

PHILOSOPHY 130: FREEDOM & DETERMINISM

UC Santa Barbara | Spring 2010

BASIC COURSE INFO

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Instructor: Joshua May

Office: South Hall, room 5720

Email: jdmay (at umail.ucsb.edu)

Website: www.joshdmay.com

Office Hours: T 1-2p & R 11-12p (& by appt.)

LECTURE INFO:

Time: TR 9:30am–10:45am

Location: Girvetz 2119

Course Web Page:

www.joshdmay.com/teaching/course1/

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Do we really have free will? The universe (or at least many parts of it) seems deterministic in that universal laws seem to make only one future state of affairs possible. But is this compatible with our ever acting freely or being morally responsible for what we do? Are our actions ever ultimately up to us? Do we really have the kind of control over our actions that we normally think we do? In this class, we'll consider contemporary philosophical arguments for certain answers to these questions. If time permits, we'll also examine some recent empirical work in psychology, neuroscience, and so-called "experimental philosophy" that bears on these issues.

PREREQUISITES

One prior class in Philosophy.

(*Recommended:* PHIL 3 and at least one prior course from the 100 series—PHIL 100A, 100D, etc.)

REQUIRED TEXT

[*Free Will \(2nd ed.\)*](#), edited by Gary Watson, Oxford University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0199254941.

Additional readings will be available on the library's Eres ([Electronic Reserve](#)) system.

UPDATES VIA U-LIST

If I need to cancel class or if I post something important to the course web page, I'll send *email updates* directly to you via UCSB's U-Lists service. Your Umail address is *automatically on this list* if you're registered for the course. Make sure you *check your Umail or have it forwarded* to an account you do check.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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|------------------------------------|--------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Participation (in class) | 10% of grade | Date: N/A | [weekly] |
| 2. Midterm (in class) | 20% of grade | Date: 4/22 (Thurs.) | [4 th week] |
| 3. Paper (7-9 pp.) | 30% of grade | Due: 5/20 (Thurs.) | [8 th week] |
| 4. Final exam (in class) | 40% of grade | Date: 6/8 (Tues.) 8-11am | [11 th week] |

Note: The due dates given are pretty firm, but they are subject to minor changes.

PARTICIPATION

This will be left fairly open, to be determined at my discretion. Attendance, tardiness, contribution to class discussion, and so on may all be factored in to some extent. I might also throw in random mini-writing assignments or quizzes.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

In general, assume you *cannot* turn assignments in late. However, of course, if you have special circumstances, exceptions may be made. But you must let me know as soon as *such special circumstances arise*; otherwise I might not work something out with you.

NO EXTRA CREDIT

All students are expected to meet the same standards to pass the course. Doing additional assignments for extra credit or catch-up grades is not an option.

MATERIAL COVERED

We will be discussing material primarily from the text. However, we *may not cover everything in the assigned reading*, and quite often *material will be brought up in lecture that is not in the readings*. So it's crucial that you come to class. Likewise, there may be *some material in the readings you'll be accountable for that we don't discuss in detail in lecture*.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to do so on time. I will do roll call and track attendance, but this isn't exactly part of your grade; it's primarily for me to learn names. However, it may be partly factored into participation (e.g. excessive absences and tardiness would certainly be factored in). Furthermore, failure to show up to class will of course likely adversely affect your performance on assignments other than participation.

CHEATING

Don't cheat (this includes *plagiarism*). I warn against this at the beginning of every quarter, and still nearly every quarter at least one person gets caught! *I take this extremely seriously*. I will give all cheaters a failing grade for the course and report the incidents to the Office of Judicial Affairs, as it is mandated by the university.

Furthermore, it's *your responsibility* to make sure that your work doesn't violate university policies about plagiarism and other academic cheating. If you need any help in understanding these standards or are in any doubt about whether your work for this course violates them, check with me. For your convenience, here is the link to UCSB's page on academic dishonesty:

<http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>

Note that if you cut something from a Web document and paste it into your paper, you are plagiarizing (even if you mix up the wording a bit). The papers you will be asked to write are *not research papers* in that there is no need to look to outside sources (including anything on the Internet); you just need to read the material required for class, attend the lectures, and take your time thinking it all through. But if you do poke around the Web, you must of course diligently cite and quote all consulted sources.

STUDENT SUPPORT

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage you all to *talk with me outside of class in office hours*. If you are unable to see me during my regular slot, I'm happy to schedule a mutually convenient time. Talking to me about the material, especially in preparation for an upcoming assignment, is not just for those who fear failing the course; it's also for those who want to secure an "A" (or whatever your goal is).

EMAILING ME

I'm available to contact by email. I can even answer relatively short and specific questions that way. If you have a more detailed and lengthy question, come to my office hours.

COURSE WEB PAGE

The web page for this class has some links that may prove useful in the course.

