

# **PHIL 290: FREE WILL, PROVIDENCE, AND OMNISCIENCE**

Dr. Christopher E. Franklin  
T/R 1pm, HAL 215  
Fall 2018

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Office: HAL 300J

Office Hours: M/F 4-5, W 10-12, 4-5, T 8-9:15 (appt.), 2:30-5 (appt.), R 8-9:15 (appt.)

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a course in analytic theology, a course in which we apply the tools and methods of analytic philosophy to questions of theology. More specifically, this course will investigate the nature and scope of free will and consider its relation to three of God's attributes: moral perfection, omniscience, and providence. The first part of the course will survey and evaluate different models of free will (particularly *compatibilism* and *libertarianism*), investigating questions such as: What is free will? How is free will related to moral responsibility? and Is free will compatible with determinism? The aim here is to determine the most plausible model(s) of free will. The second part of the course will investigate the implications for various models of free will for understanding God's nature. We will study how these models of free will at times create and at other times solve traditional problems for developing an internally consistent account of God's nature, specifically his goodness, knowledge, and power. The hope is to develop an account of human free will that is faithful to the Biblical and natural revelation of God's nature and human freedom.

## **TEXTS**

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

David E. Alexander and Daniel M. Johnson (eds.), *Calvinism and the Problem of Evil* (Eugene Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016)

(The majority of the readings will be available on my.gcc or through hyperlinks below under the course schedule)

N.B. For every day of lecture, you should bring to class all course readings due that day.

## **COURSE OUTCOMES**

Through the course, students will:

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main compatibilist theories of free will (#2, 3, 7; midterm, final)
2. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main incompatibilist theories of free will (#2, 3, 7; midterm, final)

3. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main objections to compatibilist and incompatibilist theories of free will (#2, 3, 9; midterm, final)
4. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main libertarian accounts of God's goodness, power, and knowledge, and their attendant virtues and vices (#2, 3, 7; final)
5. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the main compatibilist accounts of God's goodness, power, and knowledge, and their attendant virtues and vices ((#2, 3, 7; final)
6. Develop critical analysis and reasoning skills (Department objectives 4, 6, 8, 9; papers)

#### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES:**

1. Demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate philosophical questions from a Christian theistic framework. This will require the student to see the relationship between faith and learning and how such a perspective applies to the critical and analytical questions posed by humans in the great search for wisdom.
2. Demonstrate ability to read, comprehend, and evaluate the thought of great philosophers of the past and present in terms of the presuppositions and historical contexts of their claims about the philosophical task as well as the implications of such thought in terms of ethical and social practice. This will require observation of and interaction with primary source texts that approach the great questions and concerns that philosophers have been asking for many millennia.
3. Demonstrate ability to comprehend the major issues in philosophy from the aforementioned Christian theistic perspective as well as the ability to interact with the concerns and perspectives of other philosophies, religions, and worldviews in order to develop the skills necessary to think through what one believes and why. This will require the development of skills necessary to evaluate an argument or a belief critically in terms of strengths and weaknesses.
4. Demonstrate basic and maturing research skills. This will include the ability to state theses, show those theses through analysis of primary texts, discuss the possible weaknesses of one's own analysis, and test those theses against the best scholarship.
5. Articulate a worldview that integrates knowledge of philosophy with other disciplines in order to see the consequences of a consistent Christian theistic worldview. Students will recognize the tensions in this integration process rather than accepting simplistic answers and thus will be helped to grow into mature and thoughtful persons.
6. Demonstrate basic research and writing skills. This ability will be assessed through the evaluation of the assigned paper, both in draft and completed versions.
7. Demonstrate basic knowledge of philosophical concepts.

8. Demonstrate ability to research, write, and speak in the content area of Philosophy.
9. Be competitive and prepared for graduate school and seminary opportunities, as assessed by placement data and alumni surveys.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance:** Each student will be allowed 2 unexcused absences. Beyond this, each unexcused absence will result in a 2% loss of the student's total course grade. Excessive or frequent tardiness will count as an unexcused absence. If the student arrives late it is his responsibility to make sure he is marked 'present.' Excused absences are restricted to authorized college activities, loss of immediate family member, and illness/injury. See the Academic Policies Section of the *College Bulletin* for more information.

