

# PHIL 348: Freedom of the Will

Tuesday 11:30am-1:00pm & Friday 1:00pm-2:30pm

Location: Dunning Hall 27

Instructor: Dr. Michael J. Hannon

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2pm - 4pm

Office location: Watson Hall room 333

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## Course Description

You might think you've freely chosen to read this course description. You might think you could, at any given moment, freely choose to stop reading it. It seems clear that what you'll do next is entirely up to you — but you're probably wrong. There are powerful philosophical and scientific reasons to think free will is an utterly implausible myth. In this class, we will evaluate these philosophical and scientific arguments. As an advanced introduction to the topic of free will, we will read some of the most important philosophical articles about free will from the past few decades, as well as explore neuroscientific and psychological data relevant to the free will debate. We will discuss psychopaths, drug addicts, kleptomaniacs, hypnosis, split brains, and mind control. We will tackle questions like: What is free will? Why do we value it? Is free will possible in a deterministic world? What are the implications if we lack free will? Can we still live meaningful lives? Would praise and blame make sense? Would punishing criminals be unjustified? If we don't have free will, should we promote the illusion that we do? In the end, our central aim is to answer the question: how free are you?

## Required Reading

All readings will be posted online at: [mjhannon.com/freedom-of-the-will](http://mjhannon.com/freedom-of-the-will).

## Supplementary Reading

Kane, R. 2005. *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*. Oxford University Press.

## Course Requirements

Short Paper	10%
Essay 1	25%
Essay 2	35%
Final Exam	30%

*Short Paper.* For this first assignment, I will ask you to write a short paper (i.e. 750-850 words) on a prompt handed out in class. The prompt will be distributed 10 days before the due date. These papers are due on **October 2, 2016** and must be emailed to me by **at 11:59pm** on that date. You should use the feedback on this paper to help you prepare for the longer essays described below.

*Essays.* Research and writing are important parts of this course. In each essay you will formulate a thesis statement, argue for it, and defend it from possible objections. Your discussion should manifest a good understanding of the relevant literature. I will give you a list of topics in advance, although you may choose your own topic instead. If you would like to pursue a different topic than one I have suggested, please discuss it with me beforehand. The first paper should be approximately 1800 words and is due on **October 22, 2016**. The second paper should be 2500 words and is due on **November 19, 2016**.

Essays are due **at 11:59pm** on the due date. They must be emailed to me. Late papers will be lowered one grade initially (e.g., a B+ to a B) and an additional grade every subsequent 24 hours. Late assignments will not be accepted more than one week after the due date. You are encouraged to use secondary sources if they are relevant, but you are not required to do so. Please use any consistent style for citations (MLA, Chicago, Harvard, etc.). More information about your essay assignments will be provided in class.

*Final Exam.* The final exam will consist of ten definitions, four short answer questions, and one essay. On the final day of class (Dec 2), I will provide you with eight short answer questions and three essay questions to study. The exam will consist of a random selection of four of these short answer questions and one of these essay questions, in addition to ten definitions. We will have a class study session prior to the final exam to help prepare you; however, in order to be fully prepared for this exam, you must do the assigned readings every week, attend and participate in class regularly, and begin to study well before the exam questions are released. The exam will test your knowledge and understanding of the assigned readings and material covered in class.

*Participation.* Discussion is an important part of this course, so please come to each class with questions and comments of your own. Remember that the quality of your contributions is more important than how often you contribute.

### **Class Schedule**

September 13	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Harris, <i>Free Will</i> (pp. 1-14)
September 16	<b>THE CONTOURS OF FREE WILL DEBATE</b> Vihvelin, Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and Impossibilism
September 20	<b>EARLY LIBERTARIANISM</b> Chisholm, Human Freedom and the Self
September 23	<b>EARLY COMPATIBILISM</b> Ayer, Freedom and Necessity
September 27	<b>THE CONSEQUENCE ARGUMENT</b> van Inwagen, The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism
September 30	<b>FREE WILL MYSTERIANISM</b> van Inwagen, The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom O'Conner, The Agent as Cause
<b>October 2</b>	<b>SHORT PAPER DUE (via email)</b>
October 4	<b>CONTEMPORARY LIBERTARIANISM</b> Kane, Responsibility, Luck, and Chance
October 7	<b>MORE CONTEMPORARY LIBERTARIANISM</b> Balaguer, <i>Free Will</i> (pp. 58-88)

