

PHIL U282: FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM
Loyola University of New Orleans, Fall 2016, Dr. Ben Bayer

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION AND POLICIES

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Many think that human beings are distinguished by their ability to craft their own destinies, by their possession of free will, and many find it deeply disconcerting to deny this power. And yet there are facts about humanity's place in nature that suggest to some philosophers that we do not possess it. Ideas arising in both religious and scientific traditions are sometimes taken to imply that human beings lack meaningful control over their lives. This course surveys the problem of freedom vs. determinism in the broadest of terms. It examines the major schools of thought across philosophic traditions, and explores how central ideas arise, are recapitulated and refined across the course of history. We begin with the ancient Greeks, work our way through early and Reformation Christianity, pause to witness the formation of the modern debate during the scientific revolution, and culminate with a quick survey of twentieth century debates.

COURSE GOALS, OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

1. To develop students' ability to read and interpret primary texts in the history of philosophy on a central philosophical topic.
2. To develop students' ability to communicate their interpretation of this topic in writing and to logically evaluate arguments studied concerning this topic.
3. To develop students' appreciation for how major fundamental philosophical world views affect their assessment of a central philosophical topic.
4. To develop students' appreciation for the importance of a central philosophical topic to their own lives, and the importance of subjecting their own views on this topic to logical evaluation.

GRADING

Quizzes	15%
Online participation	15%
Paper #1	20%
Paper #2	20%
Exam #1	15%
Exam #2	15%
In-class participation	Extra credit up to an extra 5%

REQUIRED TEXTS

Copies of each of these will be made available on reserve:

- LAD course pack, available exclusively from the Loyola Bookstore
- Derk Pereboom (editor), *Free Will*, 2nd edition, 2009, ISBN 9781603841290

Also:

- Public domain or Loyola-subscribed readings available via Blackboard

LECTURE AND READING SCHEDULE

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Introduction to the problem of freedom

Monday, August 22nd

Introduction

Wednesday, August 24th

Freedom and moral responsibility

- (1) Sam Harris, from *Free Will*. Read pp. 1-14 online at Google Books: <http://goo.gl/7j8QsR>

Friday, August 26th

Freedom and science

- (2) John Searle, “The Problem of Free Will” (Blackboard)

The ancient roots of the problem of freedom

Monday, August 29th

The problem of fate and divine foreknowledge

- (3) Homer, from *The Illiad* (Blackboard)
- (4) Lucian of Samosata, “Zeus Answers a Few Awkward Questions” (Blackboard)

Wednesday, August 31st

Choice, virtue, and character

- (5) Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics* (Pereboom pp. 1–4)
- (6) Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics* (Blackboard)

Friday, September 2nd

Choice, virtue, and character

- (5)-(6) Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics* (continued)

Monday, September 5th—LABOR DAY HOLIDAY—NO CLASS

Wednesday, September 7th

The first “compatibilism”: Stoics on the will

- (7) Cicero on Chrysippus, from *On Fate* (Pereboom pp. 8-10, 11-13)
- (8) Aulus Gellius on Chrysippus, from *Attic Nights* (Pereboom pp. 14-16)
- (9) Epictetus, from *The Handbook (Enchiridion)*, (Blackboard)

Friday, September 9th

The first “compatibilism”: Stoics on the will (continued)

- (7)-(9) Cicero, Aulus Gellius on Chrysippus, and Epictetus (continued)

Monday, September 12th

Critics of Stoic compatibilism

- (10) Alexander of Aphrodisias, from *On Fate* (Course pack, pp. 1-4)
- (11) Epicurus, from *On Nature* (Course pack pp. 5-6)

Wednesday, September 14th

Critics of Stoic compatibilism

- (10) Alexander of Aphrodisias, from *On Fate* (Course pack, pp. 1-4)
- (11) Epicurus, from *On Nature* (Course pack pp. 5-6)

The problem of freedom in early and reformed Christianity

Friday, September 16th

God's foreknowledge and his omnipotence

- (12) St. Augustine, from *On Free Choice of the Will* (Pereboom pp. 25–33)
[Begin at the first line from Evodius “Therefore, when the will...”]

Monday, September 19th

God's foreknowledge and his omnipotence

- (12) St. Augustine, from *On Free Choice of the Will* (continued)

Freedom and original sin

- (13) Pelagius, Letter to Demetrias (Course pack 7-12: §1–2.0 [not 2.1], 3.1–3.3, 7.0–9.3)
- (14) St. Augustine, from *On Grace and Free Will* (Blackboard)

Wednesday, September 21st

Freedom and original sin

- (13)-(14) Pelagius and St. Augustine (continued)

Friday, September 23rd

Freedom in the Reformation

- (15) Martin Luther, from *Bondage of the Will* (Blackboard)

Monday, September 26th

Freedom in the Reformation

- (15) Martin Luther (continued)

Wednesday, September 28th

Using God's “middle knowledge” to reconcile divine foreknowledge and human freedom

- (16) Luis de Molina, from *Concordia* (Course pack pp. 13-14)
- (17) William Lane Craig, Commentary on Molina (Course pack pp. 14-20)

Friday, September 30th

Using God's “middle knowledge” to reconcile divine foreknowledge and human freedom

- (16)-(17) Molina and Craig (continued)

- **PAPER #1 DUE**

The problem of freedom in the Age of Reason and the Scientific Revolution

Monday, October 3rd

Materialistic determinism

- (18) d’Holbach, from *System of Nature* (Blackboard)

Wednesday, October 5th

Materialistic determinism

- (18) d’Holbach (continued)

Friday, October 7th

Classical compatibilism: freedom as absence of compulsion

- (19) David Hume, from *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (Pereboom pp. 87–104)

Monday, October 10th—FALL BREAK HOLIDAY—NO CLASS

Wednesday, October 12th

Classical compatibilism: freedom as absence of compulsion

- (19) Hume (continued)

Reconceptualizing causality: the agency theory

- (20) Thomas Reid, from *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* (Pereboom pp. 130–38)

Friday, October 14th

Reconceptualizing causality: the agency theory

- (20) Reid (continued)

Monday, October 17th

Metaphysically dualistic compatibilism: freedom from beyond the physical world

- (21) Immanuel Kant, from “Review of Schultz” (Course pack pp. 21-22)
- (22) Immanuel Kant, from *Critique of Practical Reason* (Pereboom pp. 105–19, or for a shortened read:
105-106; 108 [from section labeled “Possibility of Causality through Freedom...”]-110 (until section labeled “Elucidation of the Cosmological idea...”); 111 [from paragraph beginning “But if effects are appearances, is it indeed...”]-114 [until paragraph beginning “Let us now remain with this point”];
115 [from paragraph beginning “Now supposing one could say...”]-118 [until paragraph beginning “It must be noted carefully...”])

Wednesday, October 19th

Metaphysically dualistic compatibilism: freedom from beyond the physical world

- (21)-(22) Kant (continued)

Friday, October 21st

Hard determinism

- (23) Arthur Schopenhauer, from *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will* (Course pack pp. 23-34)

Monday, October 24th

Hard determinism

- (23) Schopenhauer (continued)

Wednesday, October 26th

EXAM #1

Social and psychological perspectives on freedom in the 19th century and beyond

Friday, October 28th

Materialist psychological egoism

- (24) Nicolai Chernyshevsky, from *The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy* (Blackboard)

Monday October 31st

Materialist psychological egoism

- (24) Chernyshevsky (continued)

The proto-existentialist rebellion against determinism

- (25) Fyodor Dostoevsky, from *Notes from Underground* (Blackboard)

Wednesday, November 2nd

The proto-existentialist rebellion against determinism

- (25) Dostoevsky (continued)

Friday, November 4th

Determinism via the psychology of the unconscious

- (26) Sigmund Freud, from *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Blackboard)

Monday, November 7th

Determinism via the psychology of the unconscious

- (26) Freud (continued)

Psychological indeterminism

- (27) William James, from “The Dilemma of Determinism” (Blackboard)

Wednesday, November 9th

Psychological indeterminism

- (27) James (continued)

Contemporary perspectives on freedom

Friday, November 11th

Radical existentialist indeterminism

- (28) Jean-Paul Sartre, from “Existentialism and Humanism” (Course pack pp. 35-38)

PAPER #2 DUE

Monday, November 14th

Radical existentialist indeterminism

- (28) Sartre (continued)

Wednesday, November 16th

Neocompatibilism: Reevaluating the principle of alternative possibilities

- (29) Harry Frankfurt, “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” (Pereboom pp. 185–95)

Friday, November 18th

Reevaluating the principle of alternative possibilities

- (29) Harry Frankfurt (continued)

Monday, November 21st

Neocompatibilism: The asymmetry of praise and blame

- (30) Susan Wolf, “Asymmetrical Freedom” (Pereboom, pp. 228-242)

Wednesday, November 23rd to Friday, November 25th—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS—NO CLASSES

Monday, November 28th

Neocompatibilism: The asymmetry of praise and blame

- (30) Susan Wolf (continued)

Wednesday, November 30th

Determinism as self-undermining

- (31) James Jordan, “Determinism’s Dilemma” (CP 101–104)

Friday, December 1st

Determinism as self-undermining

- (31) James Jordan (continued)

Monday, December 5th

Freedom as the fundamental alternative to think or not

- (32) Binswanger on Ayn Rand, “Volition as Cognitive Self-Regulation” (Blackboard)

Wednesday, December 7th

Freedom as the fundamental alternative to think or not

- (32) Binswanger on Ayn Rand (continued)

Friday, December 9th

Freedom and neurobiology, revisited

- (33) Searle, “Free Will as a Problem in Neurobiology” (Blackboard)