



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

## **Philosophy Programme**

**First Trimester, 2008**

**PHIL 307 (CRN 9173) Theories of Existence  
Course Information Sheet**

**LECTURER:** Dr J L Shaw

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**Email:** jay.shaw@vuw.ac.nz

**Office Hours:** Monday and Tuesday 12-2 pm

**LECTURE TIMES:** Tuesday and Thursday 10am-12noon

**VENUE:** Kirk (KK) LT 202

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Any additional information or handouts will be announced or circulated in the lectures.

### **COURSE AIMS**

In this course we will discuss concepts of existence in modern and contemporary western philosophy. This paper will investigate the theories of existence in philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Frege, Russell, Moore, Quine, and existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre. Topics include singular and general existence, existence and essence, particular and universal, existence and predicate, existence and description, and the nature of human existence.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the course, students should:

- (a) Be familiar with some of the systems of western philosophy such as idealism, realism, and existentialism;
- (b) Have an understanding of theories of meaning and existence;
- (c) Be aware of metaphysical presuppositions of some of the contemporary philosophers such as Frege, Russell and Quine;
- (d) Be able to compare and contrast the arguments of philosophers.

### **COURSE CONTENT**

See separate handout entitled 'Reading List and Course Outline'.

## **COURSE READING**

Textbooks can be purchased from Student Notes Distribution Centre located in the Student Union Building on Kelburn Campus. Books of Reading are distributed from the Student Notes Shop on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz) or can email an order or enquiry to [enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz). Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from the shop the day after placing an order online.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays)

10.00 am – 1.00 pm Saturdays.

Phone: 463 5515

## **ASSESSMENT**

One 3-hour Registry-conducted final examination, carrying 40% of the final assessment, and two final essays, each carrying 30% of the final assessment. The final examination is open-book, and it will be held between 6 and 28 June 2008.

## **FINAL ESSAYS**

The first final essay will be due on 2 May, 2008 and the second one will be due on 6 June 2008.

Overlaps between exam and essay topics are to be avoided. An essay may not exceed 3000 words.

## **OPTIONAL ESSAYS**

Students are encouraged to write two essays during the course. These essays are optional and not part of the final assessment. They will be commented on and returned to the candidates. The optional essays should be submitted on the following dates: 11 April 2008; 16 May 2008.

## **PENALTIES**

Students will be penalised for late submission of essays—a deduction of 5% for the first day late, and 2% per day thereafter, up to a maximum of 8 days. Work that is more than 8 days late can be accepted for mandatory course requirements but will not be marked. However, penalties may be waived if there are valid grounds, e.g., illness (presentation of a medical certificate will be necessary) or similar other contingencies. In such cases prior information will be necessary.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Assessment has been structured so as to ensure that some of the modern philosophers or some topics are studied in depth. Questions in the exam will ask you to demonstrate an understanding of some of the topics of philosophy such as existence, essence, particular, universal and predicate.

## **METHOD OF SUBMISSION**

All final essays are to be submitted digitally in Blackboard.

### **Directions for submission via Blackboard:**

- (1) click on the 'Assignments' icon in the course menu (to the left of the page).
- (2) select 'View/Complete Assignment' for the relevant assignment.
- (3) click the 'Browse' icon, and then select your essay.
- (4) then click 'Submit'.

## **WORKLOAD**

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 18 hours per week to this course. This includes 3 hours of lectures and 1 hour of tutorial per week.

**TERMS**

Terms are granted to all enrolled members of the course. All students enrolled in the course will be entitled to sit the final examination.

**ATTENDANCE**

Students are advised to attend lectures and take an active role in discussion, although attendance is not a requirement for terms or assessment.

**AEGROTATS**

Please note that under the Assessment Statute (Sections 4.5) 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 **first** trimester courses in 2008 the starting point for this period is **Monday 12 May 2008**.

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.
- if none of the above is available to the student, e.g., if she/he has an ongoing illness, than an aegrotat will be considered. See Assessment Statute (Sections 4.5) for a full explanation of the rules governing the provision of aegrotats in these circumstances.

**ESSAY TOPICS:**

1. Plato on existence
2. Aristotle on categories
3. Kant on possibility, actuality and necessity
4. Existence and predicate
5. Existence and being
6. Frege on existence and identity
7. Russell on existence
8. Existence and singular terms
9. Existence and traditional logic
10. Existence and free logic
11. Definitions of existence
12. Existence and essence
13. Universals and resemblances
14. Existence, knowability and nameability
15. Existentialism and humanism
16. Existentialism and freedom
17. Heidegger on inauthentic and authentic existence
18. Sartre on bad faith.

**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. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were ones 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:

[www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx)

## **GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES**

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 hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

[http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about\\_victoria/calendar\\_intro.html](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html)

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support