

PHIL 171/COGS 160: Free Will in Philosophy and Cognitive Science

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Professor: Carolyn Dicey Jennings

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Office Hours: by appointment

REQUIRED TEXT

Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course will explore the concept of free will and the plausibility of its existence through both philosophy and cognitive science. This course aims to supply students with the skills and knowledge to accurately discuss the latest developments in debates on free will.

COURSE STRUCTURE

On Tuesdays of each week the students will be presented with a lecture on the topic of the week.

On Thursdays students will have a discussion on that topic. At the end of class each Thursday a typed, one-page paper will be due on the topic of the week.

GRADING PROCEDURES

All students will be expected to turn in weekly one-page papers on one of the readings for that week (single-spaced with 12 pt Times New Roman font and 1" margins), due Thursdays by the end of class: **12 one-page papers, each worth 2.5% of the final grade, together worth 30% of the final grade.**

The mid-term will be a short answer exam: **1 mid-term exam on March 19th, worth 30% of the final grade.**

The final will be a short answer and essay-based exam: **1 final exam on May 12th, worth 30% of the final grade.**

Participation in the course will be based on 10 pop quizzes, each worth 1 percent of the final grade. **10 pop quizzes, each worth 1% of the final grade, together worth 10% of the final grade.**

Students can also earn up to 50% of the participation grade by giving a 10 minute in-class presentation on a discussion day, with up to two student presentations allowed per day (first come, first serve basis): **1 presentation, worth up to 50% of the participation grade, and up to 5% of the final grade.**

RESOURCES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Academic Support: For free academic support, go to the Calvin E. Bright Success Center located at KOLLIG 222 or email learning@ucmerced.edu.

Students with Disabilities: Upon identifying themselves to the instructor and the university, students with disabilities will receive reasonable accommodation for learning and evaluation. For more information, contact UCM Disabilities Services at SSB 230, 209-228-6996, or disabilityservices@ucmerced.edu.

Lateness Policy: Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval by the instructor, except in the case of a verifiable emergency.

Academic Honesty Policy: Any student found guilty of cheating, plagiarism, or collusion (defined here: <http://studentlife.ucmerced.edu/what-we-do/student-judicial-affairs/academicy-honesty-policy>) will be reported to Judicial Affairs and may be given a failing grade for the course.

Laptop/Tablet/Cell Phone Policy: The use of laptops, tablets, cell phones, smart phones, or other mobile communication devices is disruptive, and is therefore prohibited during class. The only exception to this policy is to allow students to access the required readings during class. Except in emergencies or for students with prior approval from the professor, those using such devices may be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to the Problem of Free Will

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 1, B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*, pp. 240-8 [Total: 19 pages]

Jan 20 Tu: Lecture on the Problem of Free Will

Jan 22 Th: Discussion, **First Paper Due**

Week 2: Classical Compatibilism

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 2, David Hume's "Liberty and Necessity" [Total: 24 pages]

Jan 27 Tu: Lecture on Classical Compatibilism

Jan 29 Th: Discussion, **Second Paper Due**

Week 3: The Consequence Argument

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 3, Laura W. Ekstrom's "Freedom, Causation, and the Consequence Argument" Section 2, pp. 334-336 (read up to second paragraph) [Total: 11 pages]

Reading Challenge: Lewis, David (1981). "Are We Free to Break the Laws?" Theoria, 47: 112-121.

Feb 3 Tu: Lecture on the Consequence Argument

Feb 5 Th: Discussion, **Third Paper Due**

Week 4: Libertarianism

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 4, Robert Kane's "Responsibility, Luck, and Chance: Reflections on Free Will and Indeterminism" pp. 217-227 (read up to section IV) [Total: 19 pages]

Feb 10 Tu: Lecture on Libertarianism

Feb 12 Th: Discussion, **Fourth Paper Due**

Week 5: Agent-Causation

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 5, Lynne Rudder Baker's "What is Human Freedom?" pp. 1-11. [Total: 21 pages]

Reading Challenge: Chisolm, Roderick (1964). "Human Freedom and the Self."

