



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
PHIL/POLS 361: BIOETHICS**

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>

Lecturer contact details

Nick Agar

office: Murphy 601

telephone: 4635046

e-mail: nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours

By arrangement

Class times, locations, and format

Classes for this course are on Tuesdays starting at 2:10 pm and ending at 5 pm. The lecture will be held in HMLT104. The class will contain two lectures which will explore different aspects of a bioethical dilemma. There will be plenty of opportunities for student participation – moral philosophy cannot be done in passive mode.

Communication of additional information

Any additional information will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Prescription

This course will introduce students to some central questions in bioethics. Topics covered include assisted reproduction, severely disabled newborns, euthanasia, and informed consent.

Course Content

This course explores a range of controversies in bioethics. The course begins by examining issues that arise at the beginning of life. What is the moral status of abortion? Does a pregnant woman have a

moral obligation to safeguard the welfare of her future child? Should a woman be entitled to accept payment for bearing another woman's child? We then turn to questions concerning the end of life. We examine debates about euthanasia, severely disabled newborns, and the moral status of advance directives. The third topic concerns the allocation of scarce medical resources. How do we decide which patients should have the strongest claim on a finite health budget? The fourth topic is organ donation. What moral reason can we give for donating organs? Are there morally acceptable ways to increase the supply of donated organs? This is followed by a section on the ethics of medical research in which we examine the issue of the rules governing medical experimentation. We conclude with a section on the behaviour of doctors in respect of their patients. Are doctors bound by a duty to always tell the truth? What limits are set by the doctrine of informed consent?

Course Objectives

Students who pass the course will have acquired a good understanding of some of the central issues in bioethics. They will have carefully considered a range of moral dilemmas concerning how human beings come into existence, how they live their lives, and how their lives end.

Expected workload

The University's guideline for a 300-level 1 trimester 24 point course is 18 hours per week, including class time.

Key text

You should purchase Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer (eds), *Bioethics: An Anthology: Second Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) from Vicbooks on Level 4 of the Student Union Building.

All undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer from 4 to 22 July 2011, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. 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

There will be two essays (25% each), three short answer tests (the best two marks to jointly contribute 10%) and an exam (40%).

i. Essays: The essays should be approximately 2500-3000 words long. The due date for the first essay will be August 19. The second essay is due October 7. **You must submit your essay 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.** However, as a back-up **you must also submit a hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Programme office (MY 518).**

Essays submitted after the due date will be accepted but they will receive only minimal written comments. There will be no grade penalty for late essays. The final date for the submission of work for this course is October 14. No essay can be accepted after this date.

ii. In-class tests: The dates of the short answer tests are as follows – July 26, August 16, and September 27. The tests will take up the final hour of the lecture. Their purpose is to evaluate students' general awareness of the literature in the text.

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

iii. Exam: The final piece of assessment is a three hour, closed book exam. You should answer any three questions – the exam will **not** be divided into sections. You should avoid overlap between exam answers and work submitted during the course. The exam will take place in the period between Friday 21 October and Saturday 12 November 2011 inclusive.

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in assessment procedures.

Mandatory course requirements

To gain a pass in this course each student must submit the written work specified for this course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)

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.

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.