



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

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
2008 Trimester 2,
Monday 7 July to Saturday 8 November 2008

PHIL105: THE BIG QUESTIONS
CRN 1004

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Coordinator: Nick Agar
Room: Murphy Building, MY601
Phone: x5046
Email: nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: by appointment only

Lecturer: Ramon Das
Room: Murphy Building, MY608
Phone: x5038
Email: ramon.das@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: by appointment only

Lecturer: Matt Gers
Room: Murphy Building, MY621
Phone: x8556
Email: matt.gers@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: Thursday 1-2

Lecturer: Daniel Turton
Room: Murphy Building, MY721
Phone: x8651
Email: daniel.turton@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: Thursday 2-3

Lecturer: Jay Shaw
Room: Murphy Building, MY613
Phone: x8936
Email: jay.shaw@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours: by appointment only

Lectures: Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 11-11:50
Venue: KKLT303

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

Tutors: Robin Aldridge-Sutton, Martin Gray, Daniel Turton, Kate Tappenden

Tutorial Times and Venues: as shown in S-cubed. Tutorials commence in the **second** week of the course

PHIL105 will use S-Cubed for tutorial registration.

Use your internet browser to go to: <https://signups.vuw.ac.nz>.

Use your normal **student login** and **password** to sign into S-Cubed.

Click on "**PHIL105**" You will see info about your course and about the different tutorial sessions.

Sign up to your preferred session by clicking on the "**sign up**" button.

Please note: This sign-up programme is only available from **Monday 7 July to Friday 11 July 2008**.

If you do not sign up during this time, you may be extremely limited in your choice of tutorial time.

If you have any problems, check the handout you were given about S-cubed. If you still have problems please see the Philosophy Programme Administrator, Murphy Building, 5th Floor, MY518.

Attendance at tutorials is not compulsory, but is strongly recommended.

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

PHIL 105 aims to provide an introduction to some central problems in philosophy. The student who passes this course will have acquired an adequate understanding of, and ability to evaluate, arguments and issues from several areas of philosophy. The course should provide a solid foundation for further work in the discipline, and also help students think more carefully and critically about a wide range of issues.

COURSE CONTENT:

Section One (Nick Agar): Olympics Special: Performance Enhancement in Sport (Weeks 1 and 2)

You should expect the Beijing Olympics to bring almost as many stories about failed drug tests as about gold medal performances. In this section we investigate the moral basis of doping controls. Should we persist in testing for banned performance enhancers? Or should we accept them as part of what it takes to produce exceptional performances?

Section Two (Nick Agar): Conscious Minds and Thinking Machines (Weeks 3 and 4)

Is consciousness a purely physical phenomenon? Will it ever be possible to build a thinking machine? In this section we investigate two famous philosophical thought experiments that seek to answer these questions.

Section Three (Ramon Das): Free Will (Weeks 5 and 6)

Do human beings have free will? If we are not free, could we be morally responsible for any of our actions? Could we have free will in a deterministic universe?

Section Four (Matt Gers): What is Mental Health? (Weeks 7 and 8)

This section examines the concepts of disease and illness as pertaining to mental health. We will be asking does mental illness exist? How can something intangible like the mind be diseased? Is mental illness socially constructed, is it real, and is it relative to a certain context?.

Section Five (Dan Turton): Time Travel and the Meaning of Life (Weeks 9 and 10)

This section contains two topics. The first, on time travel, explores what time travel is and whether it's theoretically possible. Much of the material will be discussing the logical paradoxes of time travel into the past and how they might be overcome. The second topic, on the meaning of life, looks at this ancient problem from three different angles: why dying is bad, why there might be less meaning to our lives than we had thought, and then several theories on why we do have meaning in our lives... or at least how we can get it.

Section Six (Jay Shaw): Human beings, Freedom, and Harmony (Weeks 11 and 12)

The aim of this section is to focus on the nature of human beings, freedom, and the concepts of harmony from the perspective of classical Indian philosophers.

ESSENTIAL READINGS:

You should purchase the PHIL 105 Coursebook from the Student Notes shop.

ASSESSMENT:

The assessment for PHIL 105 will be based on:

- (a) **In-Class test** worth **15%** of total course marks. This will be sat **Thursday 31 July 2008** during lecture time (11:00-11:50). Note that this is the only time the test can be sat. If you are unable to sit the test you should contact Nick Agar as soon as possible. Please provide relevant supporting documentation. Please see "Blackboard" for the questions. The date of the examination is set later in the trimester by the Registrar but will fall within the date range of **20 October to 9 November 2008**.
- (b) **Essay of approximately 2,000 words** worth **30%** of total course marks, due **4:00 pm on Friday 19 September 2008**. See the essay handout for further information.
- (c) A **closed-book, three hour**, registry-administered exam **worth 55%** of total course marks. The exam will be divided into four sections. Students will be expected to answer one question from each section. Further information about the exam will be available on "Blackboard."
- (d) Students with examinations are obliged to be present at university until the end of the examination period. Examination dates for trimester two: Friday 17 October to Saturday 8 November 2008.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND COURSE AIMS/OBJECTIVES:

The topics for the essay, in-class test, and final examination are chosen to ensure that the subject matter in the course has been adequately covered in the depth appropriate for the 100-level, while also giving students an opportunity to focus on those arguments and issues that they find most interesting. Students should demonstrate that they understand and can evaluate arguments and issues covered in at least four sections of the course.

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

The essay must be submitted in *two* different ways. A *paper* copy of your essay must be submitted to MY 518, and a *digital* copy of your essay must be submitted to blackboard. Make sure you save your file as a Microsoft Word document. The title of your file should adhere to the following format: last name, underscore, first name, underscore, dot, doc (for example: frodo_baggins.doc). If you suspect you may have trouble submitting your paper in this way, be sure to see your tutor for assistance *before the due date*. The paper copy is only a backup if something goes wrong with the digital submission.

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.

PENALTIES:

Late essays, without extension, will be penalised **one full letter grade per week**. Late essays will also receive no comments. An extension can be granted only with the (prior) approval of the course coordinator, Nick Agar, and only in exceptional circumstances. Procrastination is not a legitimate ground for an extension. If you have other assignments due around September 19, plan ahead. Also be aware that there may be "Blackboard", internet, and printing outages throughout the trimester. Please make sure you are aware of these various ITS outages. A schedule is posted on the following URL:

<http://intranet.vuw.ac.nz/its/serverroom-upgrade/timetable/>. Scheduled outages are also no excuse for lateness.

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. It is in your interests to contact the course coordinator as soon as a potential problem emerges – not just before a deadline. Extension forms are available in the Philosophy Programme office. If granted an extension by the course coordinator, students are required to agree to a new assessment due date.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each PHIL 105 student must:

- Submit the essay on or by the specified date (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of written work)

PLEASE NOTE that **Friday, 17 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 12 hours per week to PHIL105. This includes 3 hours of lectures and a 1 hour tutorial.

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 2008 the starting point for this period is **Monday, 22 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 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 on the VUW home page at

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

or go to: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy/default.aspx>

For information on the following topics, see the corresponding Blackboard files (or similar files or course website pages):

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