SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY
PHIL105: The Big Questions

TRIMESTER 2 2011
11 July to 12 November 2011

Trimester dates
Teaching dates: 11 July to 14 October 2011
Mid-trimester break: 22 August to 4 September 2011
Study week: 17–21 October 2011
Examination/Assessment period: 21 October to 12 November 2011

Please note that this course will have a final examination. You should make sure that you will be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the examination period.

Withdrawal dates
Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx

Names and contact details

Lecturers:
Simon Keller (course coordinator)
Room: Murphy 720
Phone: 463 9638
Office hours: TBA
Email: Simon.Keller@vuw.ac.nz

Nicholas Agar
Room: Murphy 601
Phone: 463 5046
Office hours: By appointment
Email: Nicholas.Agar@vuw.ac.nz

Ken Perszyk
Room: Murphy 718
Phone: 463 7410
Office hours: By appointment
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Ramon Das
Room: Murphy 608
Phone: 463 5038
Office hours: TBA
Email: Ramon.Das@vuw.ac.nz

Richard Joyce
Room: Murphy 716
Phone: 463 5699
Office hours: Tues 1-2
Email: Richard.Joyce@vuw.ac.nz

Tutors
The tutors are Lee Bremner, Daniel Burkett, Gareth Leniston-Lee, Felice Marshall, Justin Ngai, and Rhydian Thomas. They will give their contact details and office hours in the first tutorials.

Class times and locations
Lecture time: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 9:00 – 9:50am
Lecture venue: KK LT303

Tutorial Times and Venues:
Tutorials commence in the *second* week of the course, times to be announced. *Attendance at tutorials is not compulsory, but is strongly recommended. PHIL105 will use S-Cubed for Tutorial registration.*

Using S-Cubed:
Use your internet browser to go to: *https://signups.vuw.ac.nz.*
Use your normal *student login* and *password* to sign into S-Cubed.
Click on *"PHIL104"* You will see info about your course and about the different tutorial sessions. Sign up to your preferred session by clicking on the *"sign up"* button.
<u>Please note</u>: If you do not sign up during the first week of trimester, you may be extremely limited in your choice of tutorial time. The sign-up programme is only available until 19 March 2011. If you have problems please see the Philosophy Programme Administrator, Murphy Building, 5th Floor, MY518.

Course delivery
This class will involve three lectures and one tutorial per week. The lectures and tutorials are not compulsory, but attendance is strongly encouraged, and the presumption will be that each student will attend all classes. (So if information is given in lectures or tutorials, we will assume that all students have it.)

Communication of additional information
Additional information will be conveyed to students during lectures and tutorials, and on Blackboard.

Course Prescription
An introduction to some central problems of philosophy. Topics may include: Are we ever free and responsible? Does life have any meaning or purpose? Can death be bad for the one who dies? Are humans nothing but complex physical systems? Are you the same person that you were 10 years ago? Is time-travel possible? 50% internal assessment, 50% examination.

Course content
This course is divided into five sections:

1. Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence. Weeks 1-4, 11 lectures, Nicholas Agar.
We will use philosophical thought experiments to probe the nature of conscious experience. We will seek answers to three questions. Will it ever be possible to build a computer capable of conscious thought? Could science ever fully explain human conscious experience? Does the mere possibility of nonconscious, human-like zombies prove that human consciousness is partly nonphysical?

2. Personal Identity. Weeks 5-6, 6 lectures, Simon Keller.
What makes you the person you are? Are you essentially a mind, or a body, or a soul? Or is it possible that persons, as we normally think of them, do not really exist at all? We will address these questions and some of their ethical consequences.

3. Death and Immortality. Weeks 7-8, 6 lectures, Ken Perszyk.
Can death be bad for the one who is dead? Would living forever (immortality) be good for us? Is life after (bodily) death possible?

4. Free Will. Weeks 9-10, 6 lectures, Ramon Das.
We will look at the ancient problem of freedom of the will. In addition to examining the main traditional positions on this problem, we will look at a more contemporary challenge which asks whether freedom of the will is even a coherent concept.

5. Human Nature. Weeks 11-12, 6 lectures, Richard Joyce.
What do we want from a theory of human nature? (Do we expect an account of human "essence" or of what it takes to be "normal"?) Are humans naturally selfish? Are we naturally moral? What kind of thing is human happiness?

Learning objectives
Students passing this course should acquire an adequate understanding of, and ability to evaluate, some arguments and issues discussed in several areas of philosophy. The course should provide a solid foundation for further work in the discipline, and also help students think more carefully and critically about a wider range of 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/hppi/subjects/phil.aspx#grad-attributes

Expected workload
In accordance with the Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 13 hours per week to PHIL 105. This includes 3 hours of lectures per week and one tutorial.

Readings
Essential texts:
All readings will be posted on Blackboard. Students are expected to print the readings themselves. To find the readings, go to the Blackboard site and click on the link titled "Readings" on the panel on the left of the screen.

Assessment requirements
PHIL 105 is assessed on the basis of one in-class test, one essay, and a final examination. The final grade is determined as follows:
In-class test: 15%
Essay: 35%
Final Exam: 50%

The in-class test will be held during the lecture time on Wednesday 3 August. The test will cover the material presented in section 1 of the course (Consciousness and Artificial Intelligence). The test question will be available on Blackboard before the test.

The essay of approximately 2000 words is due by 12 noon on Wednesday 14 September. The essay question(s) will be announced on Blackboard and in lectures, and will cover the material presented in section 2 of the course (Personal Identity). You must submit your essay electronically via Blackboard (please consult Blackboard for instructions). The electronic version will be sent to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism website. As a back-up you must also submit a hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Programme office (MY518). The essay questions will be made available in lectures and on Blackboard.

The final examination is a closed-book, three-hour examination, to be held during the exam period from Friday 21 October to Saturday 12 November. The exam paper will be divided into four sections. Students must answer four questions, taking one from each section. All questions will have equal value. The questions will cover the material from all sections of the course. Further information will be given later in the term.

Return of assignments
Initially all assignments will be returned in tutorials and/or lectures. Uncollected assignment will be available from the Programme office Monday - Friday **from 2-3pm**.

Penalties
Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 2 marks per day, including weekends. No essays will be accepted after 14 October.

Mandatory course requirements
There are no mandatory course requirements.

Class Representative

A class representative will be elected in the first week and that person's name and contact details will be made 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.

Statement on legibility

Students are expected to write clearly. Where work is deemed 'illegible', the options are:
- the student will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) within a specified time frame after which penalties will apply;
- the student will be given a photocopy of the work and asked to transcribe it to an acceptable standard (preferably typed) and lateness penalties apply;
- if the student does not transcribe it to an acceptable standard, the work will be accepted as 'received' (so any associated mandatory course requirements are met) but not marked.

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. Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress. Most statutes and policies are available at 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 (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.