

Philosophy 741

Seminar in Metaphysics

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Course Overview

This is a seminar on the metaphysics of free will. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the idea that agent causation plays a crucial role in solving the problem of freedom and determinism, and some writers have been exploring the possibility of combining agent causation with compatibilism. In this course we will examine some of the recent literature on these and related topics, with a focus on Dana Kay Nelkin's 2011 book, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility*.

Course Requirements

- ❖ **Three short (10-15 minute) class presentations** (collectively worth 45% of final grade)
- ❖ **One term paper** (approximately 20-25 pages; worth 45% of final grade) on an approved topic
- ❖ **One set of questions on *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility*** (approximately 2-3 pages; worth 10% of final grade)

Readings

- ❖ Mark Balaguer, "Libertarianism" (forthcoming in the *Blackwell Companion to Free Will*).
- ❖ Roderick Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self" (The Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas, 1964).
- ❖ Randolph Clarke, "Free Will, Agent Causation, and 'Disappearing Agents'," *Noûs* 53 (2017), pp. 1-21.
- ❖ Ned Markosian, "A Compatibilist Version of the Theory of Agent Causation," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 80 (1999), pp. 257-277.

- ❖ Ned Markosian, "Agent Causation as the Solution to All the Compatibilist's Problems," *Philosophical Studies* **157** (2012), pp. 383-398.
- ❖ Dana Kay Nelkin, *Making Sense of Freedom and Responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ❖ Derk Pereboom, "The Disappearing Agent Objection to Event-Causal Libertarianism," *Philosophical Studies* **169** (2014), pp. 59-69.
- ❖ Peter van Inwagen, excerpts from *An Essay on Free Will* (Clarendon Press, 1983).

Schedule

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| Sep | 5 Course Intro and Admin |
| | 12 Van Inwagen, <i>An Essay on Free Will</i> , pp. 55-68 and pp. 93-105; Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self" |
| | 19 Markosian, "A Compatibilist Version of the Theory of Agent Causation" |
| | 26 Markosian, "Agent Causation as the Solution to All the Compatibilist's Problems" |
| Oct | 3 Balaguer, "Libertarianism;" Special guests: Mark Balaguer, Rebecca Chan, and Michaela McSweeney |
| | 10 Nelkin, Introduction and Ch. 1 |
| | 17 Nelkin, Ch. 2 |
| | 24 Nelkin, Ch. 3-4 |
| | 31 Nelkin, Ch. 5-6 |
| Nov | 7 Nelkin, Ch. 7 and Concluding Thoughts |
| | 14 <i>No class</i> (Monday schedule), Nelkin questions due |
| | 21 <i>No class</i> (Thanksgiving) |
| | 28 Special guest (via Skype): Dana Kay Nelkin |
| Dec | 5 Pereboom, "The Disappearing Agent Objection to Event-Causal Libertarianism;" Clarke, "Free Will, Agent Causation, and 'Disappearing Agents'" |
| | 18 Final papers due |