

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

We think of ourselves as acting freely and making our own choices. But we also think we are part of the order of nature, and governed by its laws. Are these conceptions compatible? Why is freedom important to us? In what sense and to what extent are our actions free, if they are at all? To what extent is it legitimate to think of people as responsible for their actions, and in what ways should we hold ourselves and others responsible? This course will consider central questions about freedom and responsibility through close readings of historical and contemporary writings, with an emphasis on students working out their own views on these topics and developing their writing skills.

Instructor: Eugene Chislenko, chislenko@temple.edu

Office hours: Mazur Hall 750, Thursdays 3:30-5:30pm or by appointment

Course requirements: (1) Required reading each week, either in Derk Pereboom, ed., *Free Will*, 2nd ed. (abbreviated *FW* below) or on course website

- (2) Class participation (15%)
- (3) Four in-class quizzes (15%)
- (4) A 3-page paper and required rewrite (20%)
- (5) A 2-page peer feedback assignment (10%)
- (6) A 2-page final paper proposal (required but not graded)
- (7) A final paper draft (10%) and rewrite (30%)—For senior seminar students, a research paper of 2500-3000 words, not including notes & references; for others, a 6-8 page paper with no outside research expected

Course goals: By the end of this course, you will:

- (1) Become familiar with major philosophical approaches to freedom and responsibility.
- (2) Articulate, reflect on, and defend your own views on central questions about freedom and responsibility.
- (3) Incorporate instructor and peer feedback into revised drafts of your work, and offer written and oral feedback to your peers about their written work.
- (4) Become familiar with research methods used in advanced philosophical writing, including databases such as PhilPapers, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and the Temple Library catalog.
- (5) For senior seminar students: write and a revise a longer research paper, in the length and format of papers presented at American Philosophical Association conferences.

Note: This course is a writing-intensive course (a “w-course”), and counts as a senior seminar.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

I. Free Will

1. Tu 8/29: **The Importance of Free Will**
2. Th 8/31: **Ancient Sources**
Reading: Selections from Aristotle, the Stoics, and Lucretius (*FW* 1-3, pp. 1-18)
3. Tu 9/5: **Medieval Sources**
Reading: Aquinas, from *Summa Theologica* (*FW* 5, pp. 34-41 ONLY)
4. Th 9/7: **Attitudes toward Freedom**
Reading: Sartre, from *Being and Nothingness* (pp. 55-67, on course website)

II. Is Freedom Compatible with Being Determined?

5. Tu 9/12: **No**
Reading: Selections from Spinoza, *Ethics* (*FW* 6, pp. 57-58 and 74 ONLY) and from Derk Pereboom, “Determinism *al Dente*” (*FW* 22, pp. 307-14 ONLY)
6. Th 9/14: **Yes**
Reading: Hume, from *A Treatise of Human Nature* (*FW* 7, pp. 76-86)
7. Tu 9/19: **Yes and No**
Reading: Kant, from the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (on course website)
8. Th 9/21: **Determinism Doesn’t Matter**
Reading: Thomas Nagel, “Freedom,” §§1-2 and 5-6 (on course website)
9. Tu 9/26: **Open discussion**
No new reading.
10. Th 9/28: **Writing workshop**
No new reading. **First paper due Friday, 9/29 by 11:59pm.**

III. Responsibility

11. Tu 10/3: **What is Responsibility?**
Reading: Angela Smith, “Responsibility as Answerability” (on course website)
12. Th 10/5: **What Kinds of Things are We Responsible For?**
Reading: Angela Smith, “Responsibility for Attitudes” (on course website)
13. Tu 10/10: **Taking Responsibility and Holding Responsible**
Reading: Christine Korsgaard, “Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility in Personal Relations” (on course website)
14. Th 10/12: **Open discussion**
No new reading. **Peer feedback due Friday, 10/13 by 11:59pm.**

IV. Freedom and Responsibility

15. Tu 10/17: **Is Freedom Irrelevant to Responsibility?**
Reading: P.F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment" (*FW* 13, pp. 148-71)
16. Th 10/19: **Research Methods in Philosophy**
No new reading. **First paper rewrite & peer response due Friday, 10/20 by 11:59pm.**
17. Tu 10/24: **What Kind of Freedom is Relevant? I**
Reading: Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (*FW* 15, pp. 185-95)
18. Th 10/26: **What Kind of Freedom is Relevant? II**
Reading: Hilary Bok, "Freedom and Practical Reason" (on course website)
19. Tu 10/31: **What Kind of Freedom is Relevant? III**
Reading: Bernard Williams, "Moral Incapacity" (on course website)
20. Th 11/2: **When and How Should We Hold Responsible? I**
Reading: Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" (on course website)
21. Tu 11/7: **When and How Should We Hold Responsible? II**
Reading: Derk Pereboom, "Determinism *al Dente*" (*FW* 22, pp. 325-37 ONLY)
22. Th 11/9: **When and How Should We Hold Responsible? III**
Reading: T.M. Scanlon, "Forms and Conditions of Responsibility" (on course website)
Final paper proposal due Friday, 11/10 by 11:59pm.
23. Tu 11/14: **Open discussion**
No new reading.

V. Writing Philosophy

24. Th 11/16: **Writing workshop**
No new reading. **Final paper draft due Monday, 11/27 by 11:59pm.**

No class Tu 11/21 or Th 11/23. Happy fall break!

25. Tu 11/28: **Writing workshop**
No new reading.
26. Th 11/30: **Class Mini-Conference I**
Reading: Final paper drafts
27. Tu 12/5: **Class Mini-Conference II**
Reading: Final paper drafts
28. Th 12/7: **Open discussion**
No new reading.
Final paper due Tuesday, 12/12 by 11:59pm.

COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours: I encourage you to come to office hours often; talking one-on-one or in small groups is one of the best ways to get a handle on the material and methods of the course. You'll probably get more out of it if you come with specific questions, but coming to talk about the issues in a more general way is fine too. If you have friends in the class, feel free to come as a small group. If you want to meet but have a schedule conflict, let me know and we can find a different time. I'll also hold extra office hours each time a paper deadline is coming up.

Quizzes: There will be four short reading quizzes, usually at the beginning of class. This is a way of keeping attendance, holding you accountable for doing the readings, and reflecting how you are doing in the course. You won't know in advance which day there will be a quiz. Each quiz will be graded as an A, B, C, D, or F (no plus or minus grades); your three highest grades will be averaged together as 15% of your course grade; essentially, the fourth quiz is a makeup quiz. Your answer does not need to be perfect in every detail to get an A; if you read the assigned reading a few times and take some notes on the main ideas, you should have no trouble. The question will be a basic question about the reading for that day, drawn from the Reading Questions posted on Canvas.

Plagiarism: *All* written work for this course must be your own. Be sure to cite any works you use, including web sites, books, and articles. Presenting *anyone* else's work as your own is considered plagiarism. Please read Temple University's Policy on Academic Honesty: http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm

Generative AI: The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) is not permitted in this course; any use of AI tools for work in this course may be considered a violation of Temple University's [Academic Honesty policy](#) and [Student Conduct Code](#), since the work is not your own.

Disabilities: Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact me privately to discuss your situation by the end of the second week of classes, or as soon as you can. If you haven't already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex or 215-204-1280 to learn more about the resources available to you. I will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. Temple University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02