

Course Guide: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

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Time: Thursday 14:10 – 16:00. Location: DSB 3.11

Office: 4.04a DSB.

Course description:

This course provides an introduction to the problems of free will and moral responsibility – some of the deepest and hardest (and most discussed) problems in all of philosophy. Broadly speaking, the problems arise through reflection on what William James called “the dilemma of determinism”: if determinism is true, then it can seem that nothing we do is genuinely “up to us”, and accordingly that no one is fairly blamed or praised. On the other hand, how does indeterminism *help* with free will and moral responsibility? Wouldn't indeterminism simply imply that everything we do is a matter of chance or luck? In short, the thought that we are free, responsible agents is arguably a fundamental aspect of our conception of ourselves and our place in the universe. But is this conception indeed justified? We will investigate the main contemporary theories regarding the relationships between free will, moral responsibility, and determinism.

Course summary:

This course will cover the main contemporary positions concerning debates about free will and moral responsibility, especially concerning whether these notions are or are not compatible with the truth of determinism.

Assessment:

Midterm essay, 40%
1500 word limit.
Final essay, 60%
2500 word limit.

Readings (in order of importance):

Week 1. Libertarianism

Four Views on Free Will, Chapter 1 (Robert Kane, “Libertarianism”)
- and “A Brief Introduction to Some Terms and Concepts”

Background reading:

Chisolm, Roderick. 1964. “Human Freedom and the Self,” In Robert Kane (ed.), *Free Will*. Blackwell.

Wiggins, David. 1973. "Towards a Reasonable Libertarianism," in Honderich, ed. *Essays on Freedom of Action*.

Week 2. Compatibilism

Four Views on Free Will, Chapter 2 (John Martin Fischer, "Compatibilism")

Background reading:

Frankfurt, Harry. 1969. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66.

Week 3. Hard Incompatibilism

Four Views on Free Will, Chapter 3 (Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism")

Background reading:

Strawson, Galen. 1994. "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies*.

Week 4. Moral Luck

Nagel, Thomas. 1979. "Moral Luck," in *Mortal Questions*.

Nelkin, Dana. 2019. "Moral Luck," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Week 5. Alternatives, Control, and Responsibility

Swenson, Philip. 2019. "Luckily, we are only responsible for what we could have avoided," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*. (<https://philpapers.org/rec/SWELWA>)

Fischer, John Martin and Mark Ravizza. 1998. *Responsibility and Control*, Chapter 5.

Week 6. Strawson and Reactive Attitudes

Strawson, P.F. 1962. "Freedom and Resentment".

Watson, Gary. 1987. "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme." In *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. F. Schoeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 256–86.

Week 7. Manipulation

Todd, Patrick. 2013. "Defending (a modified version of) the Zygote Argument", *Philosophical Studies*.

Todd, Patrick. "**The Replication Argument for Incompatibilism**," *Erkenntnis*.

Rogers, Katherin A. 2012. "The Divine Controller Argument for Incompatibilism," *Faith and Philosophy*.

Week 8. Blame

Coates, Justin and Neal Tognazzini, "Blame", Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.

Hieronymi, Pamela. 2004. "The Force and Fairness of Blame," *Philosophical Perspectives* 18 (1):115-148.

Carlsson, Andreas. 2017. "Blameworthiness as Deserved Guilt," *The Journal of Ethics* 21: 89 - 115.

Week 9. Hypocrisy

Cohen, G.A. 2006. "Casting the First Stone: Who Can, and Who Can't, Condemn the Terrorists?", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 58: 113 - 136.

Wallace, R.J. 2010. "Hypocrisy, Moral Address, and the Equal Standing of Persons," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 38: 307: 341.

Week 10. Moral Standing

Tognazzini, Neal. "On Losing One's Moral Voice." (on Learn)

Fritz, Kyle and Daniel Miller. 2018. "Hypocrisy and the Standing to Blame," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 99: 118 - 139.

Todd, Patrick. 2019. "A Unified Account of the (Basic) Moral Standing to Blame." *Nous*.

Todd, Patrick and Brian Rabern, "The Paradox of Self-Blame." (on Learn)

Week 11: Revision week