FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME

PHIL 409: TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY
30 POINTS

TRIMESTERS 1 and 2, 2015

Important Dates

Trimester dates: 2 March to 15 November 2015

Teaching dates: 2 March to 16 October 2015

Mid-trimester breaks: 6 April to 19 April 2015; 24 August to 6 September 2015

Mid-year break: 2-12 July 2014

Last piece of assessment due: 16 October

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to the following webpage www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Wednesday 11-12:50   Murphy (MY)617

Names and contact details

Course Coordinator: Nicholas Agar
Room No: Murphy 601
Phone: 463 5046
Email: nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz
Office hours: By appointment

Lecturer: Sondra Bacharach
Room No: Murphy 711
Phone: 463 5178
Email: sondra.bacharach@vuw.ac.nz
Office hours: By appointment

Lecturer: Justin Sytsma
Room No: Murphy 710
Phone: 463 9658
Email: justin.sytsma@vuw.ac.nz
Office hours: By appointment

Communication of additional information

This course uses Blackboard and presumes that all enrolled students have valid myvuw.ac.nz addresses. Please check that this account is active and you have organised email forwarding. Additional information and any changes to the timetable or lecture and seminar programme will be advised by email, announced in lectures, and posted on the Course Blackboard site.

Course prescription

This course is divided into three 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.

Course content

The course is taught over two trimesters, with certain weeks set aside for students to focus on their coursework. It is split into three modules taught by three lecturers: Justin Sytsma, Sondra Bacharach, and Nicholas Agar (in that order).

Justin Sytsma will be teaching Jim Tabery, *Beyond Versus: The Struggle to Understand the Interaction of Nature and Nurture* (MIT Press, 2014).

Sondra Bacharach will be teaching one of Christy Mag Uidhir, *Art and Art-Attempts* (OUP, 2013) or Dominic Lopes, *Beyond Art* (OUP, 2014). Sondra will decide which to teach in consultation with the class.

Nicholas Agar will be teaching his own book *The Sceptical Optimist: Why technology isn't the answer to everything* (OUP, 2015).

A quick google search should reveal more information on each of these books. They should be available on-line in their entirety through Victoria University library's catalogue. More detailed information about the course content will be given in the first class of each module.

Class Schedule

Weeks 1-6: Justin's Teaching

Weeks 7&8: Working On First Essay

Weeks 9-14: Sondra's Teaching

Weeks 15&16: Working on Second Essay

Weeks 17-22: Nick's Teaching

Weeks 23&24: Working on Third Essay

Learning objectives

Students passing the course should be able to:
1. advance their knowledge of several key areas of contemporary philosophy
2. demonstrate their abilities to undertake logical and critical thinking, especially as it pertains to contemporary debates in philosophy.
3. practise and improve their critical writing skills.

Graduate attributes

As with all Philosophy 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/about/overview-of-the-school/phil-overview#grad-attributes

Teaching format

This course will involve one seminar per week during teaching time. Seminars will run for one hour and fifty minutes. The weekly meetings will include lecturing and discussion. Students are expected to attend all classes, take part in class discussion, and keep up with the reading.

Workload

In accordance with the University Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote a total of 300 hours to PHIL 409, including 36 hours of seminars. This includes weekly attendance at seminars and revision for, and completion of all, set assessment tasks. The University's Assessment Handbook stipulates that course outlines should "specify the average time that is notionally assigned to the completion of each assessment task." Notional assignments of completion times appear below (which excludes the times required for attendance at seminars, reading for class and preparation for presentations):

Essay 1: 50 hours

Essay 2: 50 hours

Essay 3: 50 hours

Assessment

Assessment Item	Weighting	CLOs	Due Date
Essay, 3000-3500 words on Justin's section	33 $1/_3$%	1,2,3	24 April, 5.00 pm
Essay, 3000-3500 words on Sondra's section	33 $1/_3$%	1,2,3	24 July, 5.00 pm
Essay, 3000-3500 words on Nick's section	33 $1/_3$%	1,2,3	16 Oct, 5.00 pm

PHIL 409 is assessed on the basis of three essays. Each essay is worth 1/3 of the final grade.

These essays will assess your knowledge of the material covered in class and in readings, your capacity to select and develop a viable writing project, your ability to undertake independent research and develop independent ideas, and your skills at critically analyzing philosophical arguments relevant to your chosen topics.

Submission of work

All essays must be submitted in two ways. A copy of the essay must first be submitted digitally via Blackboard. Make sure you save your file as a Microsoft Word document. The title of your file should have the following format: last name, underscore, first name, underscore, essay number, dot, doc/docx (for example: smith_john_5.docx). Please also ensure that pages are numbered. A hard copy of the essay must then be submitted to one of the school administrators located in MY518. Indicative grades and comments will be posted on Blackboard.

Extensions and Penalties

- Late submission of assessment tasks will not get a grade higher than a C- unless the student makes an appointment as soon as practically possible with the course coordinator to explain the lateness (preferably before the assessment task is due to be submitted). The circumstances under which an extension will be considered are outlined in section 3.2.1 of the Assessment Handbook. (See: http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf).

Student feedback

No formal student feedback has been sought in previous years. Students will be asked to evaluate the course in 2015. Student feedback on University courses may be found at: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progess (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library/resources/subjectcontacts.html
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz