



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

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
Trimester 3, 2007

PHIL 123: Critical Thinking
CRN 14512 and 13093

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Coordinator: Dr Stuart Brock
Room: Murphy Building, MY 701
Phone: 463-6970
Email: Stuart.Brock@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: See Schedule of Office Hours (posted on PHIL 123
blackboard course page)
Lectures: See Timetable and Lecture Outline (posted on PHIL 123
blackboard course page)
Venue: Hunter Building, HU 220

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

COURSE AIMS:

This course aims to provide an introduction to the theory and practice of critical thinking. Students will learn how to evaluate arguments and weigh up the evidence in support of a conclusion. Students will also learn how to make rational decisions based on the hypotheses they come to believe after consideration of such arguments.

COURSE CONTENT:

PHIL 123 covers two related topics—theoretical rationality and practical rationality—and is taught through ten different modules. *Theoretical Rationality*: Truth and Other Perspectives; Argument Reconstruction; Argument Evaluation; Argument Diagramming; Fallacies and Errors in Judgment. *Practical Rationality*: Basic Decision Theory; Probability and Statistical Reasoning; Decisions under Uncertainty or Ignorance; Creative Thinking and Problem Solving; Game Theory. A more detailed lecture outline is posted on blackboard.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students who pass the course will be able to think creatively and critically. They should be able to making rational and independent decisions, and communicate their ideas clearly and effectively.

ESSENTIAL TEXTS:

Students must purchase the PHIL 123 course book, available at Student Notes at a cost of \$12.73.

Texts are available from Student Notes. Students can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz, or email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz.

ASSESSMENT:

This is an internally assessed course. The assessment will be based on the following: One assignment (worth 40%); and two tests (worth 30% each).

ASSIGNMENT: The assignment is due on Friday January 25, 2007 before 4:00 pm. Assignments should be handed in to Sophia Zhao in the Philosophy Programme Office (MY 518). The assignment will require students to analyse someone else's argument (in an editorial, journal article, policy statements, etc.) using the methods and tools discussed in lecture. More details of the assignment are posted on blackboard. Late assignments will only be accepted if the student has a legitimate excuse for failing to get it in on time. Requests for an extension should be made *before* the due date, and should be directed to the course coordinator. If the reason is medical, a doctor's certificate must accompany the request. An excuse will count as legitimate only if it can be demonstrated that you could not reasonably have been expected to hand the assignment in on time given your circumstances. The course coordinator will decide what is reasonable in these circumstances.

TESTS: After completing the ten modules, students should sit two short answer tests: one on theoretical rationality (TR), the other on practical rationality (PR). Times and locations for each test appear below:

Morning Stream:

Monday December 17: Theoretical Rationality Test (9:00-10:50) Hunter 220

Tuesday December 18: Practical Rationality Test (9:00-10:50) Hunter 220

Afternoon Stream:

Monday December 17: Practical Rationality Test (1:10-3:00) Hunter 220

Tuesday December 18: Theoretical Rationality Test (1:10-3:00) Hunter 220

Students who miss a test will have the opportunity to sit a make up test only if they have a legitimate excuse for missing it. Requests to do a make-up test must be made as soon as possible after the test date, and should be directed to the course coordinator. If the reason is medical, a doctor's certificate must accompany the request. An excuse will count as legitimate only if it can be demonstrated that you could not reasonably have been expected to make it to the test given your circumstances. The course coordinator will decide what is reasonable in these circumstances.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND OBJECTIVES

The two tests evaluate students' knowledge of the theory of critical and creative thinking. The assignment gives students an opportunity to apply that knowledge in an in-depth manner.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is recommended but not required. It is the student's responsibility to catch up on missing material if they have missed a lecture. The lecturer will *not* cover material discussed in lectures on an individual basis.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are no mandatory course requirements for PHIL 123.

WORKLOAD GUIDELINES

The workload per week will depend on how quickly a student hopes to complete the course. (This course aims to give students a significant degree of flexibility here.) The overall workload, however, should be roughly equivalent to any first year 100 level subject. The University's guideline for a 100-level 18 point course is 180 hours in total, including class time.

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 (or thereafter). Normally the candidate should have completed 30% of the course assessment before a pass can be approved.

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 on the VUW website at

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar.aspx>

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 queries 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.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx

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

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/staff.aspx

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; the VUWSA Education Coordinator is 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.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/students.aspx

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

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Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct. All cases will be recorded on a central database and severe penalties may be imposed. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

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

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

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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 name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

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. 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.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/

VUWSA employs an Education Coordinator who deals with academic problems and provides 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.