Feb 17 Tu: Lecture on Agent-Causation

Feb 19 Th: Discussion, **Fifth Paper Due**

Week 6: Simple Indeterminism

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 6 [Total: 12 pages]

Reading Challenge: Carl Ginet's "An Action Can be Both Uncaused and Up to the Agent"

Feb 24 Tu: Lecture on Simple Indeterminism

Feb 26 Th: Discussion, **Sixth Paper Due**

Week 7: Hard Determinism

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 7, Derk Pereboom's "Determinism al Dente" pp. 21-26 (to the end of section I) and 27-31 (section III) [Total: 25 pages]

Mar 3 Tu: Lecture on Hard Determinism

Mar 5 Th: Discussion, **Seventh Paper Due**

Week 8: Free Will Skepticism

Required Reading: Daniel Dennett's "Please Don't Feed the Bugbears," Daniel Wegner and Thalia Wheatley's "Apparent Mental Causation: Sources of the Experience of Will" [Total: 32 pages]

Mar 10 Tu: Lecture on Free Will Skepticism

Mar 12 Th: Discussion

Week 9: Mid-term Review

Mar 17 Tu: Mid-term Review

Mar 19 Th: **Mid-Term Examination**

Spring Recess

Week 10: The Principle of Alternative Possibilities

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 8, David P. Hunt's "Moral responsibility and unavoidable action" [Total: 17 pages]

Reading Challenge: Frankfurt, Harry G. (1969). "Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility." The Journal of Philosophy, 66(23): 829-839.

Mar 31 Tu: Lecture on the Principle of Alternative Possibilities

Apr 2 Th: Discussion, **Eighth Paper Due**

Week 11: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 9, Susan Wolf's "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" [Total: 22 pages]

Reading Challenge: Frankfurt, Harry G. (1971). "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person." The Journal of Philosophy, 68(1): 5-20.

Apr 7 Tu: Lecture on Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Apr 9 Th: Discussion, **Ninth Paper Due**

Week 12: Reactive Attitudes

Required Reading: Kane Ch. 10, Eddy Nahmias et al.'s "Surveying Freedom: Folk Intuitions about Free Will and Moral Responsibility" [Total: 22 pages]

Reading Challenge: Strawson, Peter F. (2008). "Freedom and Resentment." Freedom and Resentment and other essays. Taylor and Francis.

Apr 14 Tu: Lecture on Reactive Attitudes

Apr 16 Th: Discussion, **Tenth Paper Due**

Week 13: The Libet Experiment

Required Reading: Benjamin Libet's "Unconscious cerebral initiative and the role of conscious will in voluntary action" [Total: 11 pages]

Apr 21 Tu: Lecture on the Libet Experiment

Apr 23 Th: Discussion, **Eleventh Paper Due**

Week 14: Critiques of Libet

Required Reading: Patrick Haggard and Martin Eimer's "On the relation between brain potentials and the awareness of voluntary movements," Aaron Schurger, Jacobo D. Sitt, and Stanislas Dehaene's "An accumulator model for spontaneous neural activity prior to self-initiated movement"
[Total: 14 pages]

Apr 28 Tu: Lecture on Critiques of Libet

Apr 30 Th: Discussion, **Twelfth Paper Due**

Week 15: The Neural Basis of Free Will

Required Reading: Peter Ulric Tse's *The Neural Basis of Free Will* (selections)

May 5 Tu: Lecture on The Neural Basis of Free Will

May 7 Th: Discussion

Final Exam: May 11th from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students are expected to be able to:

CLO 1. Describe free will from the perspective of both philosophy and cognitive science.

CLO 2. Articulate and analyze the progress of ideas on free will from within philosophy.

CLO 3. Articulate and analyze the latest developments in the debate on free will from within cognitive science.

These CLOs help students to reach the **Philosophy** Program Learning Outcomes 2, 3, & 4.

PLO 2: Topics: Identify and explain the central questions within major topics of philosophical research.

This PLO is supported by CLO 2, in which students are expected to be able to articulate and analyze philosophical arguments in the free will debate by the end of the course.

PLO 3: Ideas: Describe the contributions of major thinkers in the philosophical canon.

This PLO is also supported by CLO 2, since many of the philosophical arguments considered in this course are due to major thinkers in the philosophical canon.

PLO 4: Application: Apply philosophical knowledge...to a subject in another discipline, and/or apply knowledge from another discipline to a subject in philosophy.

This PLO is supported by CLO 1, in which students are expected to be able to understand the free will debate from the perspective of both philosophy and cognitive science.

These CLOs help students to reach the **Cognitive Science** Program Learning Outcomes 1 & 4.

PLO 1: Understanding foundational concepts in cognitive and information sciences.

This PLO is supported by CLO 1, in which students are expected to understand the foundational concept of agency.

PLO 4: Ability to integrate knowledge across the disciplines that compose cognitive and information sciences.

This PLO is supported by CLO 1 and 3, in which students are expected to be able to understand the free will debate from the perspective of both philosophy and experimental science.