



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

**PHILOSOPHY
PHIL 224: Philosophy of Religion**

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

Please note that this course is 100% internally assessed. The essay is due during the examination period, but can be handed in early.

Withdrawal dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

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

Lecturer

Imran Aijaz (8 lectures: 13 July through 6 August)

Office room: Murphy (MY) 717

Office phone: 463 5233 (x8652)

Email: Imran.Aijaz@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: by appointment (and only on Tuesdays and Fridays from 13 July through 6 August)

Stuart Brock (4 lectures: 13, 17 and 20 August; 7 September)

Office room: MY 701

Office phone: 463 6970

Email: Stuart.Brock@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: by appointment (and only on 13 and 20 August and 7 and 10 September)

Ken Perszyk* (10 lectures: 14 September through 15 October)

Office room: Murphy 718

Office phone: 463 7410

Email: Ken.Perszyk@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: by appointment

* Course Coordinator

Class times and locations

Lecture time: Tuesdays and Fridays 12-2pm

Lecture venue: Murphy 102

Course delivery

The bi-weekly meetings will include lecturing and discussion. The two in-class tests will be held during regular class times. There are no tutorials for this course.

Communication of additional information

There will be a course site on Blackboard, which will contain a copy of the course outline, any notes distributed in class and power points used, and any announcements.

Course content

This course is an introduction to problems in contemporary analytical philosophy of religion, focusing on the Judeo-Christian conception of God -- understood as an omnipotent, omniscient and morally perfect person. Is belief/faith in God reasonable or rationally justified? Is this concept logically coherent to begin with and consistent with other claims typically found in the Christian tradition?

Lecture outline (approximate)

LECTURE 1 (13 July): Introduction to the course and to Philosophy of Religion

The structure and aims of the course; what is the Philosophy of Religion, and why does it matter?

LECTURE 2 (16 July): Arguments from Religious Experience

Many people, philosophers as well as laypeople, maintain that *religious experiences* enjoyed by several men and women constitute evidence that can support the rationality of theistic belief. Is this correct?

Reading: Richard Swinburne, 'The Argument from Religious Experience'.

LECTURE 3 (20 July): Theistic belief and Morality

What are the prospects of defending the reasonableness of theistic belief by considerations related to morality?

Reading: William E. Mann, 'Theism and The Foundations of Ethics'.

LECTURE 4 (23 July): Arguments from Miracles

Could the evidence of miraculous occurrences suffice to establish the reasonableness of the belief that God exists?

Reading: David Hume, 'Of Miracles'

LECTURE 5 (27 July): Pascal's Wager

'Pascal's Wager', a very common theistic argument historically and in the present, maintains that it is in our best interest to believe in God. Is this argument any good?

Reading: : Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*; Ian Hacking, 'The Logic of Pascal's Wager'; and George Schlesinger, 'A Central Theistic Argument'.

LECTURE 6 (30 July): Reformed Epistemology

Could it be reasonable to hold theistic belief even though one does not do so on the basis of rational inference from more basic beliefs? We will examine Alvin Plantinga's defence of 'Reformed Epistemology', and his concept of *properly basic* belief.

Reading: Alvin Plantinga, 'Warranted Belief in God'.

LECTURE 7 (3 August): William James and ‘The Will to Believe’

We will examine James’s famous ‘justification of faith’ in his lecture ‘The Will to Believe’.

Readingt: William James, ‘The Will to Believe’.

LECTURE 8 (6 August): Tentative Religious Commitment

In thinking about religious (or theistic) belief and the uncertainties surrounding it, some philosophers have suggested that people ought to accept such belief ‘tentatively’. What does this mean and what are the prospects for defending this understanding of religious (or theistic) belief?

Reading: Robert McKim, ‘The Critical Stance I: Tentative Religious Belief’.

LECTURE 9 (10 August): In-class test

LECTURE 10 (13 August): The Superfluity Argument

LECTURES 11-13 (17 and 20 August; 7 September): Meta-theism, Meta-atheism and Fictionalism

LECTURE 14 (10 September): In-class test

LECTURES 15-17 (14, 17 AND 21 September): Omnipotence, Impeccability (Perfect Moral Goodness) and Divine Freedom

LECTURES 18-21 (24 and 28 September; 1 and 5 October): The Problem of Evil: The Logical Argument from Evil, and the Free Will Defence; the Evidential Argument from Evil, Skeptical Theism and Theodicies; Hell and Universalism

LECTURES 22 and half of 23 (8 and 12 October): Foreknowledge and Free Will

LECTURES 23 and 24 (12 and 15 October): Incarnation

Learning objectives

Students who pass the course will understand some of the major issues/arguments discussed in contemporary analytical philosophy of religion; they will be able to analyse and critically evaluate some of the major responses given to them and will develop the skills needed to defend their own position.

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 decision-making. For more details please consult our website

www.victoria.ac.nz/phil/degrees/index.aspx

Expected workload

The University’s expectation for a 20-point course is 200 hours over the entire trimester, including time in class.

Readings

Essential texts:

Students must purchase The PHIL224 Course Book. Part I (for the first 4 weeks of the course) should now be available For the first two weeks of trimester it will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer. After week two, all student notes will be sold from the Student Notes

Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building. Part II of the Coursebook, for the remaining 8 weeks of the course, will be available in due course.

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.

Recommended Reading:

Extra readings on the essay topics will be provided on Blackboard.

Assessment requirements

1. A two-hour in-class test, worth 35% of the final grade, on **Tuesday 10 August**. [This test will cover material taught by Imran Aijaz in the first four weeks of the course. Details on the nature/format of the test will be announced in class and on Blackboard during the first week of the course.]
2. A one-hour in-class test, worth 15% of the final grade, on **Friday 10 September**. [This test will cover material taught by Stuart Brock in lectures 10-13 of the course. Details on the nature/format of the test will be announced as soon as possible.]
3. An essay of approximately 3500 words (but no longer than 4000 words), worth 50% of the final grade, due by 4:30 pm on **Friday 29 October**. Essays submitted after the due date will be accepted without penalty but will receive only limited written comments. **No essay submitted after 4:30pm on Friday 5 November will be accepted, i.e. marked.** Essay topics, including details on the required form of submission of the essay, will be distributed in due course during lectures and posted on Blackboard.

Penalties

A make-up for either in-class test will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, such as a serious illness. Presentation of a medical certificate will be necessary. In such cases, you must notify the course coordinator as soon as possible.

Mandatory course requirements

None.

Return of assignments

Tests will be returned during lectures. Uncollected tests and the essay may be collected from the Programme/School Office on the fifth floor of Murphy 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. 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

