Philosophy 442: Moral Responsibility
Rutgers University; Murray Hall MU-115
Mon 1:10 – 2:30, Wed 1:10 – 2:30

Contact information
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Course description

The practice of blaming and praising people for their conduct is ubiquitous and central to the moral life. Agents, we assume, are typically responsible for what they do. But despite its ubiquity, this practice raises deep philosophical questions. What does holding someone morally responsible amount to? When can we be excused for our wrongdoings? Under what conditions do we merit blame or praise for what we did? Do we meet those conditions as often as we think? Is it even possible to meet those conditions? Are we ever genuinely responsible for what we do?

Aristotle famously identified two conditions for an act to be voluntary (and thus properly subject to blame or praise) in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. First, you can be held responsible for what you do only if you do it *of your own free will*. This is the *freedom* or *control* condition. You cannot be blamed or praised for an act that was not under your control. Second, you can be held responsible for what you do only if you *know* what you are doing. This is the *epistemic* or *knowledge* condition. You cannot be blamed or praised for what you did if you weren't aware of what you were doing.

In this course, we will follow Aristotle's distinction and survey the contemporary philosophy of moral responsibility in two parts. Our first and longest part will be about the freedom condition. What is free will? Under what conditions is an act free? Are those conditions compatible with determinism? Do we ever meet those conditions? Is free will possible? Topics will include the compatibilist views of David Hume and J.J.C. Smart, P.F. Strawson's groundbreaking work on reactive attitudes, the compatibilist views of Harry Frankfurt, Gary Watson, and Susan Wolf, Peter Van Inwagen's consequence argument, Derk Pereboom's manipulation argument, incompatibilist theories of free will, and free will skepticism.

Then, in the second part, we will move to the epistemic condition on moral responsibility. When does lack of knowledge excuse? What kind of ignorance can make us blameless? Can *moral* ignorance exculpate? Can *psychopaths* be blamed for their wrongdoings? Do people meet the knowledge condition as often as we think? It is often claimed that ignorance does not excuse if it is culpable. But what makes one's ignorance culpable? Are people culpably ignorant as often as we think? We will discuss the works of Holly Smith, Gideon Rosen, Michael J. Zimmerman, Neil Levy, Michelle Moody-Adams, William Fitzpatrick, Angela Smith, George Sher, Patricia Greenspan, Dana Nelkin, and others.

Learning Goals

Become familiar with the main questions, concepts, arguments, and theories surrounding moral responsibility and free will in contemporary English-speaking philosophy.

Develop fundamental philosophical and critical thinking skills. These include the ability to (i) construct, defend, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments in one's own words, (ii) understand and think creatively (both individually and in teams) about complex concepts, arguments, theories, and problems, (iii) interpret contemporary scholarly work in philosophy, (iv) write clearly and concisely, and (v) discuss constructively and respectfully with others about complex questions.

Required texts

All readings are freely available on Sakai in PDF format.
No textbook to purchase

Assignments and grading policy

Attendance and participation	10%
Weekly Online Quizzes	30%
Midterm paper	25%
Final paper	35%

Attendance & *participation***:** Attending and participating to the classes is mandatory. Attendance will be worth **10% of your final grade**. You have **2 free unexcused absences**. After that, you will lose **0.5%** of your final mark **per absence**, up to a maximum of 10%. If you have to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence.

Quizzes: I will assign a total of **12 online quizzes**. Together, they will be worth 30% of your final grade. Your **two lowest quiz scores won't count**. **Only your top 10 scores will count**. The quizzes will evaluate your grasp of the readings and lectures. You may use your notes and the readings to complete them, but you must do so alone. The quizzes will be made available online, on Sakai, two days before the quiz due date (see schedule for quiz deadlines). No late quizzes will be accepted. **Late quizzes will receive a zero.**

Papers: You will write a **midterm paper, worth 25%** of your total grade and a **final paper, worth 35%** of your final grade. Each paper will explore in detail a topic of your choice. You will be expected to answer a question and defend a particular thesis in your own words, with your own arguments. I will put suggestions of essay questions on Sakai. You may choose a topic that is not on the list, but I must approve it first. The **midterm** must be **2000-3500 words** and will be **due by March 12th at midnight**. The **final** paper must be **3000-4000 words** and will be **due by May 4th at midnight**. You will **submit both papers electronically, on Sakai, in .doc or .docx format**. **Late papers** will receive lower marks. You will lose **5%** of your assignment mark for each day late.

Team exercises: Each class will feature team exercises to test your grasp of the readings. The teams will be formed randomly at the beginning of the semester and will remain the same for the whole semester. Each class, the members of the team(s) with the most correct answers in the exercises will get a **small bonus on their final grade**. Absent team members do not get a bonus. At the end of the semester, the team with the most wins gets an additional small bonus.

