



School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations
Te Hunga Aro Whakamuri

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
Trimester 2, 2007

PHIL328: ETHICS AND GENETICS
CRN 10178

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Coordinator: Nick Agar
Room: Murphy Building, MY601
Phone: 4635046
Email: Nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12

Lectures: Tuesday, 9 - 11:50
Venue: Murphy Room 632, MY632

Additional Information: Any additional information or notices about this course will be posted on Blackboard

COURSE AIMS:

PHIL 328 course explores a variety of issues that arise in connection with the modern scientific revelations about the alterability of human and nonhuman nature. We will begin by exploring the moral and scientific underpinnings of the Transhumanist movement. The transhumanists are a group of increasingly influential thinkers who think that we should be using available technologies to transcend our humanity by radically extending our life spans and enhancing our intellects. We then turn to the debate provoked by research into human stem cells. Does the prospect of a regenerative medicine that might cure hitherto poorly treated diseases justify the moral costs involved in conducting research on human embryos? The final topic is the debate over the genetic modification of food. Will GM feed the hungry and reduce humanity's burden on the environment – or are they another tool for the rich to exploit both the poor and nature?

COURSE CONTENT:

The exact content of PHIL 328 is detailed in a separate handout.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students who pass the course will have acquired a good understanding of some of the central ethical issues connected with the prospect of scientifically modifying human and nonhuman nature.

ESSENTIAL TEXTS:

All of the reading materials for this course will be posted on Blackboard.

Assessment

There will be two essays (25% each), three short answer tests (the best two marks to jointly contribute 10%) and an exam (40%).

- (i) **Essay:** The essays should each be approximately **2,500-3,000 words**. The due date for the first essay will be **Friday 17 August 2007**. The due date for the second essay is **Friday 28 September 2007**. **Each essay is worth 25%** of your total course marks. **You must submit your essays electronically via Blackboard** (please consult *Blackboard* for instructions). **This electronic version will be sent to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism website, and is the version that will be graded.** However, as a back-up **you must also submit a hard copy of your essay to the Philosophy Department office (MY 508).**

Essays submitted after the due date will be accepted but they will not receive written comments. There will be no grade penalty for late essays. The final date for the submission of any written work for this course is October 19. No essay can be accepted after this date.

- (ii) **In-class tests:** The dates of the short answer tests are as follows:
Tuesday 24 July,
Tuesday 4 September,
 and **Tuesday 25 September.**
 The tests will take up the **final hour of the lecture**. Their purpose is to evaluate students' awareness of the literature covered in the course.
- (iii) **Exam:** The final piece of assessment is a **three hour, closed book**, registry-administered exam **worth 40%** of your total course marks. The date of the examination is set later in the trimester by the Registrar but will fall within the date range of **19 October to 10 November 2007**. You should answer any three questions – the exam will **not** be divided into sections. You should avoid overlap between exam answers.

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities in assessment procedures.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND OBJECTIVES

The essay gives students an opportunity for a relatively philosophically in-depth treatment of one of the issues covered in the course. The in-class tests should ensure that students are keeping up with the issues and literature as the course proceeds.

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

All essays 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, dot, doc (for example: frodo_baggins.doc). If you have trouble using this function, make sure you see the course coordinator *before the due date*.

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS

All essays will be submitted to and evaluated by **TurnItIn.com**, an on-line plagiarism detection service, before being graded. Please refer to the information below relating to plagiarism in order to avoid any confusion as to what constitutes plagiarism.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each PHIL328 student must:

- Submit the essays on or by the specified dates.

PLEASE NOTE that **Friday, 19 October 2007** is the **FINAL DATE** on which any written work can be accepted by the Programme, since this is the date on which we must determine whether students have met the course requirements. This means that the provision for late submission with a penalty does not apply beyond this date. Permission to submit work after 19 October 2007 must be sought in writing from the Head of Programme, Dr Cei Maslen, and will only be granted for serious medical reasons (supported by medical certificate), or in case of serious personal crisis.

Note: A student who has obtained an overall mark of 50% or more, but failed to satisfy a mandatory requirement for a course, will receive a K grade for that course, while a course mark less than 50% will result in the appropriate fail grade (D, E or F).

Workload guidelines

In accordance with Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 18 hours per week to PHIL328. This includes three hours of lectures.

AEGROTATS

Please note that under the revised Examination Statute (Sections 6-10) students may now apply for an aegrotat pass in respect of any item of assessment falling within the last three weeks before the day on which lectures cease. In the case of second trimester courses in 2007 the starting point for this period is **Monday, 24 September 2007**.

The following rules apply:

- Where a student is not able to sit a test falling within these last three weeks because of illness or injury etc., an alternative test will be arranged where possible. If the student has completed in the view of the course-supervisor, sufficient marked assessment relevant to the objectives of the course, an average mark may be offered.
- Where a student has an essay or other piece of assessment due in the last three weeks, and has a medical certificate or other appropriate documentation, the student will be given an extension.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means **no cheating**. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. Plagiarism is **prohibited** at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is 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. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.

Plagiarism is not worth the risk.

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct (www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- suspension from class or university
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course.

Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at:
www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS

General University policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hard copy or under 'About Victoria' on the VUW home page at www.vuw.ac.nz.

Student and staff conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct

Academic grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances

Students with Impairments (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building; telephone: 463-6070, email: disability@vuw.ac.nz. The Disability Liaison Person for the Philosophy Programme is Sophia Zhao, tel. 463 5368 or email sophia.zhao@vuw.ac.nz

Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contact is **Dr Allison Kirkman, Murphy Building, room 407 and Dr Stuart Brock, Murphy Building, room 312**. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Maori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: student-services@vuw.ac.nz) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at: www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/

VUWSA employs Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at education@vuwsa.org.nz) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

Manaaki Pihipihinga Maori and Pacific Mentoring programme

1. Academic mentoring for all Maori & Pacific students at all levels of under graduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social sciences. Contact Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses
2. Post graduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities
3. Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact: Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz or phone 463 5842

We are located at: 14 Kelburn Parade back court yard Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Maori Studies mentoring is done at the marae. Pop in and see us to register with the programme (and use our study spaces and computer suites and free cups of tea and coffee while you study)