

Freshman Seminar: Free Will and Film
Winter 2017
Alternating Mondays 12-2, HSS 8025
(Draft 1/6)

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Course Description: In this course, we will use thought-provoking films to explore questions like: Is anyone a free agent? Do we live in a determined world? Does freedom require a great deal of knowledge of one's world? Is freedom necessary for a meaningful life? The format of the course will center on discussion of films (some that you will have watched in advance, some shorter ones or clips that we will watch together during the sessions). We will read short articles about some of the philosophical issues that arise in the films we view before each meeting. The class will be run in seminar style, so come ready for discussion!

Requirements:

- (1) Attendance at each session. You can get credit for the class only if you attend (one absence is allowed, if you have a good excuse, provided in advance and make up the viewing or work).
- (2) Watching three films outside of class, one of which you will choose and review, and reading three articles.
- (3) Posting a question about each reading in advance of the class in which it will be discussed.
- (4) Writing and presenting one review of a film for the final session. (600 words maximum—about 2 pages).

Schedule:

Week 1 (January 9): *Introduction and Start Viewing of the Truman Show*

Week 2 (January 23): *Discussion of The Truman Show, Freedom, and Knowledge*

Reading: Wolf, *Freedom Within Reason*, chapter 4

Week 3 (February 6): *Discussion of Minority Report, Pre-Punishment, and Freedom*

Reading: Smilansky, "Determinism and Pre-Punishment: The Radical Nature of Compatibilism"

Week 4: Viewing and Discussion of *Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiments*; *The Asch Experiments*

Reading: Nelkin, "Freedom, Responsibility, and the Challenge of Situationism"

Week 5: Discussion of *The Adjustment Bureau* and Reviews

No new reading

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 except with permission of the instructor.
- Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.