

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 105: The Big Questions

TRIMESTER 2 2010

12 July to 13 November 2010

Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 12 July 2010 to 15 October 2010

Mid-trimester break: 23 August to 5 September 2010

Study week: 18 to 22 October 2010

Examination/Assessment period: 22 October to 13 November 2010

Students who enrol in this course must be able to attend an examination, at the university, at any point in the examination period.

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

Course Coordinators

Edwin Mares (Course Coordinator)

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Lecturers:

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Office Hours:

Richard Joyce

Office: MY

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Email: richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz

Office Hours: TBA

Class times and locations

Lecture time: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00-9:50 am.

Lecture Room: Maclaurin LT103

Students are strongly encouraged to sign up for weekly tutorials using S-Cubed. Information about S-Cubed can be found by clicking the course information icon in the blackboard course menu. Tutorials commence in the second week of the course.

Course delivery

This course involves three lectures per week, along with a single tutorial. Attendance for both lectures and tutorials is strongly encouraged, but not mandatory.

Communication of additional information

Additional information, and notification of changes, will be conveyed to students via Blackboard. Thus, it is important to regularly check Blackboard.

Course content

This course is an introduction to some central problems of philosophy. Topics will include: Are you the same person you were 10 years ago? Are humans nothing but complex physical

systems? Are we ever truly free and responsible for our actions? Is time travel possible? Can death be bad for the one who dies? Does life have any meaning or purpose?

Lecture outline:

Weeks 1-2:

Ramon Das on Free Will

Weeks 3-4:

David Gilbert on Time Travel

Weeks 5-6:

Cei Maslen on Personal Identity

Weeks 7-8:

Nick Agar on Consciousness and the Mind-Body Problem

Weeks 9-10:

Ken Perszyk on the Fear of Death and Possibility of an Afterlife

Weeks 11-12:

Richard Joyce on Human Nature

Learning objectives

Students passing the course should have, and be able to convey, a good understanding of arguments and issues from several areas of philosophy. Part of this understanding includes the ability to critically evaluate such arguments. Students who pass this course should have a solid foundation for further work in the discipline as well as an ability to think more carefully and critically about a range of philosophical issues.

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 twelve teaching weeks of the trimester there will be four contact hours per week. Independent working hours during teaching weeks should average at eight hours per week. Independent work during other periods (preparing for the test and exam, and writing up the assignment) should equal roughly 36 hours in total.

Readings

Essential texts:

Students must purchase the PHIL 105 Course Book. For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold by 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 nominated collection points at each campus. 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.

There may be additional readings and these will be available on Blackboard.

Assessment requirements

The assessment is based on one in-class test – to determine the student's uptake and assimilation of the course materials –, one essay – to determine how well the student has learned to construct a position on one of the course topics and argue for it -- and a final exam – to test the breadth of knowledge that the student has gained in the course.

In Class Test: 4 August during lecture. (1 hour in duration). Worth 20% of final grade.

Essay: Due 17 September by 4 pm (approximately 2000 words in length). Worth 30% of final grade. To be turned in to the school office, Murphy 518.

Final Exam: During the exam period 22 October to 13 November 2010. Worth 50% of the final grade. Three hour exam. Closed book. No notes allowed.

There will be no make-up tests. The penalty for cheating is a zero mark. Extreme cases may result in University academic disciplinary procedures being invoked.

Marking criteria

The marking criteria for all pieces of written work are the same.

1. A philosophical issue should be analysed. This means it should be stated and explained clearly. (Why is there a puzzle or a problem? How does it arise? What does it presuppose?)
2. Alternative positions should be described and evaluated. These must include some discussed in class and in the reading set for the course. Evidence of extra research is not required.
3. An argument for a conclusion should be presented in an orderly way. It should support the conclusion.
4. The conclusion should be stated clearly. (Has the problem or puzzle been solved or dissolved? If not, why not? Are any of the alternative positions satisfactory? If not, why not? Does the solution to one problem give rise to another?)

Penalties

Late essays, without an approved extension, will be penalised one full letter grade per week. An approved extension may be granted only with the prior approval of the course coordinator, and only for legitimate reasons. No essays will be accepted without extension after 24 September.

Return of assignments

Essays and tests will be returned during tutorials, within three weeks of the due date. If students fail to attend the relevant tutorial, they may pick up their essay from the Programme Office on the fourth/fifth floor between the hours of 2 and 3pm on Monday to Friday.

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