



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY PHIL409 – TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

FULL YEAR 2012

5 March to 17 November 2012

Trimester dates

Mid-trimester break: 6 April to 22 April 2012

Mid-year break: June 9 to July 15 2012

Mid-trimester break: 27 Aug to 9 Sept 2012

The taught portion of all courses at 400-level will end after 18 weeks, in order to allow students time to focus on their PHIL 489 research essays. During the final six weeks of the term, it is expected that you will be working on your research essays, and staff will be available for meetings, consultations and advice.

Withdrawal dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

Lecturers

Bill Lycan

Office room: Murphy 713

Email: ujanel@email.unc.edu

Office hours: Wednesdays 11-1

Nick Agar

Office room: Murphy 601

Office phone: 463 5046

Email: Nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: By appointment

Richard Joyce (course coordinator)

Office room: Murphy 716

Office phone: 463 5699

Email: Richard.Joyce@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: By appointment

Class times and locations

Lecture time: Mondays 12-1:50

Lecture venue: Murphy 403

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 Prescription

This course is divided into three 6-week sections. Each section will be run by a different lecturer on material related to their current research interests. In this way students can gain a knowledge and appreciation of the most current and cutting edge problems in philosophy. 100% internal assessment.

Course content

The first six weeks of the course will be taught by Bill Lyan. This section of the course will look briefly at four solutions to the mind-body problem, the standard competing theories of mind: Dualism, Behaviorism, the Identity Theory, and Functionalism. Then the class will take up some special topics: problems of consciousness, subjectivity, and the qualitative character of sensory experience.

For the first class:

- i. Read the Descartes and Ryle snippets fairly carefully.
- ii. Read through at least the first 6 pages of the companion handout "Notes, I."
- iii. (Optional) Read the Place and Block pieces and the rest of the handout.

All these pieces are on Blackboard, except the Place, which can be found here:
<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~paulsko/papers/PlaceCBP.pdf>.

The next six weeks will be taught by Nick Agar. This part of the course addresses the possibility of using technology to morally enhance humans. There are two ways in which we might be morally enhanced. We could undergo moral disposition enhancement – this would make us more likely to act morally. Alternatively we could undergo moral status enhancement – this would increase our entitlement to certain forms of beneficial treatment and reduce our eligibility for certain forms of harmful treatment. The lecturer will distribute papers that address the question of whether either of these forms of moral enhancement is a good idea.

The final six weeks will be taught by Richard Joyce on David Enoch's book *Taking Morality Seriously: A Defense of Robust Realism* (OUP, 2011). In this book Enoch develops, argues for, and defends a strongly realist and objectivist view of ethics and normativity more broadly. This view—according to which there are perfectly objective, universal, moral and

other normative truths that are not in any way reducible to other, natural truths—is familiar, but this book is the first in-detail development of the positive motivations for the view into reasonably precise arguments. And when the book turns defensive—defending Robust Realism against traditional objections—it mobilizes the original positive arguments for the view to help with fending off the objections. (dust-jacket blurb)

Learning objectives

Students passing the course should advance their knowledge of several key areas of value theory. 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. Students are expected to attend classes regularly, take part in class discussion, and keep up with the reading.

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 <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/hppi/about/overview-of-the-school/phil-overview#grad-attributes>

Expected workload

The University's guideline for a 30-point course is 300 hours over the entire trimester, including time in class.

Readings

Essential texts:

Readings for Bill's and Nick's sections of the course will be supplied on Blackboard. Copies of Enoch's book will be ordered for VicBooks, but can also be purchased from Amazon, etc. The first one or two chapters will go on Blackboard. (Beyond that violates copyright.)

Assessment requirements

PHIL 409 is assessed on the basis of three mandatory essays:

1. A 3-3500 word essay on Bill's section of the course, due Monday May 7.
2. A 3-3500 word essay on Nick's section of the course, due Monday 16 July.
3. A 3-3500 word essay on Richard's section of the course, due Monday Oct 15.

Each essay is worth 1/3 of the final grade.

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/avcademic.