

**Philosophy 200: Proseminar**  
**Free Will and Moral Responsibility: The Ethics, Metaphysics, Science, and**  
**History**  
(Draft 10/3/2018)

Dana Kay Nelkin

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Course Web Site: TritonEd

### **Course Description**

The pro-seminar will focus on close readings and discussion of classic and contemporary texts, with lots of practice in philosophical writing and presentations. We will take advantage of the terrific breadth and depth of our faculty's expertise by having a different faculty member join our discussion each week. Our general theme will be free will and responsibility, which will afford us introductions to work in a wide variety of areas across the discipline, including metaphysics, ethics, moral psychology, science, and history of philosophy.

### **Schedule of Topics and Readings**

*Notes:*

- All required readings will be available for download from our TritonEd website.
- There might be some small changes to the readings listed below.
- Helpful surveys and collections that offer an overview: *Four Views on Free Will* (edited by Manuel Vargas); *Free Will: A Contemporary Introduction* by Michael McKenna and Derk Pereboom, *Oxford Readings in Free Will* second edition (edited by Gary Watson). I will also make more recommendations along the way for those who would like to read more. And just ask if you would like some leads on particular topics!

#### Week 1: Introduction to Free Will and Moral Responsibility (Dana Kay Nelkin)

- Derk Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism" in *Four Views on Free Will* edited by Manuel Vargas
- Susan Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason*, chapter 4

#### Week 2: Moral Responsibility, Reactive Attitudes, and Excuses (David Brink)

- Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"
- Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme"

Week 3: Responsible Agency and Moral Perception (Matthew Fulkerson)

- Sarah McGrath, "Moral Knowledge By Perception"
- Andrew Cullison, "Moral Perception"

Week 4: Locke on Freedom (Sam Rickless)

- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 2, chapter 21, "Of Power" (Nidditch Edition, Clarendon Press, 1975)

Week 5: Self-Defense and Culpability (Richard Arneson)

- Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense"
- Richard Arneson, "Self-Defense and Culpability: Fault Forfeits first"

Week 6: Kant, Laws, and Free Will (Eric Watkins)

- Immanuel Kant, *The Third Antimony and Resolution*
- Eric Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, chapter 5

Week 7: Dispositions (Jonathan Cohen)

- Kadri Vihvelin, "Free Will DeMystified: A Dispositional Account" (background)
- Paul Boghossian and David Velleman, "Is Color a Secondary Quality"?
- Colin McGinn, "Another Look at Color"

Week 8: Physics and Free Will (Kerry MacKenzie)

- Robert Kane, "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism"
- John Dupre, "The Solution to the Problem of the Freedom of the Will"

Week 9: Freedom in Ancient Philosophy and Beyond (Don Rutherford)

- Charles H. Kahn, "Discovering Will: From Aristotle to Augustine"
- Suzanne Bobzien, "Stoic Conceptions of Freedom and Their Relation to Ethics"

Week 10: Responsibility and Psychopathy (Monique Wonderly)

- Gary Watson, "The Trouble with Psychopaths"
- Matthew Talbert, "The Significance of Psychopathic Wrongdoing"

**Requirements:**

- Nine short weekly reading response papers (600-900 words), turned in before each session in weeks 2-10. Each paper should be emailed to me by 8 pm on the Tuesday before the session in which we will discuss the reading. Your grade will be calculated based on the grades of your 7 best papers. (This means that you can drop the two lowest grades). Your paper should engage with one of the readings for the week, and do one of the following (or

something similar): (i) provide a careful reconstruction of a difficult piece of reasoning to be found in a relevant text, (ii) evaluate the validity or soundness of an argument in a relevant text, (iii) articulate and provide support for a philosophical position that competes with those found in the relevant texts, or (iv) offer a new defense of a position found in the reading. (65%)

- 2 Presentations. Each presentation should be focused on a single reading, and should be accompanied by a handout (of no more than 2 pages in length) that frames the discussion to follow. Presentations should include a setting out of the main claims and reasoning in a given reading, and questions for the group to discuss. You should expect to talk for a total of about 10-15 minutes. Sign-ups for presentations will take place after the first session. (20%)
- Participation in seminar. Participation can take many forms, including the valuable asking of clarificatory questions, supplementing or further articulating a piece of reasoning under consideration, posing a challenge to a conclusion or a move in the reasoning, and so on. Quantity is not the goal. At the same time, you should not feel afraid to try something out, even if it doesn't pan out in the end. Our collective goal will be to create a comfortable environment in which everyone productively contributes to the conversation. (15%)
- Attendance is expected at every meeting. If you need to miss a session, please communicate with me (if possible, ahead of time).