



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
PHIL 215
ST: CONSPIRACY THEORY**

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

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

The Philosophy Programme's office is located in Murphy Building (abbreviated as MY) Room 518 and the direct phone number is (04) 463-5368.

Coordinator:	Stuart Brock	Lecturer:	Marc Wilson
Room:	MY 701	Room:	EA 501B
Phone:	463-6970	Phone:	463-5225
Email:	Stuart.Brock@vuw.ac.nz	Email:	Marc.Wilson@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours:	By appointment	Office Hours:	By appointment

Class times and locations

Class Times: Tuesday, 11:00-1:00

Friday, 11:00-1:00

Location: HM003

Course delivery

Tuesday's class will be a traditional two-hour lecture. Friday's class will be conducted in seminar style and will require students to come to class prepared, having closely read one assigned article for the week. In some cases, the Friday class will also involve a pop quiz on the content of the nominated article. A list of required readings for each week is available on blackboard.

Attendance is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. Students will also be encouraged to participate in discussions online through the blackboard course page.

Communication of additional information

Any additional information or notices about this course will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Prescription

This course will examine philosophical and psychological issues pertaining to conspiracy theories.

Course content

Questions addressed in the course will include: What is a conspiracy theory? What (if anything) is wrong with conspiracy theories and conspiracy theorists? What are the social, political, or psychological conditions most conducive to the development and maintenance of conspiracy theories? What are the 'functions' of conspiracy beliefs? This course will assist students in appropriately assessing the validity of conspiratorial theorising.

Learning objectives

Students passing this course should be able to:

1. distinguish conspiracy theories from other closely related theories of social phenomena;
2. evaluate the evidence in support of conspiracy theories; and
3. understand the conditions required for the development and maintenance of conspiracy theories.
4. discriminate between various moral and ethical considerations that apply to conspiracies and conspiracy theorizing.

Expected workload

In accordance with Faculty of Humanities and Social Science guidelines, the overall workload for a 20 point course is 200 hours spread over the entire trimester. This includes the time spent in lectures and tutorials, with the rest spent researching for and writing up essays, reading the set texts and preparing for pop quizzes.

Readings

Students must purchase the PHIL 215 course book. There will also be additional readings accessible from the Blackboard course page.

All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 4 to 22 July 2011. After week two of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from vicbooks on Level 4 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.

Assessment requirements

The assessment will be based on the following: two essays (worth 40% each) and five pop quizzes (worth 4% each; 20% in total).

ESSAYS. Students are required to write two essays. Each essay will count for 40% of your overall assessment and should be approximately 3500 words. Essay questions and instructions will be posted on blackboard on or before August 12. In addition, the instructions will include a statement of the particular learning objectives each essay is designed to assess, together with marking criteria. The first essay will be due on September 12, 2011. The second essay will be due on October 24, 2011. Essays should be submitted by 10:00am on the due date.

All essays must be submitted in two ways. A copy of the essay must first be submitted digitally via blackboard (select 'assignments' icon in the course menu). Make sure you save your file as a Microsoft Word document. The title of your file should follow the following format: last name, underscore, first name, underscore, essay number, dot, docx (for example: brock_stuart_3.docx). A hard copy of the essay must then be submitted to the lecturer at the start of class on the due date. The hard copy will not be graded unless there is a problem with your blackboard submission. In such cases, students will be required to re-enter an identical copy to blackboard at their earliest convenience.

All essays will be submitted to and evaluated by turnitin.com, an online plagiarism detection service, before being graded. Plagiarized essays (no matter what the extent of the plagiarism) will receive an automatic zero. Extreme cases may result in University academic disciplinary procedures being invoked.

Late essays will only be accepted if the student has a legitimate excuse for failing to get it in on time. Requests for an extension should be made *before* the due date, and should be directed to the course coordinator. If the reason is medical, a doctor's certificate must accompany the request. An excuse will count as legitimate only if it can be demonstrated that you could not reasonably have been expected to hand the essay in on time given your circumstances. The course coordinator will decide what is reasonable in these circumstances.

POP QUIZZES: Students will also be assessed on their performance on a series of pop quizzes. Pop quizzes will be short tests (10 minutes) taken at the beginning of the Friday class. Each quiz is designed to test the student's understanding of an assigned reading for the week. There will be at least six quizzes worth 4% each. Only the student's best five quizzes will count towards their final grade (20% in total). The quizzes are specifically designed to assess how well students have met all four of the learning objectives. Information about the assigned readings for each week is given on blackboard.

Students who miss a pop quiz for a legitimate reason may be able to take a make-up quiz. Requests for a make-up quiz should be directed to the course coordinator and made at the earliest possible time after the missed quiz. If the reason is medical, a doctor's certificate must accompany the request. An excuse will count as legitimate only if it can be demonstrated that you could not reasonably have been expected to have taken the quiz at

the assigned time given your circumstances. The course coordinator will decide what is reasonable in these circumstances

Return of essays

Initially all assignments will be returned in lectures. Uncollected assignment will be available from the Programme office Monday - Friday between 2:00 and 3:00 pm.

Penalties

Late essays will not be accepted unless an extension has been granted by the course coordinator. Students who miss a pop quiz for a legitimate reason should direct any request for a make-up quiz to the course coordinator. (See 'assessment requirements' above for more details.)

Mandatory course requirements

There are no mandatory course requirements for this course.

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 via 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 will 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. 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.