

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



**VICTORIA**  
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

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

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM  
2008 TRIMESTER 2**

**PHIL 202: ETHICS  
CRN 3589**

**LECTURER:** Nicholas Agar  
**ROOM:** MY601  
**PHONE:** 4635046  
**EMAIL:** Nicholas.agar@vuw.ac.nz

**LECTURE TIMES:** Tuesday 9:00-11:50am  
**VENUE:** HMLT002

**OFFICE HOURS:** by appointment only

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Information about any changes to the timetable or programme will be announced in lectures and posted on Blackboard. There will be separate hand-outs with information about the lecture outline, essay topics, and readings.

#### **COURSE AIMS**

This course is an introduction to contemporary ethical theory. We begin with an examination of the three most important historical and contemporary traditions in ethical thinking - utilitarianism, Kantianism and virtue theory. We then explore meta-ethical issues. Are ethical statements claims about the natural world or are they reports of psychological dispositions? What's the relationship between ethics and evolution? The course concludes with an investigation of the ethical status of friendship and of issues connected with the boundaries of the moral community.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students who pass the course will have a good understanding of some of the central issues in contemporary moral philosophy. They will be able to recognize, employ and critically analyze utilitarian, Kantian and virtue ethical arguments. They will also have an appreciation of how ethical theories connect with our understanding of the natural world.

#### **LECTURE OUTLINE**

July 8: Introduction to Ethics; Utilitarianism part 1  
July 15: Utilitarianism part 2: What is happiness?  
July 22: Kantianism  
July 29: Morality and humanity. Introduction to Virtue Ethics  
August 5: Virtue Ethics part 2: Do character traits exist?  
August 12: Introduction to meta-ethics: Ethical Relativism

September 2: J. L. Mackie's Error Theory  
 September 9: Moral Realism  
 September 16: Evolutionary Ethics  
 September 23: Morality and Friendship  
 September 30: The Boundaries of the Moral Community  
 October 7: Mystery Topic

### **COURSE READING**

You should purchase the PHIL 202/302 Coursebook from from the Student Notes Shop on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

### **ASSESSMENT**

There will be one essay (30%), three short answer tests (the best two marks to jointly contribute 10%) and an exam (60%).

i. Essay: The essay should be approximately 2500-3000 words long. The due date is September 26. **You must submit your essay 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 518) by 4:30pm on the due date.**

Essays submitted after the due date will be accepted but they will receive only limited written comments. There will be no grade penalty for late essays. The final submission date is October 17. Essays submitted after his date will not be marked.

ii. In-class tests: The dates of the short answer tests are as follows – July 29, September 9, September 30. The tests will take up the final 30 minutes of the lecture. Their purpose is evaluate students' awareness of the literature in the coursebook.

iii. Exam: There will be a closed-book three hour exam for this course.

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

#### **Relationship between assessment and course 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.

### **MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

To gain a pass in this course each student must submit the written work specified for this course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work)

PLEASE NOTE that **17 October** 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.

**NB:** 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**

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 15 hours per week to PHIL 202. This includes 3 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 **first** trimester courses in 2006 the starting point for this period is **Monday 15 May**.

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 Examination Statute 6-10 for a full explanation of the rules governing the provision of aegrotats in these circumstances.

### **GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly those regarding assessment and course of study requirements, and formal academic grievance procedures.

#### **Student Conduct 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 can be taken if there is a complaint. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor. This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at:

[www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct](http://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](http://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 or, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean of your faculty. Class representatives are available to assist you with 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:

[www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances).

#### **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](http://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](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html).

**Students with Disabilities**

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities an equal opportunity with all 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 Co-ordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the options and support that are available. Disability Support Services are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

Telephone: 463-6070

Email: [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz)

The name of your School’s Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the Administrative Assistant.

**Student Support**

Staff at Victoria want students' learning experiences at the University to be positive. If your academic progress is causing you concern, the following staff members will either help you directly or quickly put you in contact with someone who can.

	<b>Staff member</b>	<b>Location</b>
FHSS	Dr Allison Kirkman	Murphy Building, room 407
Law	Kirstin Harvey	Old Govt Building, room 103
Science, and Architecture and Design	Liz Richardson	Cotton Building, room 150
Commerce and Administration	Colin Jeffcoat	Railway West Wing, room 119
Kaiwawao Maori	Liz Rawhiti	Old Kirk, room 007
Manaaki Pihipihinga	Melissa Dunlop	14 Kelburn Parade, room 109D
Victoria International	Matthias Nebel	Rutherford House, room 206

The Student Services Group is also available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

[www.vuw.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/)

Email: [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz).

VUWSA employs two 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 is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building:

Telephone 463 6983 or 463 6984

Email: [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz).