

# Phi 383 - Summer 2022

## Free Will

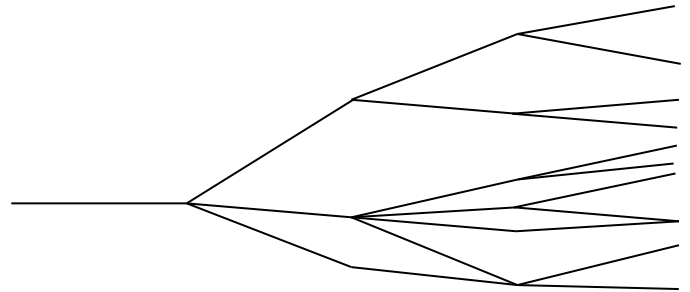
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<b>Time:</b>	MTWTh Asynchronous	<b>Where:</b>	Online; Blackboard
<b>Instructor:</b>	Thiago Xavier de Melo	<b>Office hours:</b>	By appt.: <a href="mailto:txdemelo@syr.edu">txdemelo@syr.edu</a>

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### Course Description

Are you sticking with your old job, or are you dropping it to follow that new career path? Are you having fruits for breakfast this morning, or will you eat unhealthy food? Faced with many paths your life may take, sometimes you feel that you have control over which path you will actually take, you then deliberate on this and act accordingly. When this happens, does anything *cause* you to choose or act in whatever way you did? Do *you* cause it? Does your *character*? Your *will*? Suppose that the conjunction of a) the laws of nature plus b) the state in which the entire universe is in right now completely determine the state in which the entire universe will be a minute from now. One minute passes, and meanwhile, you have chosen to eat a banana and you ate it. Obviously, you are part of the universe. But then, who determined, caused, and controlled your decision and action? Was it you (your character, your will) or the conjunction of the laws of nature together with the previous state of the universe? In what sense, if any, could your life have followed different paths? Could you really have done otherwise? If so, what could have caused you to do otherwise, and was that thing something ultimately under your control? And so, are you responsible for your decisions and actions? Can you be truly morally responsible even under the hypothesis that you are never able to do something else other than what you actually do? Does it ever make sense to feel guilty about past actions you took? Do you ever act freely or with free will?



In this course, we will carefully study these and related questions. We will ask which sort of presuppositions they have, which answers they allow for, and which reasons we have to prefer one or another of such answers. (Note: we will not tackle questions about new careers and healthy food.)

### Learning Objectives

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

- state and explain the problems involving the notions of free will;

- state and explain the main views on such problems;
- reconstruct arguments in favor and against those views;
- identify further potential objections to, and arguments for, those views.

## Course Materials

- **Required textbook:** *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* by Robert Kane, published in 2005 by Oxford University Press. (We will read this book almost entirely. So you should acquire your copy. See below for schedule of readings.)
- **Additional readings:** All other readings will be posted on [Blackboard](#). See reading schedule below for details.

(The required textbook is the only book you need to buy. But, if you are interested in anthologies and collections of texts containing most of our ‘additional readings’, see Gary Watson’s *Free Will* (Oxford Readings in Philosophy) 2nd Edition. For a collection that includes many of our additional readings plus many other readings on other topics in philosophy, see *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd Edition, by Gideon Rosen et al.)

(If you are interested in other excellent, and increasingly more advanced, introductions to our topic, take a look at Helen Beebe’s *Free Will An Introduction* (Palgrave Philosophy Today), and Michael McKenna, and Derk Pereboom’s *Free Will: A Contemporary Introduction*. (Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy.))

Study questions and handouts on readings will be made available on Blackboard.

**Use of Class Materials and Recordings:** Original class materials (slides, handouts, assignments, videos, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course instructor. You may download these materials for your own use in this class. However, you may not provide these materials to other parties (e.g., web sites, social media, other students) without permission. Doing so is a violation of intellectual property law and of the student code of conduct.

## Assessment and Grade distribution

- 40% — Five out of six sets of quizzes (8% each set of quizzes; lowest set dropped)
- 40% — Four short written assignments (10% each)
- 20% — One final essay

**Letter grade:** A 93 - 100; A- 90 - 92.99; B+ 87 - 89.99; B 83 - 86.99; B- 80 - 82.99; C+ 77 - 79.99; C 73 - 76.99; C- 70 - 72.99; D+ 67 - 69.99; D 63 - 66.99; D- 60 - 62.99; F 0 - 59.99.

## Grade components and course requirements

**Quizzes:** There will be six sets—one set for each week—of multiple choice questions on the given readings. Every day you will gain access to some questions of a week’s set. All questions of a week’s set must be completed until Friday of the given week.

**Short written assignments:** These are assigned on the first four Thursdays and will be due on Monday following that Thursday. They contain questions that ask you to draw schema, explain concepts and/or reconstruct and evaluate arguments found in our readings. Specific instructions will be provided.

**Final Essay:** You will write a short argumentative essay where you explain and assess a view or where you explain and present an argument for a view. Specific instructions and detailed tips will be provided on August 4. The essay is due on August 11 by 11:59pm (EDT, i.e. Syracuse timezone).

**Participation:** This requires responsiveness to emails.

**Readings** are required to be done beforehand; they are important for ‘participation’ during classes. (See below for reading schedule.)

## Schedule: quick look

- **Every day** from Monday through Thursday: a *required reading*, some study questions, and *multiple-choice questions* on the given reading that complete a set of quizzes every week.
- **Every Friday:** a set of quizzes is due.
- **First four weeks:** a *short written assignment*—assigned on Thursday, due on coming Monday by noon.
- **Fifth week:** *final essay* assigned—due on last day of classes (Aug 11) by 11:59pm.

See Detailed Schedule below.

## Policies

**Missed exams:** Proper documentation is required to have a makeup exam scheduled.

**Academic Integrity:** Syracuse University’s Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits

students from submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. Under the policy, students found in violation are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered as described in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. SU students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

**Accommodations:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations should register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), [disabilityservices.syr.edu](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315.443.4498. Please provide me with a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS so I am aware of your accommodations. Planning for accommodations as early as possible is best. I'd be happy to meet with you to discuss how I can help.

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## Detailed Schedule: Topics, Readings, Quizzes, and Assignments

The schedule of topics and readings is *tentative*. Changes will be announced in lectures and emails, and updated to this Syllabus on Blackboard.

### - - - Week 1 - - -

**July 4** : Holiday

**July 5** : Introduction to our course and topic

- Required reading: ‘The Free Will Problem’, Ch. 1 of **CIFW** (A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will) by **Robert Kane**
- Required reading: this syllabus!

**July 6** : Compatibilism

- Required: ‘Compatibilism’, Ch. 2 of Kane’s CIFW.

**July 7** : Incompatibilism

- Required: ‘Incompatibilism’, Ch. 3 of Kane’s CIFW.
- Optional: **Helen Beebe**. ‘Compatibilism and the Ability to Do Otherwise’

**Quiz 1** available — Due on Friday (July 8).

**Homework 1 assigned** — Due on July 11 by noon.

### - - - Week 2 - - -

**July 11** : The Libertarian Dilemma and the Indeterminist Condition

- Required: ‘Libertarianism, Indeterminism, and Chance’, Ch. 4 of Kane’s CIFW.

**July 12** : Extra-factor Libertarianism

- Required: ‘Minds, Selves, and Agent Causes’, Ch. 5 of Kane’s CIFW.

**July 13** : Agent-causation

- Required: **Roderick Chisholm**. ‘Human Freedom and the Self’

**July 14** : Simple Indeterminism

- Required: ‘Actions, Reasons, and Causes’, Ch. 6 of Kane’s CIFW.

**Quiz 2** available — Due on on Friday (July 15).

**Homework 2 assigned** — Due due on Monday July 18, by noon.

## - - - Week 3 - - -

**July 18** : Skepticism about Free Will

- Required: ‘Is Free Will Possible? Hard Determinists and Other Skeptics’, Ch. 7 of Kane’s CIFW.

**July 19** : The Basic Argument

- Required: **Galen Strawson**. ‘Free Will’

**July 20** : Alternate Possibilities, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility

- Required: ‘Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities’, Ch. 8 of Kane’s CIFW.

**July 21** : Against the The Principle of Alternate Possibilities

- Required reading: **Harry Frankfurt** “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility,”

**Quiz 3** available, due on Friday (July 22).

**Homework 3 assigned** — Due on Monday July 25 by noon.

## - - - Week 4 - - -

**July 25** : Hierarchical Views

- Required: Sections 1 through 4 of ‘Higher-order Desires, Real Selves, and New Compatibilists’, Ch. 9 of Kane’s CIFW.

**July 26** : (cont.)

- Required: **Harry Frankfurt**, “Freedom of the Will and a Concept of a Person,”

**July 27** : Wolf’s on Deep Self and Sanity

- Required: **Susan Wolf**. ‘Sanity and The Metaphysics Of Responsibility’

**July 28** : (cont.)

- Sections 5 and 6 of ‘Higher-order Desires, Real Selves, and New Compatibilists’, Ch. 9 of Kane’s CIFW.

**Quiz 4** available — Due on Friday (July 29).

**Homework 4** — due on Monday August 1 by noon.

## - - - Week 5 - - -

**August 1** : Reactive Attitude Views

- Required: Sections 1 and 2 of ‘Reactive Attitude Theories’, Ch. 10 of Kane’s CIFW.

**August 2** : (cont.)

- Required: **P. F. Strawson**. “Freedom and Resentment”

**August 3** : (cont.)

- Required: Sections 3 through 5 of ‘Reactive Attitude Theories’, Ch. 10 of Kane’s CIFW.

**August 4** : Skepticism (again)

- Required: Derk Pereboom Selections from ‘Why We Have No Free Will and Can Live Without It’.

**Quiz 5** available, due on Friday (August 5).

**Final Essay** — Due on Thursday August 11 by 11:59pm (EDT).

## - - - Week 6 - - -

**August 8** : Libertarianism (again)

- Required: ‘Ultimate Responsibility’, Ch. 11 of Kane’s CIFW.

**August 9** : Free Will and Science

- Required: ‘Free Will and Modern Science’, Ch. 12 of Kane’s CIFW.

**August 10** : Free Will and God

- Required: ‘Predestination, Divine Foreknowledge, and Free Will’, Ch. 13 of Kane’s CIFW.

**August 11** : Conclusion

- Required: ‘Five Freedoms’, Ch. 14 of Kane’s CIFW.

**Quiz 6** available, due on Thursday (August 11).