blood donation

**10) Empirical work on body gifting and donation practices (18 May 2010)**

- Blood donation
- Wet nursing and cross-nursing
- Breastfeeding and human milk banking

**11) Empirical work on body gifting and donation practices (25 May 2010)**

- Organ donation and transplantation
- Xenotransplantation
- Genetic engineering

**12) Empirical work on body gifting continued (1 June 2010)**

*Mid-year break (28 June to 11 July 2010)*

**TRIMESTER 2: Student seminar programme**

**12)** (13 July 2010 – no seminar)

**13)** (20 July 2010)

**14)** (27 July 2010)

**15)** (3 August 2010)

**16)** (10 August 2010)

**17)** (17 August 2010)

**Office use only**

Date Received:

# School of Social and Cultural Studies

Te Kura Mahinga Tangata

**CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY  
CRIMINOLOGY  
SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY**

## Assignment Cover Sheet

(please write legibly)

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last name) (First name)

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Course (eg ANTH101): \_\_\_\_\_

Tutorial Day: \_\_\_\_\_ Tutorial Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Tutor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **CERTIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY**

*I certify that this paper submitted for assessment is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_