Course policies

*Civil discourse***:** The course will feature a lot of in-class discussions. In order for that to work, it is crucial that you all observe **basic norms of civility and respect**. Raise your hand if you have a comment or question and do not interrupt others. This also means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other's views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a **respectful, collegial, and constructive way**. This is a paraphrase of the department's policy on civil discourse, available at:

http://www.philosophy.rutgers.edu/about-us/discourse. **Violations of these guidelines will not be tolerated.** Please reach out to me if you feel like those norms are not being respected in the class.

Cell phones: The **use of cell phones is strictly prohibited** during class. If you use your phone during class, I will mark you as **absent** for that class.

Laptops: Laptops are tolerated, but **only if you use them for taking notes**. Using them for other purposes (e.g., doing work for other classes, updating your Instagram, playing video games, watching cat videos on YouTube) is not only distracting for you and those around you, it is also highly disrespectful to your teachers.
Also, research has shown that laptops are poor tools for taking notes. Unless you have a learning disability, you're much more likely to succeed if you take notes by hand. (https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/ https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html)

Extra credits: I don't give any, so don't bother asking.

Academic integrity: Don't plagiarize! The current academic integrity policy can be found at: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/ For a useful guide on how to avoid plagiarism, see: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (subject to change, see the course website for latest schedule)
Readings identified with a ***** are **mandatory** and must be done *before* class. Further readings are optional, but recommended, especially if you are writing a paper on the topic.
Assignments are in **red**.

Topics	Date	Readings and assignments
Introduction	Jan 17	No reading
PART 1 – The freedom condition: what is free will? Do we have it?		
1.1 Compatibilism		
Classical compatibilism	Jan 22	* David Hume – Selections from *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* - Further reading: Robert Kane (2005). *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will,* Ch.1-2
	Jan 24	* J.J.C. Smart (1961). Free will, praise and blame - Further reading: Moritz Schlick (1930). When is a man responsible?

Quiz 1 due	**Jan 26**	*Topic quiz 1: Hume and Smart*
P.F. Strawson on reactive attitudes	Jan 29	* P.F. Strawson – Freedom and resentment

	Jan 31	* Gary Watson – Moral responsibility and the limits of evil
		
		    - Further Reading: Galen Strawson – On "Freedom and resentment"
		    - Further reading: Susan Wolf – The importance of free will

Quiz 2 due	**Feb 2**	*Quiz 2 topic: Strawson and Watson*

Harry Frankfurt and the principle of alternate possibilities	Feb 5
	
	Feb 7
		* Harry Frankfurt (1969). Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility
		* David Widerker (1995). Libertarianism and Frankfurt's attack on the principle of alternative possibilities
		* Maria Alvarez (2009). Actions, thought-experiments and the principle of alternate possibilities
		
		    - Further reading: Carl Ginet (1995). In defense of the principle of alternative possibilities
		    - Further reading: David Widerker (2000). Frankfurt's attack on the principle of alternative possibilities: A further look
		    - Further reading: David Widerker (2006). Blameworthiness and Frankfurt's argument against the principle of alternate possibilities.

Quiz 3 due	**Feb 9**	*Topic quiz 3: Frankfurt on the PAP*
Contemporary compatibilism	Feb 12	* Harry Frankfurt – Freedom of the will and the concept of a person - Further Reading: Gary Watson – Free agency
	Feb 14	* Susan Wolf – Sanity and the metaphysics of free will - Further reading: Susan Wolf – Asymmetrical freedom
Quiz 4 due	**Feb 16**	*Topic quiz 4: Frankfurt and Wolf*

1.2 Incompatibilism

The Consequence argument	Feb 19
	
	Feb 21
		* Peter Van Inwagen - An Essay on Free Will (Selection)
		* David Lewis – Are we free to break the laws?
		
		    - Further reading: Helen Beebee (2013). *Free Will*, chapter 3
		    - Further reading: Kadri Vihvelin (SEP) – Arguments for incompatibilism

Quiz 5 due	***Feb 23***	***Topic quiz 5: the consequence argument***
Manipulation Arguments	Feb 26 Feb 28	* Derk Pereboom – *Living Without Free Will* (Selections) * Michael McKenna – A Hard-line Reply to Pereboom's Four-Case Manipulation Argument * Kristin Demetriou – The Soft-Line Solution to Pereboom's Four-Case Argument - Further Reading: Alfred Mele – Manipulation, compatibilism, and moral responsibility
Quiz 6 due	***Mar 2***	***Topic quiz 6: Manipulation arguments***

