

WHAT IS FREEDOM?

Fall 2015, PHIL 286

Office Hours: M, W 3 – 5, and by appointment

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Course Description

Freedom is arguably the central value of the modern world. But what is freedom? In this class we are going to try to answer this question by approaching the concept from three distinct yet inter-related points of view. The first point of view is *metaphysical*. Here, we are concerned with the question of *free will*, with whether subjects can genuinely chose between different courses of action or whether their actions are causally determined by events antecedent to their action. The second point of view on freedom that we take is that of *moral psychology*. Here the question is: how must reason, will, and desire be ordered such that one can be said to be responsible for one's chosen action? The issue is not how the world must be so that I can be free, but how my 'soul' must be ordered such that an action can genuinely be *mine*. The last point of view on freedom that we take is *political*. What is it to be free politically? Is it simply to not be interfered with by others, or does it require forms of activity in which we act with others? Is political freedom simply the having of certain rights, or is democracy necessary even for personal freedom?

Required Texts

All readings can be found on my website: <http://faculty.www.umb.edu/steven.levine/>

Course Outline (This is subject to revision)

Week	Date	Class Theme and Activities	Assignment
Week 1	Sep. 9 11	Introduction to the Concept of Freedom	For Sep. 11: Van Inwagen, 'Freedom of the Will'
Week 2	Sep. 14 16 18	Libertarianism	Van Inwagen, 'Freedom of the Will' R. Chisholm, 'Human Freedom and the Self'
Week 3	Sep. 15 17 19	Compatibilism and Hard Determinism	A. J. Ayer, 'Freedom and Necessity' E. Craig, 'Hard and Soft Determinism'
Week 4	Sep. 28 30 Oc. 2	Higher-order theories	H. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person'
Week 5	Oct. 5 7 9	Higher-order theories continued Oct. 9th. First Paper Due	G. Watson, 'Free Agency' C. Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self'

Week 6	Oct. 14	Deep-Self Accounts <i>No class Oct. 12 or 16th</i>	Finish Taylor
Week 7	Oct. 19 21 23	Strawsonian Naturalism	P. F. Strawson, 'Freedom and Resentment'
Week 8	Oct. 26 28 30	Autonomy	S. I. Benn, From <i>A Theory of Freedom</i> G. Dworkin, From <i>The Theory and Practice of Autonomy</i>
Week 9	Nov. 2 4 6	Freedom in Modern Political Thought: Liberalism, Republicanism, and Democracy	B. Constant, 'Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns' Short excerpts from Hobbes and Rousseau
Week 10	Nov. 9 13	Negative Liberty Nov. 13th: Second Paper Due	I. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty'
Week 11	Nov. 16 18 20	Positive Liberty	Excerpt from T. H. Green, 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract' C. Taylor, 'What's Wrong with Negative Liberty'
Week 12	Nov. 23	Republicanism <i>Nov 25th: Course Withdrawal Deadline</i>	Q. Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty'
Week 13	Nov. 30 Dec. 2, 4	Republicanism Continued	Q. Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty' P. Pettit, 'The Republican Idea of Freedom'
Week 14	Dec. 7 9 11	Feminist Freedom	Nancy J. Hirschmann, 'Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom'
Week 15	Dec. 14	Open Class <i>Take home final due Dec. 18th at 4 PM</i>	

Assessable Tasks

In this class you will have a variety of ways of demonstrating your intellectual engagement with the course material, including in-class participation, a 5 page paper, a 7 page paper, and a take home final exam. In the first paper you will analyze the arguments of two texts that we will read, both on a single topic. The goal will be to not only lay out the structure of each text's argument, but also to pinpoint why and how the analysis of one text diverges from that of the other. In the second paper you will analyze the argument from two related texts and assess which argument you find more cogent.

For the final take home exam you will write two short (2-3 pages) essays on assigned topics.

