

## SENIOR SEMINAR

This course is a writing-intensive capstone seminar for philosophy majors, centered on writing a conference-length research paper with the help of the instructor and other students in the class. The first half 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. We will consider questions such as: Is acting freely compatible with being governed by the laws of nature? 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? The second half of the course will be devoted to writing a longer research paper, with instructor and peer feedback at every stage.

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

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

**Course requirements:** (1) Required reading (all on Canvas)  
(2) Class participation (10%)  
(3) Six short reading quizzes (10%)  
(4) A 3-page paper and required rewrite (20%)  
(5) A 2-page peer feedback assignment (10%)  
(6) A 2-page final paper proposal and 2-page annotated bibliography (required but not graded)  
(7) A research paper draft (20%) and rewrite (30%) of at most 3000 words, not including notes & references

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

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

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

1. Tu 1/16: **Introduction; Research in Philosophy**
  2. Tu 1/23: **Is Freedom Compatible with Being Determined?**  
Reading: Derk Pereboom, "Determinism *al Dente*" (through §I only); David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* II.3.1-2 ("Of liberty and necessity")
  3. Tu 1/30: **What is Responsibility?**  
Reading: Angela Smith, "Responsibility as Answerability"; Christine M. Korsgaard, "Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility in Personal Relations"
  4. Tu 2/6: **What Kinds of Things are We Responsible For?**  
Reading: Angela Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes"; T.M. Scanlon, "Forms and Conditions of Responsibility"
  5. Tu 2/13: **What Kind of Freedom is Relevant for Responsibility?**  
Reading: Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"  
**First paper due Thursday, 2/15 by 11:59pm.**
  6. Tu 2/20: **What Kind of 'Can' is Relevant for Freedom?**  
Reading: Kant, from the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*; Hilary Bok, "Freedom and Practical Reason"; Bernard Williams, "Moral Incapacity"  
**Peer feedback due Thursday, 2/22 by 11:59pm.**
  7. Tu 2/27: **Responsibility and Sanity**  
Reading: Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"  
**First paper rewrite & peer response due Thursday, 2/29 by 11:59pm.**
- No class Tu 3/5. Happy spring break!*
8. Tu 3/12: **In-Class Research Day**  
No new reading. Bring a computer if possible, or consult the instructor about alternatives.  
**Paper proposals due Thursday, 3/14 by 11:59pm.**
  9. Tu 3/19: **Writing Workshop I**  
Reading: Paper proposals.  
**Annotated bibliographies due Thursday, 3/21 by 11:59pm.**
  10. Tu 3/26: **Writing Workshop II**  
Reading: Annotated bibliographies.
  11. Tu 4/2: **Open Discussion**  
Reading: No new reading.  
**Final paper due Thursday, 4/4 by 11:59pm.**
  12. Tu 4/9: **Class Mini-Conference I**  
Reading: Final paper drafts

13. Tu 4/16: **Class Mini-Conference II**

Reading: Final paper drafts

14. Tu 4/23: **Open Discussion**

No new reading.

**Final paper rewrites due Thursday, May 2 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 six short reading quizzes, at the beginning of classes 2-7. This is a way of keeping attendance, holding you accountable for doing the readings, reflecting how you are doing in the course, and giving you practice in offering short, accessible summaries of dense philosophical texts. Each quiz will be graded as an A, B, C, D, or F (no plus or minus grades). Your five highest grades will be averaged together as 10% of your course grade; basically, the sixth 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 below.

**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](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](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02)

## READING QUESTIONS

The following questions can be useful for guiding your reading and for taking notes as you read. Every in-class quiz will be on one reading question for that day.

*For class 2:*

- How does Pereboom argue against compatibilism?
- How does Hume defend his view that liberty is compatible with necessity?

*For class 3:*

- How does Smith defend her view of responsibility as answerability?
- What is the practical conception of responsibility, and how does Korsgaard defend it?

*For class 4:*

- How does Smith argue against volitional views of responsibility?
- According to Scanlon, why is it important to distinguish “substantive responsibility” and “moral reaction responsibility”?

*For class 5:*

- How does Frankfurt argue against the principle of alternate possibilities (PAP)?

*For class 6:*

- According to Kant, why must freedom be presupposed as a property of the will of all rational beings?
- How does Bok try to resolve the stalemate between compatibilists and libertarians?
- How does Williams defend his view that “moral incapacities” are real incapacities?

*For class 7:*

- What is “the sane deep self view,” and how does Wolf defend it?