



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
PHIL 403: METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY
30 POINTS**

TRIMESTERS 1 and 2, 2014

Important Dates

Trimester dates: 3 March to 16 November 2014

Teaching dates: 3 March to 17 October 2014

Mid-trimester breaks: 18 April to 4 May 2014; 25 August to 7 September 2014

Mid-year break: 3 – 13 July 2014

Last piece of assessment due: 27 October 2014

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 the following webpage www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Seminars

Tuesdays 1:00-2:50 Murphy LT617 during trimester 1

Thursdays 10:00-11:50 Murphy LT 617 during trimester 2

Names and contact details

Lecturer	Cei Maslen (Course Coordinator)	Max Cresswell	Simon Keller
Office	MY707	MY721	MY720
Phone	(04) 463-6524	(04) 463-6902 or call home number (see course handout)	(04) 463-9638
Email	Cei.Maslen@vuw.ac.nz	Max.Cresswell@vuw.ac.nz	Simon.Keller@vuw.ac.nz
Office Hours	By Appointment	3-4pm Tuesdays	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 seminar programme will be advised by email, announced in lectures, and posted on the Course Blackboard site.

Course prescription

This course examines several topics in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology. These may include the problem of universals, the nature of time, free will, causation and possibility.

Course content

The first eight-week section of the course will be taught by Max Cresswell on Russell's *Philosophy of Logical Atomism* and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. The second eight week section will be taught by Cei Maslen on causation. The final eight-week section will be taught by Simon Keller on the ethics of belief, looking at such questions as "Should we only ever base our beliefs on the evidence?" "Should we change our beliefs when we find out that other people disagree with us?" and "When do stories about the evolutionary origins of our beliefs show that our beliefs are not justified?"

More detailed information about the course content will be given in the first class of each module.

Learning objectives

Students passing the course should be able to:

1. understand and appreciate the current state of research and knowledge in a variety of fields within analytic philosophy,
2. properly evaluate current and future research within those fields, and
3. under supervision, embark on a research project within those fields.

Graduate attributes

As with all Philosophy courses, learning objectives of this course contribute to the attainment of specific attributes in the areas of logical and critical thinking, conceptual analysis and rational and ethical decision-making. For more details please consult our website:

www.victoria.ac.nz/hppi/about/overview-of-the-school/phil-overview#grad-attributes

Teaching format

This course will involve one seminar per week in the first and second trimesters. Seminars will run for one hour and 50 minutes.

Mandatory course requirements

There are no mandatory course requirements for PHIL 403.

Workload

In accordance with University guidelines, students will nominally devote 300 hours to the course throughout the trimester. This includes weekly attendance at lectures and tutorials and revision for and completion of all set assessment tasks. The University's Assessment Handbook stipulates that course outlines should "specify the average time that is notionally assigned to the completion of each assessment task." Notional assignments of completion times appear below (which excludes the times required for attendance at seminars, reading for class and preparation for presentations):

Essay 1: 50 hours

Essay 2: 50 hours

Essay 3: 50 hours

Assessment

Assessment Item	Weighting	CLOs	Due Date
Essay 1 (3,000-3,500 words)	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %	1, 2, 3	May 15, 5.00 pm
Essay 1 (3,000-3,500 words)	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %	1, 2, 3	September 8, 5.00 pm
Essay 1 (3,000-3,500 words)	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %	1, 2, 3	October 27, 5.00 pm

Each essay will be evaluated against the following criteria:

1. succinctness, clarity and precision of expression,
2. originality of thesis,
3. soundness of argument,
4. understanding and survey of related literature.

Submission and return of work

All essays must be submitted in two ways. A copy of the essay must first be submitted digitally via blackboard. Make sure you save your file as a Microsoft Word document. The title of your file should follow the following format: last name, underscore, first name, underscore, essay number, dot, docx (for example: smith_john_5.docx). A hard copy of the essay must then be submitted to one of the school administrators located in MY518. Indicative grades and comments will be posted on blackboard.

Please ensure that all essays have page numbers.

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

- All extensions must be obtained directly from the Co-ordinator of Graduate Studies. In 2014 this is Cei Maslen, MY 707, Cei.Maslen@vuw.ac.nz.
- All extensions must be obtained prior to the deadline for submission of the assessment task unless unforeseeable circumstances prevent this.
- Short extensions of up to 3 days will be automatically granted to any student who requests it with an email prior to the scheduled deadline.
- Longer extensions need to be negotiated and require justification and supporting evidence.
- Any work submitted late without an extension having been obtained is subject to penalties (see below).

Penalties

Late essays submitted without extensions having been obtained will receive a penalty of 5 points per day late. No essay will be accepted after November 10.

Set texts

A full reading list and selected papers for each module will be given to students in (or by) the first class of each module. Students will also be expected to do some additional research using the Philosophers Index (library database).

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. Contact details for the class representative will be made available on blackboard.

Student feedback

PHIL 403 was last formally evaluated in 2008, and students will be asked to evaluate the course in 2014. In light of that feedback, the course has been restructured so that important course information—such as learning objectives, deadlines, assessments, grading criteria and how to prepare for essays—is communicated early and clearly.

Students will be asked to evaluate the course again in 2014.

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 (see below for further details)
- 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