



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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

***PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME***  
**PHIL 105 The Big Questions**

20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 1 2016

**Key dates**

**Trimester dates:** 29 February to 29 June 2016

**Teaching dates:** 29 February to 5 June 2016

**Easter break:** 24–30 March 2016

**Mid-trimester break:** 25 April to 1 May 2016

**Study period:** 6–9 June 2016

**Examination/Assessment Period:** 10–29 June 2016

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 in the last three weeks of teaching, or an examination, it may instead be possible to apply for an aegrotat (refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)).

**Class times and locations**

	Stream 1 (CRN 27002)	Stream 2 (CRN 1004)
Lectures:	Mon, Wed, & Fri: 12.00-12.50pm	Mon, Wed, & Fri: 3.10-4.00pm
Venue:	Hunter LT323	Maclaurin LT102

**Tutorials:**

Students must sign up to a tutorial group using **myAllocator**, which can be accessed from the Tools section on the [Current Students](#) homepage. Tutorials begin in week 2 of the trimester. Tutors will be announced in class and on Blackboard. A list of tutorial topics will be available at the start of term (posted on Blackboard). The topic of each week's tutorial will be the material covered in lectures in the previous week.

## Names and contact details

Course Coordinator: Richard Joyce  
Room no: Murphy 713  
Phone: 463 5699  
Email: richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz  
Office hours: By appointment

Lecturer: Josh Parsons  
Room no: Murphy 711  
Phone: TBA  
Email: josh.parsons@ccc.ox.ac.uk  
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 that 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 considers some of the most difficult questions about life. Possible topics: What's the meaning of life? Does God exist? What is human nature? Are we free? Is there a single true morality? Is there life after death? Would it be good to live forever? What is happiness?

## Course content

The first half of the course is taught by Richard Joyce. Richard's lectures will address the following questions: What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of death? What is human nature? Are humans always selfish? What do we know and how do we know it? The second half of the course will be taught by Josh Parsons. Josh's lectures will address the following questions: Does God exist? Are the past and future as real as the present? If so, could we travel into the past or future? What is love? Do we love people just for who they are, or because of what they are like? What is truth? Are some propositions neither true nor false? Are some both true and false?

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

1. demonstrate a broad introductory-level knowledge of the topics covered in the course
2. apply this knowledge in the critical analysis to the central philosophical issues raised by these topics
3. develop and practice their critical writing skills.

## Teaching format

PHIL105 is delivered as three 50-minute lectures per week and a 50-minute tutorial per week. There are two streams for the lectures (i.e., all noon lectures are repeated, at a different venue, at 3.10pm of the same day).

**Lectures:** The lectures are a core foundation for learning.

**Tutorials:** The tutorials reinforce the lecture experience and allow students to discuss the material in an informal small group setting.

## Workload

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 200 hours to the course throughout the year. An approximate indication of the hours to be spent on each component of the course is as follows:

Preparation and attendance at classes 100 hours

Breakdown of assessment:

In-class tests	15 hours	
Tutorial exercises	15 hours	
Essay	35 hours	
Examination	35 hours	(= total 200 hours)

## Assessment

Assessment Item	Weighting	CLOs	Due Date
In-class test (50 minutes)	15%	1,2,3	1 April
Tutorial exercises (best 5 out of 6)	15%	1,2	See below
Essay, 2000 words	35%	1,2,3	2 May - 5.00 pm
Final Exam (two hours)	35%	1,2,3	10-29 June

1. **In-class test:** An in-class test will be held on Friday April 1, during the usual lecture time.
2. **Tutorial exercises:** Over the course of the trimester there will be six exercises held during tutorials. A student's *five* best test results will count toward 15% of his/her final grade (and the weakest result will be ignored). These tests begin in week 2 of term (i.e., the first tutorial), and thereafter in weeks 4/5, 7, 9, 11, and 13. These will be very short tests, more like mini-quizzes. There will be no make-up tests for students who miss the tutorial without a documented excuse.
3. **Essay:** The essay should be approximately 2000 words long and must be typed. It is worth 35% of the final grade. Essays must be submitted electronically to Blackboard; a hard copy is not required. The essay is due no later than **5.00pm on Monday, 2 May**. The essay topics will be available on Blackboard.

4. **Final examination:** The date and time will be announced later in the trimester, but will fall some time between 10th and 29th of June. The exam consists of three essay questions, and is worth 35% of the final grade.

The tutorial exercises will assess your knowledge of the material covered in lectures during the previous week, the in-class test will assess your understanding of the material given in previous weeks, the essay will assess your knowledge of the topics and ability to critically analyze the central philosophical issues, and the examination will focus on the comprehension and understanding of the topics in the latter part of the course.

## Submission and return of work

Essays must be submitted electronically to Blackboard; a hard copy is not required. The title of your file should have the following format: last name, underscore, first name, underscore, dot, doc/docx (for example: smith\_mary.docx). Please also ensure that pages are numbered. Grades will be posted on Blackboard.

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com). **Turnitin** is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material.

## Extensions and penalties

### Extensions

The development of work discipline and time management skills are an important part of the education process and it is expected that each student takes responsibility for allocating sufficient time for their studies.

Students needing an extension should make an appointment as soon as practically possible with the course coordinator, Richard Joyce, to explain the lateness (preferably before the assignment 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)).

There will be no make-up tests for students who miss the tutorial without a documented excuse.

### Penalties

Philosophy Programme policy stipulates that late submission of essays is penalised if no extension has been granted. Late essays submitted without extensions having been obtained will receive a penalty of 5 points per week (or part thereof) late.

## Set texts

There is no required textbook for PHIL 105. Every week there is a set reading posted on Blackboard which students will be expected to have read prior to the lectures, and to have thought about (and be ready to discuss) for the following week's tutorial.

In addition, lecturers will post extra readings on Blackboard grouped according to topic.

## Recommended reading

Simon Blackburn's book, *The Big Questions*, provides useful background reading (but is not an official textbook).

## Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course.

## Student feedback

Based on student feedback in recent years, the way the course is assessed has been broken down into smaller exercises and emphasis has been taken off the examination (now worth 35% rather than 50%). Student feedback on University courses may be found at [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)
- 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)
- Special passes: refer to the *Assessment Handbook*, at [www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf)
- 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)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Terms and conditions: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- 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)