



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PHILOSOPHY
PHIL 105: The Big Questions

20 POINTS
TRIMESTER 1 2014

Important dates

Trimester dates: 3 March to 2 July 2014

Teaching dates: 3 March to 6 June 2014

Easter/Mid-trimester break: 18 April to 4 May 2014

Study week: 9 – 13 June 2014

Examination/Assessment Period: 13 June to 2 July 2014

Note: students who enrol in courses with examinations must be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the scheduled examination period.

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Lectures

Lectures: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays: 11:00-11:50 am.

Venue: Maclaurin Lecture Theatre 103

Tutorials

Students must sign up to a tutorial group. Tutorials begin in week 2 of the trimester. Tutors will be announced in class and on Blackboard. For tutorial times and venues see:

www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/timetables

A list of tutorial topics will be available at the start of term (posted on Blackboard). The topic of each week's tutorial will be the material covered in lectures in the previous week.

Names and contact details

Course Coordinator: Professor Richard Joyce
Room No: Murphy 713
Phone: 463 5699
Email: richard.joyce@vuw.ac.nz
Office hours: By appointment

Lecturer: Dr Justin Sytsma
Room No: Murphy 710
Phone: 463 9658
Email: jmsytsma@vuw.ac.nz
Office hours: By appointment

Communication of additional information

This course uses Blackboard and presumes that all enrolled students have valid myvuw.ac.nz addresses. Please check that this account is active and you have organised email forwarding. Additional information and any changes to the timetable or lecture and tutorial programme will be advised by email, announced in lectures, and posted on the course Blackboard site.

Prescription

This course considers some of the most difficult questions about life. Possible topics: What's the meaning of life? Does God exist? What is human nature? Are we free? Is there a single true morality? Is there life after death? Would it be good to live forever? What is happiness?

Course content

The first four weeks of the course are taught by Richard Joyce, while the remaining eight weeks are taught by Justin Sytsma. Richard's lectures will address the following questions: What is the meaning of life? What is the meaning of death? What is human nature? Are humans always selfish? What is happiness? Justin will cover the following topics: What do we know? Am I a ghost in a machine? Can machines think? Am I free? Why be good? Is it all relative? Does time go by?

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

1. demonstrate a broad introductory-level knowledge of the topics covered in the course
2. apply this knowledge in the critical analysis some of the central philosophical issues raised by these topics
3. develop and practise their critical writing skills.

Teaching format

PHIL 105 will involve three 50-minute lectures and one 50-minute tutorial per week. The presumption is that each student will attend all classes (so if information is given in lectures or tutorials, we will assume that all students have it).

Mandatory requirements

There are no mandatory requirements for PHIL 105.

Workload

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 200 hours to the course throughout the year. An approximate indication of the hours to be spent on each component of the course is as follows:

Preparation and attendance at classes	100 hours	
Breakdown of assessment:		
In-class tests	15 hours	
Essay	35 hours	
Examination	50 hours	(= total 200 hours)

Assessment

Assessment Item	Weighting	CLOs	Due Date
Five in-class tests (best of three)	15%	1,2,3	See below
Essay, 2000 words	35%	1,2,3	5 May - 5.00 pm
Final Exam (three hours)	50%	1,2,3	13 June to 2 July 2014

1. **In-class tests:** Over the course of the trimester there will be five in-class tests. A student's *three* best test results will count toward 15% of the final grade (and the weakest two results will be ignored). These tests will be held *in tutorials*, starting in week 3 of term (i.e., the second tutorial), and thereafter in weeks 5, 7, 9, and 11. These will be very short tests, more like mini-quizzes. There will be no make-up tests for students who miss the tutorial without a documented excuse.

2. **Essay:** The essay should be approximately 2000 words long and must be typed. It is worth 35% of the final grade. Essays must be submitted electronically to Blackboard; a hard copy is not required. The essay is due no later than **5pm on Monday, 5 May**. The essay topics will be available on Blackboard.

3. **Final examination:** The date and time will be announced later in the trimester, but will fall some time between 13 June and 2 July. The exam consists of four essay questions, and is worth 50% of the final grade.

The in-class tests will assess your knowledge of the material covered in lectures during the previous week, the essay will assess your knowledge of the topics and ability to critically analyse the central philosophical issues, and the examination will focus on the comprehension and understanding of the topics in the latter part of the course.

Submission and return of work

Essays must be submitted electronically to Blackboard; a hard copy is not required. Essays and tests will be returned at times to be advised. If students fail to attend these times, they may collect their essay from the Office, Murphy Room 518, between the hours of 2.00 and 3.00 pm from Monday to Friday and must show their Student ID card before collection.

Extensions and penalties

Extensions

Extensions can be granted only with the prior approval of the course coordinator, only in exceptional circumstances, and only with supporting documentation. Having lots of other assignments due around the same time is no excuse; plan ahead. If granted an extension, students must agree to a new due date. Contact the course coordinator as soon as a problem emerges.

Penalties

Philosophy Programme policy stipulates that late submission of essays is penalised. For each week or part thereof of lateness, a late assignment gets a 5 point penalty, up to three weeks, after which the assignment will get a zero mark (i.e., 1-7 days late = a loss of 5%; 8-14 days late = a loss of 10 %; 15-21 days late = a loss of 15%, and after that a zero mark).

Set texts

There is no required textbook for PHIL 105. Much of the material for Justin's part of the course (weeks 5-12) will draw on Simon Blackburn's book, *The Big Questions*, which is available for purchase as an ebook at various places on-line for a reasonable price. All other readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Every week there is a set reading which students will be expected to have read prior to the lectures, and to have thought about (and be ready to discuss) for the following week's tutorial.

In addition, lecturers will post extra readings on Blackboard grouped according to topic.

Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:

Student feedback

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course. Student feedback on University courses may be found at

www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library/resources/subjectcontacts.html>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz