

**Responsibility  
Philosophy 138  
Fall 2018**

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**Course Description:** We will begin with a puzzling case study: psychopaths. We will then ask whether psychopaths, who appear to lack certain moral capacities, can be responsible and, if so, in what ways. In the first half of the course, we will explore the nature of moral responsibility and its connection to legal responsibility, punishment, and the experience of guilt and build a general framework for answering questions about who is responsible for what and in what ways. In the second half of the course, we will then turn to some important particular applications of the framework, namely, whether people bear legal responsibility in circumstances of structural societal injustice, whether people can be responsible for actions that are due to implicit bias (which, by definition, they are unaware of), whether people can be responsible for war crimes, and finally, returning to our first case study, whether psychopaths can be responsible agents. The class will provide an opportunity for you to learn about the issues directly under discussion, and it will also give you practice in honing your reasoning skills and give you tools to bring to a wide variety of issues you might encounter in the future.

**Requirements:**

- Short reading responses/formulations of questions (150-200 words for each class meeting; 20 out of 28 required) 30%
- 1 paper in two drafts (about 2200 words)
  - first draft 10% (Due November 5)
  - second draft, revised after comments 25% (Due November 19)
- 1 take-home final exam (35%) (Due December 14, 11 am)
- up to 5% extra credit for participation in class group assignments and discussion.

Note: A hard copy of your paper must be turned in, and an electronic copy uploaded to turnitin.com on our TED web site.

Note: Each assignment must be turned in order to receive credit for the course.

**Specific course topics and readings**

All reading can be found on our TritonEd website in the form of PDFs or links to articles. You can access library materials remotely through the library web site. Typically, we will read one article or book excerpt for each of 28 class periods following the first class,

and you can find the order of readings below. If there is any change, I will be sure to let you know in class and on our class web site.

**A. Moral Responsibility: A Case Study and An Introduction to the Conceptual Landscape**

1. Gary Watson, *The Trouble With Psychopaths* (pp. 307-316)
2. Gary Watson, *The Trouble With Psychopaths* (pp.316-323)
3. John Martin Fischer and Mark Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control* (excerpts)
4. Susan Wolf *Freedom Within Reason*, chapter 4
5. Angela Smith, "Responsibility as Answerability"
6. Dana Kay Nelkin, "Difficulty and Degrees of Praiseworthiness and Blameworthiness"

**B. Moral and Criminal Responsibility**

7. H.L.A. Hart "Legal Responsibility and Excuses"
8. Michael Moore, *Placing Blame*, chapter 13 (Choice, Character, and Excuse)
9. David O. Brink and Dana K. Nelkin, "Fairness and the Architecture of Responsibility"

**C. Responsibility and Punishment**

10. Michael Moore, *Placing Blame*, chapter 2
11. Herbert Morris "Persons and Punishment"
12. Warren Quinn "The Right to Threaten and the Right to Punish"
13. Derk Pereboom *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life*, chapter 7

**D. Desert, Punishment, and Guilt**

14. Gilbert Harman, "Guilt-Free Morality"
15. Michael McKenna, "Punishment and the Value of Deserved Suffering"
16. Randolph Clarke, "Moral Responsibility, Guilt, and Retributivism"

**E. Responsibility and Structural Injustice**

17. Gary Watson, "A Moral Predicament in the Criminal Law"
18. Tommie Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform*, chapter 7

**F. Responsibility, Implicit Bias, and "System 1" Conduct**

19. Jules Holroyd, "Responsibility for Implicit Bias"
20. Neil Levy, "Implicit Bias and Responsibility: Probing the Data"
21. Holly Smith, "Dual Process Theory and Moral Responsibility"

**G. War Crimes**

22. John Doris and Dominic Murphy, "From My Lai to Abu Ghraib: The Moral Psychology of Atrocity"
23. Matthew Talbert and Jessica Wolfendale, "War Crimes: Causes, Excuses and Blame"

## **H. Provocation and Reasonable Person**

- 24. Dolores Donovan and Stephanie Wildman, "Is the Reasonable Man Obsolete?"
- 25. TBA

## **I. Psychopaths**

- 26. David Brink, "Responsibility, Incompetence and Psychopathy"
- 27. TBA
- 28. TBA

## **Notes**

- Laptops, phones and other electronic devices may not be used in class **except by permission of the instructor.**
- 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 result in an "F" for the course.
- Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.
- ***If you would like to talk about anything, please see me in office hours or make an appointment with me at a different time if those aren't convenient for any reason. I am available most days, and happy to see you.***