



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY

PHIL312: PHILOSOPHY OF VALUES: META-ETHICS

TRIMESTER 1 2012

5 March to 4 July 2012

Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 5 March to 8 June 2012

Mid-trimester break: 6–22 April 2012

Last piece of assessment due: 8 June

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 713

Office phone: 463 5699

Email: richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: Wednesdays 11-12

Class times and locations

LECTURE TIMES: Wednesday and Friday 9:00-10:50

VENUE: Murphy 102

Course delivery

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

Communication of additional information

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

Course Prescription

This course will investigate some fundamental questions in moral theory; including whether morality is an illusion; whether moral claims can be true or false; and whether moral judgements can motivate us on their own.

Course content

We make moral judgements all the time: We judge some actions to be wrong, others praiseworthy; we judge some people to be good, others wicked; and so forth. But what are we doing when we make such judgements? When we say something like “Stealing is wrong” are we claiming that stealing has the property of wrongness? If so, what kind of property might that be, and by what means do we detect its presence? Perhaps wrongness is an objective feature of the universe, or perhaps it’s a kind of feature that humans somehow collectively invent, or perhaps it doesn’t exist at all. How do we justify our moral opinions, and what relation do these opinions bear to our motivational states? Do moral facts explain any phenomena in the world? Addressing these questions is the work of meta-ethics. Meta-ethical positions to be critically discussed include noncognitivism, the error theory, moral realism, naturalism, non-naturalism, fictionalism, and constructivism.

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 13 February to 16 March 2012. After week two of the trimester all undergraduate textbooks 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

PHIL 312 is assessed on the basis of two essays, worth 50% of the final grade each.

The **first essay** of approx. 2500 words will be due on **Monday 23 April at 5pm**.

The **second essay** of approx. 2500 words will be due on **Friday 8 June at 5pm**.

First essay topics will be handed out shortly after the course begins. Second essay topics will be posted on Blackboard before 6 April.

You must submit two copies of your essay. Submit one electronically via Blackboard (please consult Blackboard for instructions) which will be sent to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism website. Also submit an identical hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Programme office (MY 518).

Penalties

Late essays will be penalised one full letter grade per week or part thereof. An extension can be granted only with the (prior) approval of the course coordinator, 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.

Class Representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and this person's name and contact details will be made available. 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.