October 11	<b>A CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY LIBERTARIANISM</b> Frankfurt, Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility
October 14	<b>CONTEMPORARY COMPATIBILISM</b> Frankfurt, Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person
October 18	<b>MORE CONTEMPORARY COMPATIBILISM</b> Wolf, Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility
October 21	<b>A CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY COMPATIBILISM</b> Pereboom, Determinism Al Dente
<b>October 22</b>	<b>FIRST ESSAY DUE (via email)</b>
October 25	<b>FREEDOM AND RESENTMENT</b> P. Strawson, Freedom and Resentment
October 28	<b>IMPOSSIBILISM</b> G. Strawson, The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility
November 1	<b>MORAL LUCK</b> Nagel, Moral Luck
November 4	<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL EGOISM</b> Feinberg, Psychological Egoism
November 8	<b>SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND FREE WILL</b> Nahmias, Autonomous Agency and Social Psychology
November 11	<b>NEUROSCIENCE AND FREE WILL</b> Libet, Do We Have Free Will? Smith, Taking Aim at Free Will
November 15	<b>EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY AND FREE WILL</b> Nahmias et al., Surveying Freedom
November 18	<b>THE CONSEQUENCES OF SKEPTICISM</b> Vohs and Schooler, The Value of Believing in Free Will Baumeister et al., Prosocial Benefits of Feeling Free
<b>November 19</b>	<b>SECOND ESSAY DUE (via email)</b>
November 22	<b>ILLUSIONISM</b> Smilansky, Free Will: From Nature to Illusion
November 25	<b>FREE WILL AND CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT</b> Greene and Cohen, For the Law, Neuroscience Changes Nothing and Everything

November 29                    **LIVING WITHOUT FREE WILL**  
Pereboom, Hard Incompatibilism and Meaning in Life

December 2                    **REVIEW**  
No readings

### **Absences**

Regular attendance is expected and required. Absences may not be used as an excuse for failing to submit assignments.

### **No Electronics Policy**

This is an electronics-free classroom. Why? Recent studies suggest that students who use electronics (e.g. laptops, cell phones, iPads, etc.) in class perform worse on average than their non-electronic using peers, and are much less likely to pay attention in class. Further, the use of technology in the classroom is not only seriously distracting to those using it but also to those *who are not using technology*. This is true whether these people can actually see someone else's screen or not. Seeing what's on other people's screens is distracting enough, but so is the chatter of fingers on the keyboard. In light of this, laptops, tablets, smartphones, cellphones, and co. are to be turned off and stowed away out of sight. In the rare and exceptional case where you are expecting an urgent call – it happens! – alert me at the beginning of class, keep your phone on vibrate, and leave the room to take the call.

### **Academic Integrity**

Please see Queen's University's policy on plagiarism ([www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity)). Examples of plagiarism include: copying and pasting from the internet, a printed source, or other resource without proper acknowledgement; copying from another student; using direct quotations or large sections of paraphrased material in an assignment without appropriate acknowledgement; submitting the same piece of work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor. A first offence will likely result in a zero for the assignment and a second offence will likely result in a failure of the course.

### **Location and Timing of Final Exam**

The final examination in any class offered in a term or session must be written on the campus on which it was taken, at the end of the appropriate term or session at the time scheduled by the Examinations Office. The exam period is listed in the key dates prior to the start of the academic year in the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Calendar and on the Office of the University Registrar's webpage. A detailed exam schedule for the Fall Term is posted before the Thanksgiving holiday. Students should delay finalizing any travel plans until *after* the examination schedule has been posted. Exams will *not* be moved or deferred to accommodate employment, travel/holiday plans or flight reservations.

### **Accessibility**

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Wellness Services (SWS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the Student Wellness website at: [www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/](http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/)

**Grading Scale**

All assignments will be letter graded. Your final grade will be a letter grade. Further information about grading can be found at: [http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/sites/default/files/policy\\_on\\_grading.pdf](http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/sites/default/files/policy_on_grading.pdf)

**Some tips**

At no stage in one's life is reading philosophy easy. In order to make your reading efficient and rewarding, you must maintain a sympathetic but critical attitude to the text. This can often be best achieved by approaching the text with a number of general questions in mind:

- What conclusion does the author wish to reach?
- Why is that conclusion interesting?
- What is the argument, and is it valid?
- Should the premises of the argument be accepted?
- If we accept the argument and conclusion, what else follows?