



## FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

### SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

#### PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME PHIL209: SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSPIRACY THEORIES 20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 2 2015

#### Important dates

**Trimester dates:** 13 July to 15 November 2015

**Teaching dates:** 13 July to 16 October 2015

**Mid-trimester break:** 24 August to 6 September 2015

**Last assessment item due:** 30 October 2015

**Study period:** 19–23 October 2015

**Examination/Assessment Period:** 23 October to 14 November 2015

Note: students who enrol in courses with examinations must be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the scheduled examination period.

**Withdrawal dates:** Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

#### Class times and locations

Lectures: Monday 14:10-16:00, Wednesday 15:10-17:00

Venue: Murphy (MY)LT220

#### Names and contact details

Course Coordinator: AProf Stuart Brock  
Room No.: MY 701  
Phone: (04) 463-6970  
Email: [stuart.brock@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:stuart.brock@vuw.ac.nz)  
Office hours: By Appointment

Lecturer: AProf Marc Wilson  
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Email: [marc.wilson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:marc.wilson@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.

## 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.

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

1. undertake basic research under supervision in the disciplines of psychology and philosophy;
2. distinguish conspiracy theories from other closely related theories of social phenomena;
3. evaluate the evidence in support of conspiracy theories;
4. understand the conditions required for the development and maintenance of conspiracy theories;
5. discriminate between various moral and ethical considerations that apply to conspiracies and conspiracy theorising.

## Teaching format

Monday's class will be a traditional two-hour lecture and will require students to come to class prepared, having closely read one assigned article for the week. Wednesday's class will be conducted in tutorial style and students will be expected to contribute to discussion.

## Mandatory course requirements

There are no mandatory course requirements.

## Workload

In accordance with University Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 200 hours to the course throughout the trimester. This total includes the following:

- weekly attendance at lectures (48 hours);
- completion of all set weekly readings for reading quizzes and lecture (22 hours);
- research exercise (10-20 hours);
- research and writing for first essay (40-60 hours);
- research and writing for second essay (40-60 hours).

## Assessment

Assessment items and workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
1 Weekly Reading Quiz (3% each)	30%	2,3,4,5	N/A
2 Research Assignment (Extended Bibliography)	10%	1	3 August, 13:00
3 First Essay (2,500-3,000 words)	30%	1,2,3	7 September, 13:00
4 Second Essay (2,500-3,000 words)	30%	1,4	30 October, 13:00

## Submission and return of work

Reading quizzes will be taken at the start of each class on Monday, beginning in week 2. Latecomers will not be permitted to take a make-up test. Tests will be returned the following Wednesday.

Other assessment tasks (essays, research assignment) must 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). Grades and feedback will be posted on blackboard within two to three weeks of submission.

## Extensions

Late submission of assessment tasks (research assignment, essays) will not be accepted 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: [www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf)).

## Set texts

There is no textbook or book of readings students will be required to purchase for this course. Instead, a reading list is provided on blackboard. All readings are accessible from the library. Students will be expected to source this material for themselves.

## Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. The class representative's contact details will be posted on blackboard in the first week of lectures.

## Student feedback

PHIL 209 is a Special Topic Course. As such, this course bears no relation to previous iterations of PHIL 209. Consequently, no changes to the course have been made based on the feedback of previous students enrolled in PHIL 209.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at the following url:

[www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://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](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Aegrotats: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)

- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Resolving academic issues: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Special passes: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)
- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Student Contract: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Subject Librarians: [library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian](http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian)
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- Victoria graduate profile: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)