

**Topics in Metaphysics: Free Will
Philosophy 131
Winter 2011**

Dana Kay Nelkin

Office: HSS 8004

Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:30; Thursday 11-12; and by appointment

Phone: (858) 822-0472

E-mail: dnelkin@ucsd.edu

Web site:

<http://philosophyfaculty.ucsd.edu/faculty/dnelkin/DanaNelkin/Welcome.html>

Course Description: In this course, we will explore a set of related metaphysical issues with direct implications both for ethics and for our self-conception. We will start with a challenge: contrary to our everyday assumptions, our actions can never be truly free. We will then examine a number of attempts to show that (and how) we can act freely. In the process, we will consider the relationship between free action and responsible action, different theories of causation, the relationship between dispositions and abilities, and what implications new research in neuroscience has for the question of whether we are free and responsible agents.

Requirements:

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|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| • 1 short paper (2-3 pages) (15%) | Due: 1/25 |
| • 1 midterm exam (20%) | Date: 2/10 |
| • 1 medium paper (6-7 pages) (25%) | Due: 3/1 |
| • 1 final exam (40%) | Date: 3/17, 3-6 |

Note: A hard copy of each paper must be turned in, and an electronic copy uploaded to turnitin.com. (This is very easy to do, and I'll give you instructions and a password for doing so before each paper.)

Specific course topics and readings

Many readings may be found in *Free Will*, edited by Gary Watson (noted with a "W" below) and *Four Views on Free Will* by John Martin Fischer, Robert Kane, Derk Pereboom, and Manuel Vargas (noted with a "4"). All other readings may be found on library e-reserves (<http://reserves.ucsd.edu>). Library materials are noted with an "L".

- 1/4: Introduction: Skeptical Challenges and Hard Cases
- 1/6: Skeptical Challenges and a First Libertarian Response
 G. Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility" (W)
 Chisolm, "Human Freedom and the Self" (W)
- 1/11: Event Causal Libertarianism and Influencability
 Kane, "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism"
 Smart, "Free Will, Praise, and Blame" (W)
- 1/13: The Principle of Alternate Possibilities
 Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" (W)
 Pereboom, "Source Incompatibilism and Alternative Possibilities" (L)
- 1/18: Compatibilism and Real Self Views
 Frankfurt, "Free Will and the Concept of a Person" (W)
 Watson, "Free Agency" (W)
- 1/20: Skepticism Revisited
 Nagel, "Freedom" (W)
- 1/25: Libertarianism, Round 2 (*Paper Due*)
 Kane, "Libertarianism" (4)
- 1/27: Compatibilism, Round 2: Reasons-Responsiveness
 Fischer, "Frankfurt-Style Compatibilism" (W)
- 2/1: Compatibilism, Round 2: Reasons-Responsiveness
 Fischer, "Compatibilism"; "Replies" (4)
- 2/3: Hard Incompatibilism
 Pereboom, "Hard Incompatibilism"; "Replies" (4)
- 2/8: Revisionism
 Vargas, "Revisionism"; "Replies" (4)
- 2/10: **MIDTERM**
- 2/15: Agent Causation Views
 Clarke, "Toward a Credible Agent-Causal Account of Free Will" (W)
- 2/17: Agent Causation Views

O'Connor, "Agent Causation" (W)

2/22: Agent Causation Views

"Markosian, "A Compatibilist Version of the Theory of Agent Causation" (L)

2/24: A Different Compatibilism and Abilities

Wolf, "Freedom Within Reason" excerpt (L)

3/1: The New Dispositionalism (**Paper Due**)

Fara, "Masked Abilities and Compatibilism"

3/3: The New Dispositionalism

Clarke, "Dispositions, Abilities to Act, and Free Will: The New Dispositionalism"

3/8: Free Will and Neuroscience

Libet, "Unconscious Cerebral Initiative..." (L)

3/10: Free Will and Neuroscience

Mele, *Effective Intentions: The Power of the Conscious Will*, excerpt (L)

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. Violations will be reported, and an "F" in the course will result.
- **Laptops and other electronic devices** may not be used in class except to take notes on lectures.
- Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.