(Note: The rest of my website also has some information and external links to several resources for philosophy. However, browse at your own risk. What is particularly useful for this course will be provided on the web page for this course.)

WRITING SUPPORT

I will be expecting you to write *college-level papers* for this course, so I will be expecting few errors in the areas of spelling, grammar, professional academic style, and so on. Furthermore, writing in philosophy is often very different from writing in other disciplines. Since philosophy requires the clear communication of often difficult and subtle ideas, weak writing renders high level performance impossible.

So I encourage everyone to talk to me about their paper (and exams) before the due date, regardless of whether you have written for a philosophy class before. (More details on requirements for papers will be provided later on in the course.)

READING PAPER DRAFTS

In general, I am happy to discuss with you drafts of your papers before they are turned in. However, I will *not* accept emailed or dropped off drafts. Instead, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your drafts into office hours (or make an appointment) to *discuss* them.

IF YOU FACE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

If for any reason you face major difficulties—medical or otherwise—get in touch with me *as soon as possible*. I'm happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully.

READINGS

WHEN TO READ

Students are expected to *do the assigned reading*. You should aim for doing the reading *before or around the time it's covered* in class. The point of this is: *don't give up on the reading*. If you didn't get to it before we covered it in class, make sure you do it after. This is especially important because philosophy involves close examination of often fairly dense arguments. However, you aren't expected to have figured it all out before you walk in the door. That's what we're going to try to do in class. (Notice also that I've provided the length of the readings so you can plan ahead.)

READING LIST

The list of readings below is subject to change. All readings are in the Watson *Free Will* text, unless marked "PDF," in which case they'll be online (or emailed to you). We'll go through these articles in this order, but there is no set schedule. You'll need to come to class to know where we are exactly.

Part 1. The Free Will Problem(s) - The Issue, Concepts, & Positions

- 01. Watson, Gary (2003) "Introduction" (pp. 1-2) [1 p.]
- 02. Pink, Thomas (2004) "The Free Will Problem" Ch. 1 of his *Free Will* [PDF; 10 pp.]
- 03. Fischer et al. (2007) "Brief Intro to Some Terms and Concepts" *Four Views on Free Will* [PDF; 4 pp.]

Part 2. Alternative Possibilities - the Consequence Argument & the Garden of Forking Paths

- 04. Watson, Gary (2003) "Introduction" (pp. 2-8) [7 pp.]
- 05. van Inwagen, Peter (1983) "An Argument for Incompatibilism" [20 pp.]
- 06. Lewis, David (1981) "Are We Free to Break the Laws?" [13 pp.]
- 07. Dennett, Daniel (1984) "I Could Not Have Done Otherwise—So What?" [PDF; 10 pp.]
- 08. Fischer, John Martin (2002) "Frankfurt-Style Compatibilism" §§1-4 only, pp. 190-8 [9 pp.]

Part 3. Contemporary Compatibilism - Reflection and Normative Competence

- 09. Watson, Gary (2003) "Introduction" (pp. 17-22) [6 pp.]
- 10. Frankfurt, Harry (1971) "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" [15 pp.]
- 11. Watson, Gary (1975) "Free Agency" [15 pp.]
- 12. Wolf, Susan (1988) "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Free Will" [16 pp.]

Part 4. Libertarian Refinements - Agent-Causation & Non-Deterministic Causation

- 13. Watson, Gary (2003) "Introduction" (pp. 9-14) [6 pp.]
- 14. O'Connor, Timothy (1995) "Agent Causation" [28 pp.]
- 15. Kane, Robert (1999) "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance" [23 pp.]
- 16. Fischer, John Martin (2002) "Frankfurt-Style Compatibilism" §§5-6, pp. 198-211 [13 pp.]

Part 5. Misc. Topics - Empirical Work & Addiction

- 17. Nahmias, Eddy (forthcoming) "The Psychology of Free Will" [PDF, 18 pp.]
- ~~18. Wallace, R. Jay (1999) "Addiction as Defect of the Will" [27 pp.]~~
- 19. Watson, Gary (2003) "Introduction" (conclusion, pp. 24-25) [2 pp.]

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week		Tues.		Thurs.
1	3/30	Part 1	4/1	<i>Canceled</i>
2	4/6	Part 2	4/8	Part 2
3	4/13	Part 2	4/15	Part 2
4	4/20	Part 2	4/22	Midterm
5	4/27	Part 3	4/29	Part 3
6	5/4	Part 3	5/6	Part 3
7	5/11	Part 4	5/13	Part 4
8	5/18	Part 4	5/20	Part 4
9	5/25	Part 4	5/27	Part 5
10	6/1	Part 5	6/3	Part 5
11	Final Exam - Tues. 6/8, 8-11 am			

Notice:

Class is canceled **Thurs. April 1st**, which is during the first week of class.

Paper Assignment to be handed out around 5/11