

Independent Study in Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Prof. Jeremy Reid

Fall 2022

1. Course Description

The purpose of this course is to give students a deep understanding of the most important *recent* contributions to the debates about free will and moral responsibility. Given substantial methodological shifts in recent years, particular attention will be paid to details about how this debate is framed, what questions are taken to be the important ones, and how recent empirical work on agency, causality, physics, and neuroscience pertains to particular philosophical questions. Students will also pay attention to the high levels of conceptual precision and clarity of presentation that contemporary scholarship in this field demands, and aim to develop their writing skills accordingly.

2. Format

Students will meet independently each week in person to discuss the readings and writing assignments.

3. Assessment

50% weekly writing assignments
50% final paper (5000–8000 words)

For the writing assignments, each week one student will write up a summary of the readings (think of these as notes for your future selves) and the other student will write a discussion piece. 2 pages single-spaced is ideal, but it is ok if the notes go over that—you've done your hard work getting your writing concise, so now your focus should be on quality. Writing assignments should be completed before each student meeting and shared with each other to serve as a basis for discussion.

Final papers are due Sun Jan 15 at 11:59pm at the very latest—though I strongly encourage you to complete them and submit them for assessment before then. Students will present an outline of their final papers in the final week of semester (if not sooner).

4. Schedule of Readings

PART I

Introduction:

1. Pereboom, *Free Will*

Metaphysics and freedom:

2. Sartorio, *Causation and Free Will*, Part I + II
3. Sartorio, *Causation and Free Will*, Part III + IV + V

Empirically responsible skepticism:

4. Nichols, *Bound*, Part I "Agency"
5. Nichols, *Bound*, Part II "Moral Responsibility"

Physics and freedom:

6. Ismael, *How Physics Makes Us Free*, "Appendix for Slackers " + Ch 4-5
7. Ismael, *How Physics Makes Us Free*, Ch 6-9

PART II

Causal efficacy:

8. Roskies, "Monkey Decision Making as a Model System..."
Steward "Action as Downward Causation"
(Optional) Bernstein and Wilson, "Free Will and Mental Causation"

Rosy picture:

9. Nahmias "Your Brain as the Source of Free Will Worth Wanting..."
Susan Wolf "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"
(Optional) Frankfurt "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

Gloomy picture:

10. Neil Levy "Choices Without Choosers"
Prinz "Moral Sedimentation"
(Optional) Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility"

Self-authorship:

11. Roskies "Don't panic: Self-authorship without obscure metaphysics"
Herdova "Barking Up The wrong Tree"
(Optional) Kamtekar "Situationism and Virtue Ethics on the Content of Our Character"

Reasons-responsiveness/rationality:

12. Hieronymi, "Reflection and Responsibility"
Fischer / Sartorio?
(Optional) Rationality Wars

Manipulation discussion:

13. McKenna, "A Hardline Reply to the Four-Case Manipulation Argument"
Pereboom, reply to McKenna
Tierney, "The Four-Case Argument and the Existential/Universal Effect"

Strawson discussion:

14. Todd, "Strawson, Moral Responsibility, and the "Order of Explanation"
Beglin, "Responsibility, Libertarians, and the "Facts as We Know Them"
Mesel, "The Facts and Practices of Moral Responsibility"

Misc:

15. Tierney, "Defusing Existential and Universal Threats to Compatibilism"
Wallace
O'Connor "Degrees of Freedom"

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of cheating or fraud; it occurs when a student misrepresents the work of another as his or her own. Plagiarism may consist of using the ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or the whole text of another without appropriate acknowledgment, but it also includes employing or allowing another person to write or substantially alter work that a student then submits as his or her own. Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an "F" grade. All instances of plagiarism in the College of Liberal & Creative Arts will be reported to the Dean of the College, and may be reported to the University Judicial Affairs Officer for further action.

Disability Access

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/415-338-2472, video phone/415-335-7210) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).

Student Disclosures of Sexual Violence

SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Title IX Coordinator by completing the report form available at <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>, emailing vpsaem@sfsu.edu or calling 338-2032.

To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

- The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/
- Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>
- For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>