Contemporary incompatibilism	Mar 5
	
	Mar 7
		* Roderick Chisholm (1964). Human freedom and the self
		* Robert Kane (1999). Responsibility, luck and chance
		* Carl Ginet (2014). Can indeterminstic cause leave a choice up to the agent
		No quiz this week because of midterm
		    - Further reading: Randolph Clarke and Justin Capes (SEP) Incompatibilist (Nondeterministic) Theories of Free Will
		    - Further reading: Randolph Clarke (1993). Toward a credible agent-causal account of free will
		    - Further reading: Carl Ginet (2002). Reasons Explanations of Action: Causalist versus Noncausalist Accounts

Midterm due	Mar 12	***Midterm paper due by midnight, Monday March 12***
SPRING RECESS		

Incompatibilism and free will skepticism	Mar 19 Mar 21	* Galen Strawson. (1994). The impossibility of moral responsibility * Randolph Clarke (2005). On an Argument for the Impossibility of Moral Responsibility * Derk Pereboom (2002). Living without free will: the case for hard incompatibilism - Further reading: Saul Smilansky (2002). Free will, fundamentalism, and the centrality of illusion
Quiz 7 due	Mar 23	*Topic quiz 7: contemporary incompatilism and free will skepticism*

PART 2 – The epistemic condition: when does ignorance exculpate?

The epistemic condition and the problem of moral ignorance	Mar 26	* Holly Smith (1983). Culpable ignorance - Further reading: Jan Willem Wieland (2017). The epistemic condition

	Mar 28	* Gideon Rosen (2003). Culpability and ignorance
		
		    - Further reading: Michael J. Zimmerman (1997). Moral Responsibility and Ignorance
		    - Further reading: Gideon Rosen (2004). Skepticism about moral responsibility
		    - Further reading: Neil Levy (2011). *Hard Luck* (Selections)

Quiz 8 due	Mar 30	*Topic quiz 8: Smith and Rosen*
Michelle Moody-Adams on moral ignorance	Apr 2	* Michelle Moody-Adams (1994). Culture, Responsibility, and Affected Ignorance - Further reading: Elizabeth Harman (2011). Does moral ignorance exculpate?
William Fitzpatrick on moral ignorance	Apr 4	* William J. FitzPatrick (2008). Moral responsibility and normative ignorance * Neil Levy (2009). Culpable Ignorance and Moral Responsibility: A Reply to FitzPatrick
Quiz 9 due	*Apr 6*	*Topic quiz 9: Moody-Adams and Fitzpatrick*

Attributionist responses: Angela Smith	Apr 9
	
	Apr 11
		* Angela Smith (2005). Responsibility for attitudes
		* Neil Levy (2005). The good, the bad, and the blameworthy.
		* Angela Smith (2008). Control, responsibility, and moral assessment
		
		    - Further reading: Pamela Hieronymi (2008). Responsibility for believing
		    - Further reading: Elinor Mason (2015). Moral ignorance and blameworthiness

Quiz 10 due	*Apr 13*	**Topic quiz 10: Angela Smith's attributionism**

Attributionist responses: George Sher	Apr 16
	
	Apr 18
		* George Sher (2009). *Who Knew?* (Selections)
		* Holly Smith (2011). Non-tracing cases of culpable ignorance
		
		    - Further reading: Manuel Vargas (2005). The trouble with tracing
		    - Further reading: John Martin Fischer & Neal A.Tognazzini (2009). The truth about tracing

Quiz 11 due	**Apr 20**	**Topic quiz 11: George Sher and Holly Smith**

Can psychopathy exculpate?	Apr 23
	
	Apr 25
		* Patricia Greenspan (2003). Responsible psychopaths
		* Neil Levy (2007). The responsibility of psychopaths revisited
		* Dana Nelkin (2015). Psychopaths, Incorrigible Racists, and the Faces of Responsibility
		
		    - Further reading: Haji (1998). On Psychopaths and Culpability
		    - Further reading: Matthew Talbert (2008). Blame and Responsiveness to Moral Reasons: Are Psychopaths Blameworthy?
		    - Further reading: Paul Litton (2010). Psychopathy and Responsibility Theory

Quiz 12 (last) due	*Apr 27*	**Topic quiz 12: the responsibility of psychopaths**
Catch-up and revision	Apr 30	No reading, no quiz
Final paper due	**_May 4_**	**_Final paper due by Friday May 4 at midnight_**

Student disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services

Student-wellness services

Just In Case Web App http://codu.co/cee05e

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)：(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA) (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / https://ods.rutgers.edu/

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Scarlet Listeners （732) 247-5555 / http://www.scarletlisteners.com/

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.