

## ATTENTION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Attention plays a central role in many morally important phenomena, and in almost every kind of mental state. Until recently, it has been comparatively neglected by philosophers, many of whom are now becoming more interested in the nature and importance of attention. This seminar will cover recent work on attention and responsibility, including attention's relation to activity and passivity, prioritization, blame, moral emotion, negligence, the attention economy and the ethics of social media, and virtues such as modesty, gratitude, and strength of will.

**Instructor:** Eugene Chislenko, [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu)

Office hours: Mazur Hall 750, Tu 1-3pm or by appointment

**Course requirements:** (1) Weekly reading and active class participation (25%)  
 (2) Two 3-page papers (25%)  
 (3) 3000-word final paper (50%)

You will need access to Sebastian Watzl's book *Structuring Mind*, available online through Temple Libraries. All other readings will be on Canvas.

## SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND READINGS

1. Th 1/13: **Introduction**
2. Th 1/20: **The Nature of Attention**  
 Reading: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Attention," §§1-2 only  
 Sebastian Watzl, *Structuring Mind*, through Ch. 3 (pp.1-69)
3. Th 1/27: **Attention and Prioritization**  
 Reading: Watzl, *Structuring Mind*, Chs. 4-5 (pp. 70-113)
4. Th 2/3: **Passive and Active Attention**  
 Reading: Watzl, *Structuring Mind*, Chs. 6-7 (pp. 114-152)
5. Th 2/10: **Responsibility**  
 Reading: Angela Smith, "Responsibility as Answerability"  
 Angela Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes"
6. Th 2/17: **Blame**  
 Reading: Eugene Chislenko, "Blame as Attention"  
 Matt King, "Attending to Blame"

[No class 2/24 (Central APA) or 3/3 – happy spring break!]

7. Th 3/10: **Virtue**

Reading: Nicolas Bommarito, *Inner Virtue*, Chs. 1-2

Michael Brady, “Virtue, Emotion, and Attention”

Jay Garfield, “Mindfulness and Ethics”

8. Th 3/17: **Modesty and Gratitude**

Reading: Bommarito, “Modesty as a Virtue of Attention”

Bommarito, *Inner Virtue*, Ch. 5

9. Th 3/24: **Willpower and Grit**

Reading: Catherine Rioux, “Hope as a Source of Grit”

Eugene Chislenko, “The Ethics of Willpower”

10. Th 3/31: **Ignorance and Negligence**

Reading: Alessandra Tanesini, “Ignorance, Arrogance, and Privilege”

Matt King, “The Problem with Negligence”

Alejandro Mosqueda, “Negligence, Inadvertence, and Moral Responsibility”

11. Th 4/7: **The Attention Economy**

Reading: Tim Wu, *The Attention Merchants*, Ch. 1

Vikram Bhargava and Manuel Velasquez, “Ethics of the Attention Economy: The Problem of Social Media Addiction”

12. Th 4/14: **Students’ Choice**

Reading: TBA

**Final paper due Friday, April 15 by noon.**

13. Th 4/21: **Class Mini-Conference**

Reading: Final paper drafts.

**Final paper rewrite due Thursday, April 28 by noon.**

## COURSE POLICIES

**Office Hours:** Come to office hours often! The material is hard and you need to talk through it. Come with specific questions if you can, but coming to talk in a more general way is fine too. It's also fine to come as a small group. If you want to meet but have a schedule conflict, let me know.

**Short papers:** In weeks 2-12, you will write two substantial 3-page papers, defending a thought about a reading from the *preceding* three meetings, taking class discussion into account. These are due by Wednesday at noon, as a Word or PDF file (I slightly prefer Word, but either is fine) emailed to [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu). Within weeks 2-12, you have complete freedom with regard to which two weeks you write a 3-page paper, though you may not submit two 3-page papers about the same week's readings. It's fine (and encouraged) to develop a 3-page paper into a term paper.

**Plagiarism:** *All* written work for the 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 follow this link to see Temple University's Policy on Student Conduct Code, which includes academic honesty: [policies.temple.edu/PDF/398.pdf](http://policies.temple.edu/PDF/398.pdf). The Philosophy Department Plagiarism Policy mandates an "F" grade, and reporting to the Chair and the CLA Undergraduate Affairs Office, for plagiarized work.

**Disabilities:** Any student who has a need for accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability or medical condition should contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) located in the Howard Gittis Student Center South, 4th Floor at [drs@temple.edu](mailto:drs@temple.edu) or 215-204-1280 to request accommodations and learn more about the resources available to you. If you have a DRS accommodation letter to share with me, or you would like to discuss your accommodations, please contact me as soon as practical. I will work with you and with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities. All discussions related to your accommodations will be confidential.

**Statement on Academic Freedom:** Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed at [policies.temple.edu](http://policies.temple.edu).

## FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Write a term paper on a topic of your own choosing, from within the topics covered in this seminar. Defend your view through discussion of relevant parts of the readings for the course, as well as your own thoughts and examples. Explain all key terms so that someone who has not taken the course can understand your paper. Consider explicitly the best reasons why someone might disagree with you, and how you might convince that person. Your paper should show an understanding of course readings and class discussion, and of which parts of the readings are relevant for your topic. But the assignment is to work out and defend your own view. Summary of what we have covered so far should take up less than half your paper. When choosing a topic, think about what you're most interested in, and also what you have something to say about that goes beyond what we have covered in class.

**Length and scope:** Your paper has a strict maximum length of 3000 words, not including notes and bibliography (about 10-12 pages), double spaced, with 12-point font and at least 1-inch margins. This is the most typical length for a conference paper, which you can revise and submit directly to conferences. Your paper should cite a range of readings—either from several weeks of the seminar, or from one or two weeks plus some outside research—but does not need to discuss more than 1-3 readings in depth. Feel free to consult with me throughout the semester about your topic and choice of paper length.

**Logistics:** Your paper is due **Friday, April 15, by noon**. Please email your paper as a Word file or PDF (I slightly prefer Word, but either is fine) to [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu), with your name and a title at the top of the first page. *Late papers* will be marked down one third of a grade (from A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for each day or fraction of a day they are late, including Saturday and Sunday. We will read everyone's paper drafts and discuss them in class the following week. You will then have a chance to rewrite your paper, with the rewrite due **Thursday, April 28 by noon**. Only the revised paper will be graded, but lateness penalties apply to both drafts. To be accepted, the original submission must be a full-length paper (at least 2500 words, not including notes or references) with a systematic defense of your view on a topic in the course.