



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

### PHILOSOPHY

#### PHIL309: SPECIAL TOPIC: EVOLUTIONARY ETHICS

### TRIMESTER 1 2011

28 February to 2 July 2011

#### Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 28 February to 3 June

Mid-trimester break: 18 April to 1 May

#### 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

Richard Joyce (course coordinator)

Office room: Murphy 716

Office phone: 463 5699

Email: [Richard.Joyce@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Richard.Joyce@vuw.ac.nz)

Office hours: Tuesdays 1-2

#### Class times and locations

LECTURE TIME: Tuesday and Friday 11:00-12:50

VENUE: Murphy 102

#### Course delivery

The weekly meetings will include lecturing and discussion. There are no tutorials for this course.

#### Communication of additional information

There will be a course site on Blackboard, which will contain some readings and information about the course.

#### Course content

The subject of reconciling our evolutionary past with our sense of right and wrong is undergoing a resurgent wave of interest. This course is a comprehensive examination of the field of evolutionary ethics, falling roughly into two parts. Part one examines the empirical question of whether the human "moral sense" (the tendency to assess the world in moral terms) is an evolutionary adaptation. Part two asks whether any normative or metaethical consequences would follow if this nativist hypothesis proved to be true. In this latter

section we will ask, first, whether moral nativism might support some version of moral realism (moral nativism as vindicating morality), then ask whether moral nativism might support some version of moral skepticism (moral nativism as debunking morality).

A more detailed programme of lecture topics will be provided in the first lecture (and posted on Blackboard).

### Learning objectives

Students passing the course should gain a comprehensive understanding of the field of evolutionary ethics. They will become familiar with a cluster of empirical topics and in particular with how these topics relate to some perennial philosophical questions. They should also practice and improve their critical writing skills and presentation skills.

Students are expected to attend classes regularly, take part in class discussion, and keep up with the reading.

### Expected workload

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

### Readings

#### Essential texts:

The course follows the material presented in *An Introduction to Evolutionary Ethics*, by Scott James (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), so it is essential that each student has access to this book throughout the term. Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Copies of James' book should be available for purchase from the Memorial Theatre foyer from Feb 7 to March 11. After week two of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks on level 3 of the Student Union Building. Customers can order textbooks online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto: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 8am - 6pm, Mon-Fri during term time (closing at 5pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

### Assessment requirements

PHIL 309 is assessed on the basis of two essays and ten "reading questions," the latter of which are intended to be exercises in reading-assessment.

#### Essays:

The **first essay** of approx. 2500 words will be due on **Monday 2 May at 5pm**.

The **second essay** of approx. 2500 words will be due on **Friday 3 June at 5pm**.

First essay topics will be handed out on 28 March. Second essay topics will be posted on Blackboard before 16 April.

You must submit two copies of your essay. You must submit one electronically via Blackboard (please consult Blackboard for instructions), which will be sent to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism website, and is the version that will be graded. You must also submit a hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Programme office (Murphy 518).

### **Reading assessment:**

For weeks 2-11, students must compose at least one question or substantial comment about that week's reading. These questions/comments can be of two kinds: theoretical claims that you want clarified, and critical objections to the theory. These questions must be emailed to Richard Joyce ([richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz)) 24 hours prior to each Friday lecture (i.e., by each Thursday at 11am). These questions will be assessed on a three tier scale: 100%, 50%, or 0%. A single good question/comment may suffice for the maximal grade, but students may prefer to ask several questions. The purpose of these questions/comments is for students to demonstrate that they have engaged critically with the readings, and they may also form the basis of discussion in the Friday session.

Barring exceptional emergencies, late questions will not be accepted. Each week's questions will count for 2% of your overall mark in the course.

### **Relation between Assessment and Course Aims/Objectives:**

The topics for the essays and reading questions are chosen to ensure that the subject matter in the course has been adequately covered in the depth appropriate for the 300-level, while also giving students an opportunity to focus on those arguments and issues that they find most interesting. Students should demonstrate that they understand and can evaluate arguments (issues) covered in both sections of the course.

### **Assessment:**

The final grade is determined as follows:

Essays:	80% (40% each)
Reading questions:	20% (2% each)

### **Penalties**

Late essays will be penalised one full letter grade per week. No essays will be accepted after June 3. An extension can be granted only with the (prior) approval of the course co-ordinator, and only in exceptional circumstances. Having a lot of other assignments due around the deadline is not a legitimate ground for an extension. Plan ahead.

### **Mandatory course requirements**

None.

### **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.

### **WHERE TO FIND MORE DETAILED INFORMATION**

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study). Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress). Most statutes and policies are available at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy), except qualification statutes, which are available via the *Calendar* webpage at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx) (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the website of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic), at [www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/avcacademic](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic).