



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME
PHIL 409: TOPICS IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY
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: 31 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

Fridays 10:00-11:50 Murphy LT617

Names and contact details

Lecturer	Stuart Brock (Course Coordinator)	Justin Sytsma	Sondra Bacharach
Office	MY701	MY710	MY711
Phone	(04) 463-6970	(04) 463-9658	(04) 463-5178
Email	Stuart.Brock@vuw.ac.nz	Justin.Sytsma@vuw.ac.nz	Sondra.Bacharach@vuw.ac.nz
Office hrs	By Appointment	By Appointment	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 is divided into three sections. Each section will be run by a different lecturer on material related to their current research interests. In this way students can gain a knowledge and appreciation of the most current and cutting edge problems in philosophy.

Course content

Each module in this course will closely examine one recently published monograph in analytic philosophy. The blurb for book appears below.

Module 1: Saul Kripke, *Reference and Existence*.

Reference and Existence, Saul Kripke's John Locke Lectures, can be read as a sequel to his classic *Naming and Necessity*. It confronts important issues left open in that work -- among them, the semantics of proper names and natural kind terms as they occur in fiction and in myth; negative existential statements; the ontology of fiction and myth (whether it is true that fictional characters like Hamlet, or mythical kinds like bandersnatches, might have existed). In treating these questions, he makes a number of methodological observations that go beyond the framework of his earlier book -- including the striking claim that fiction cannot provide a test for theories of reference and naming. In addition, these lectures provide a glimpse into the transition to the pragmatics of singular reference that dominated his influential paper, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" -- a paper that helped reorient linguistic and philosophical semantics. Some of the themes have been worked out in later writings by other philosophers -- many influenced by typescripts of the lectures in circulation -- but none have approached the careful, systematic treatment provided here. The virtuosity of *Naming and Necessity* -- the colloquial ease of the tone, the dazzling, on-the-spot formulations, the logical structure of the overall view gradually emerging over the course of the lectures -- is on display here as well.

This module will start with a close examination of *Naming and Necessity*.

Module 2: Jesse Prinz, *The Conscious Brain: How Attention Engenders Experience*.

The problem of consciousness continues to be a subject of great debate in cognitive science. Synthesizing decades of research, *The Conscious Brain* advances a new theory of the psychological and neurophysiological correlates of conscious experience. Prinz's account of consciousness makes two main claims: first consciousness always arises at a particular stage of perceptual processing, the intermediate level, and, second, consciousness depends on attention. Attention changes the flow of information allowing perceptual information to access memory systems. Neurobiologically, this change in flow depends on synchronized neural firing. Neural synchrony is also implicated in the unity of consciousness and in the temporal duration of experience. Prinz

also explores the limits of consciousness. We have no direct experience of our thoughts, no experience of motor commands, and no experience of a conscious self. All consciousness is perceptual, and it functions to make perceptual information available to systems that allows for flexible behavior. Prinz concludes by discussing prevailing philosophical puzzles. He provides a neuroscientifically grounded response to the leading argument for dualism, and argues that materialists need not choose between functional and neurobiological approaches, but can instead combine these into neurofunctional response to the mind-body problem. *The Conscious Brain* brings neuroscientific evidence to bear on enduring philosophical questions, while also surveying, challenging, and extending philosophical and scientific theories of consciousness. All readers interested in the nature of consciousness will find Prinz's work of great interest.

Module 3: Ted Gracyk, *Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*

The Philosophy of Art is a highly accessible introduction to current key issues and debates in aesthetics and philosophy of art. Chapters on standard topics are balanced by topics of interest to today's students, including creativity, authenticity, cultural appropriation, and the distinction between popular and fine art. Other topics include emotive expression, pictorial representation, definitional strategies, and artistic value. Presupposing no prior knowledge of philosophy, Theodore Gracyk draws on three decades of teaching experience to provide a balanced and engaging overview, clear explanations, and many thought-provoking examples. All chapters have a strong focus on current debates in the field, yet historical figures are not neglected. Major current theories are set beside key ideas from Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Marx, and Hegel. Chapters conclude with advice on further readings, and there are recommendations of films that will serve as a basis for further reflection and discussion. Key ideas are immediately accompanied by exercises that will test students' reactions and understanding. Many chapters call attention to ideology, prejudices, and common clichés that interfere with clear thinking.

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 on Fridays in the first and second trimesters. Seminars will run for one hour and 50 minutes. Students will have one break week on Friday March 14 in order to read and prepare for upcoming classes.

Mandatory course requirements

There are no mandatory course requirements for PHIL 409.

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	July 14
Essay 2 (3,000-3,500 words)	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %	1, 2, 3	September 15
Essay 3 (3,000-3,500 words)	33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %	1, 2, 3	October 31

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.

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

1. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Wiley-Blackwell (1972/1991).
2. Saul Kripke, *Reference and Existence*, Oxford University Press (2013).
3. Jesse Prinz, *The Conscious Brain: How Attention Engenders Experience*, Oxford University Press (2011).
4. Ted Gracyk, *Philosophy of Art: An Introduction*, Polity Press (2011).

All texts can be purchased at vicbooks: www.vicbooks.co.nz.

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

PHIL409 was last formally evaluated in 2011. 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 in the first session. In addition, opportunities for individual face-to-face feedback on essay drafts will be provided for all students who attend and participate in class discussion.

Student feedback on University courses may be found at the following website:

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