

**Philosophy 115: Methods Seminar for Majors
Fall 2010**

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Course Description: The primary purpose of this course is for majors to learn how to understand, construct, evaluate, present, and discuss philosophical arguments and to write about them in a clear and rigorous way. The small seminar setting will provide lots of practice in all of the above, or, in other words, lots of opportunity to hone your skills as a philosopher. The format of each class will be discussion of the views and arguments expressed in the readings assigned for that day, and everyone will be expected to come to class prepared to contribute to class discussion. We will use the rich and evolving literature on responsibility and the reactive attitudes as our starting point, beginning with this question: What would be lost if human emotions and attitudes such as resentment, gratitude, guilt, indignation, and forgiveness were either unjustified or absent from our lives?

The question becomes pressing because such attitudes appear to presuppose that their objects are free and responsible agents, and, yet, many powerful arguments have been made that question whether anyone is genuinely free and responsible. We will raise questions about the relationship of these attitudes to responsibility, and about the role of these attitudes in a meaningful human life. Using recent research on psychopathology and autism to illuminate our inquiry, we will also explore the question of whether the capacity for these attitudes is itself required for being moral agents.

Requirements:

- (1) 4 short 2-3 page papers responding to the readings. For the first three, you will be given specific prompts to respond to. (35%)
- (2) 1 term paper (about 10 pages), preceded by a prospectus that includes the main ideas and a bibliography (1 page). (35%) Prospectus due: November 23, start of class; Term paper due: December 8, 5 pm.
- (3) By 9 am on the morning of each class, an e-mail consisting of 1 question regarding the readings. (10%)
- (4) Attendance and participation. (10%)
- (5) 1 presentation. (10%)

Schedule with Readings

September 23: Introduction

September 28: P.F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"; Eshelman, "Moral Responsibility"

September 30: Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism and Meaning in Life" in *Living Without Free Will (revised)* (**First Short Paper Due**)

October 5: Nichols, "After Incompatibilism: A Naturalistic Defense of the Reactive Attitudes"

October 7: Pereboom, "Free Will, Love, and Anger" (**Second Short Paper Due**)

October 12: Sommers, "The Objective Attitude"

October 14: Murpy, *Getting Even: Forgiveness and It's Limits* (excerpt)

October 19: Hieronymi, "Articulating an Uncompromising Forgiveness" (**Third Short Paper Due**)

October 21: Smilansky, *Free Will and Illusion* (excerpt)

October 26: Fischer and Ravizza, "Precis of *Responsibility and Control*"

October 28: Talbert, "Blame and Responsiveness to Moral Reasons: Are Psychopaths Blameworthy?" (**Fourth Short Paper Due**)

November 2: Watson, "The Trouble With Psychopaths"

November 4: Russell, "Responsibility and the Condition of Moral Sense"

November 9: Levy, "The Responsibility of the Psychopath Revisited"

November 11: Vargas and Nichols, "Psychopaths and Moral Knowledge" and Vargas and Nichols, "How to Be Fair to Psychopaths"

November 16: Veterans' Day Holiday

November 18: Kennett, "Autism, Empathy, and Moral Agency"

November 23: Shoemaker, "Moral Address, Moral Responsibility, and the Boundaries of the Moral Community" (**Term Paper Prospectus Due**)

November 25: Thanksgiving Holiday

November 30: Damm, "Emotion and Moral Agency"

December 2: McKenna, "The Limits of Evil and the Role of Moral Address: A Defense of Strawsonian Compatibilism"

Notes

- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible.
- The Academic Honor Code must be observed in this course.
- Laptops and other electronic devices may not be used in class.
- Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.