Final Grade Calculation

First Paper: 25%, Due Oct. 9th

Second Paper: 35%, Due, Nov. 13th

Take Home Final Exam: 30%, Due Dec. 18th

Class participation and reading questions: 10%

Grading Policy for Papers

Your papers will be evaluated by the following criteria: (1) **Accuracy**: A good paper must always present the views being discussed accurately. You should be careful not to misinterpret what you have read, or ascribe to the author views she does not hold. You must also defend any interpretation you make of a writer's work. When you are trying to prove that the writer holds the view you ascribe to her, you may use quotes or paraphrase. However, you should avoid paraphrasing or quoting when trying to explain or defend an author's view. Use quotes and paraphrasing only to 'pin down' an author on a question of interpretation. (2) **Thoroughness**: A good paper is thorough in its discussion of the issues. It does not leave important issues un-discussed, when they are clearly relevant to the topic you have selected. For example, you must address, and offer reasons against, the position you are rejecting in your paper. (3) **Clarity of writing**: Besides being grammatically correct, your writing must be easily understood by any reader. You cannot expect me (or any reader) to understand what you mean in your writing unless you present your argument in clear and precise writing. For the second paper there is a further criteria, (4) **Persuasiveness**, because it is an argumentative paper. Thus, you must assert a thesis (conclusion), and offer the most persuasive evidence that you can to support your conclusion. Being a persuasive writer also requires that you treat the opposing position fairly and accurately, and present reasons that show why you reject this position.

Participation Grade

Your participation grade is based on whether you contribute to class discussion, and whether your contribution demonstrates that you have read, and thought about, the readings for that day. You can contribute to class in many ways: By asking questions about the lecture or reading, by clarifying something another student has said, by raising thoughtful objections to the reading, by conveying how your beliefs are challenged or confirmed by what we've read and so on. Do not hesitate to ask questions: Sometimes, you make a valuable contribution by pointing that something in the reading or discussion does not make sense to you. Please see me if you think it will be difficult for you to speak in class, or if you find it difficult later in the semester. Coming to see me in office hours to discuss class material also contributes to your participation grade.

Attendance Policy

Your presence in class is a minimum condition of your success in this course. Attendance as well as lateness will be noted and factored into your final grade, as follows:

4 absences: final grade lowered by ½ grade (e.g. from B- to C+)

5 absences: final grade lowered by a full grade (e.g. from B- to C-)

6 absences: failure; no credit given

In general, the distinction between "excused" and "unexcused" absences is not recognized (an absence is an absence). **After 3 times, arriving late to class will count as an absence.**

Other Important Information:

1. **UMB email:** You need to have a working UMB email so that I can contact you through the Wisers system. I send out notifications through email, so make sure yours is working.
2. **Homework:** The readings for this class are listed above by the week. If homework is not explicitly assigned in class, these readings are your homework. The reading schedule may change due to events. If it does I will notify you and update the schedule on my website.
3. **Late Policy:** Paper will be penalized a whole grade if it is up to one week late. Thereafter, it will be penalized a whole grade each additional week that it is late. **I do not accept emailed papers.**
4. **Incompletes:** I only give an incomplete for the class if there is an extreme emergency. To get an incomplete in that event you must contact me and work out a schedule to get your work in.
5. **Class Preparation and Reading Philosophy:** Your main task in this class is to understand the class readings. But reading philosophy is hard. It is therefore essential that you acquire and read the texts carefully before each class. It is an extremely good idea to take notes on whatever you read, and to re-read the material at least once. Philosophy articles and texts tend to be fairly short but dense, and cannot be read in the same way as literature, news, or history. Come to class familiar with the material and be prepared to ask questions about things that you did not understand or things you understood but found strange or not plausible. For readings that you download, you must print the article out and bring it to class. If you don't bring the readings to class your grade will suffer.
6. **Office Hours and Writing Papers:** If you have difficulty writing papers contact the CAS center at 287-6560 or 6550. But a better thing to do is to make use of my *office hours*. Come and talk to me about things you do not understand in class, and for help with your papers. I am happy to help you plan your papers.

Policy on Academic Honesty

Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's work as your own. You need to be careful to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism. This means that if you ever use a phrase, a sentence, or an idea from a text, you must provide a citation. If it is something we read for the class, it is acceptable to give the source and page number. E.g.: (Rawls, "The Justification of Civil Disobedience, p. 100). When utilizing other material, you must provide full bibliographic information of that text. If you don't provide appropriate citations, this will affect your grade. If you have gone so far as to misrepresent another person's work as your own by copying from another's paper, using a paper writing service, copying something off the web or out of a book or in any other way I will assume you intend to commit plagiarism and will give you an 'F' for the course. The current Code of Student Conduct which includes information about academic dishonesty is available online at: http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/policies/community/code

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services. The Ross Center for Disability Services is located in the Campus Center, UL 211. You can contact them by calling: 617-287-7430 or sending an email to: ross.center@umb.edu. Once you have received your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.