



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

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PHILOSOPHY</b><br/><b>PHIL312: PHILOSOPHY OF VALUES: META-ETHICS</b></p> |
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**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  
Office hours: Tuesdays 1-2

Ramon Das  
Office room: Murphy 608  
Office phone: 463 5038  
Email: Ramon.Das@vuw.ac.nz  
Office hours: Mondays 9-10

### Class times and locations

LECTURE TIME: Monday and Thursday 11:00-12:50  
VENUE: Murphy 220

### 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

This course will investigate some fundamental questions in moral theory, including: whether morality is an illusion; whether moral claims can be true or false; whether there are such things as moral properties; whether moral facts explain any phenomena in the world; and whether moral judgements can motivate us on their own. Theoretical positions to be critically discussed include noncognitivism, the error theory, moral realism, naturalism, non-naturalism, fictionalism, and constructivism.

The course is divided evenly into two large sections, the first of which will be taught by Richard Joyce and the second by Ramon Das. 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 meta-ethics. They should also advance their abilities to undertake logical and critical thinking, especially as it pertains to value theory. 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 quite closely follows the material presented in *Foundations of Ethics*, edited by Shafer-Landau and Cuneo (Blackwell, 2007), so it is essential that each student has access to this book throughout the term. Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Copies of Shafer-Landau and Cuneo 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

100% internal assessment. PHIL 312 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). This electronic version 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 (MY 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 the relevant lecturer (either richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz or ramon.das@vuw.ac.nz) 24 hours prior to each Thursday lecture (i.e., by each Wednesday 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 Thursday 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:

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| 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).