### Participation—10%

For each class meeting, students are expected to have carefully read all the assigned reading and to be prepared for class discussion. Students really will be evaluated for their participation. If a student never says anything in class, the student will receive a 0 for participation.

### Critical Reading Responses—25%

Students will turn in four critical reading responses. Each of the four responses is to be 550-600 words (excluding notes and bibliography), typed, double-spaced, with the word count appearing under your name at the top of the first page, with appropriate citation, and turned in in hard-copy form at the beginning of the class it is due. In the written response, students should raise and *crucially* pursue *one* issue from the assigned reading. **The response is not a summary, but a critical engagement with issues from the course reading, lecture, or discussion.** By 'critical' I mean you must in some way go beyond the class reading, lecture, and discussion to raise a novel point (Note: if *you* raise a novel point in class discussion, feel free to pursue that further in your critical response). Unlike the paper (described below), you need not offer *any* summary of the issues you are critically engaging. Rather **in the very first sentence** give me your thesis and then in the rest of the response defend your thesis. Your thesis might aim to show some author we read made some mistake. Your thesis might aim to show that some critique or defense of some position that I made in class was problematic or you might take on some issue one of your peers raised in class. The crucial thing is this: you must make a novel argument. By 'novel' I do not mean something no human person has ever thought of, but rather something that we, in this class, whether in the course reading, lecture, and discussion, have not already covered. So, if you just give the argument *I* gave in lecture, then that is not novel.

N.B. the critical response topics are limited in the following way. The first critical response can be on any reading, lecture, or discussion from the beginning of class up to the day the assignment is due. The second critical response can be on any reading, lecture, or discussion after the day the first critical response is due up to the day the second critical response is due. And so on.

See the handout **Minimal Standards for Written Work** posted on my.gcc concerning formatting requirements. Any work that fails to meet *any* of the minimal standards will automatically receive a third of a letter grade penalty and will receive an additional half letter grade penalty for each 24 hour period from the time the student is informed of the problem until the student turns in a properly formatted work.

### **Paper—25%**

The student is to select an idea, argument, or puzzle covered in any part of the course reading that he or she so chooses. *The topic must come from the reading.* Here is a brief description of the assignment, but you *must* see the handout **How to Write a Philosophy Paper** on my.gcc for clearer guidelines concerning what the paper requires, how best to satisfy these requirements, and how I will grade the papers. The first part of the paper should set out to explain the central argument or puzzle that the student is engaging. The second, and most important, part of the paper should, in the case of an idea or argument, seek to defend or critique the idea or argument or, in the case of a puzzle, offer a solution or explain why you think there is no solution. This part of the paper is not to be a summary of someone else's thought/argument, but is to be something of *your own creation*. This is difficult and success requires time. Thus, you should select your topic as soon as possible and consider and cultivate your response over a couple of weeks. If you wait to the last minute it will be impossible for you to articulate any *well-developed* thought of your own. You are welcome and encouraged to discuss all parts of this paper with me in office hours.

The paper is due on 11/29 at the beginning of lecture and must be submitted in *electronic* form to my email address. You *must* name the file as follows: Your Last Name Paper (so Jane Doe will name the file of her paper: Doe Paper).

The word count is between 1800-2000 words (excluding notes and bibliography). Too many or too few words will be penalized by how many words over or under you are.

See the handout **Minimal Standards for Written Work** posted on my.gcc concerning formatting requirements. Any work that fails to meet *any* of the minimal standards will automatically receive a third of a letter grade penalty and will receive an additional half letter grade penalty for each 24 hour period from the time the student is informed of the problem until the student turns in a properly formatted work.

### **Midterm—15%**

There will be a midterm exam given on October 4. Prior to the exam I will post *the exam* on my.gcc. The exam will consist of 6 numbered (1-6) essay questions. On the day of the exam, I will roll a six-sided die once: whatever number the die lands on will be the essay question students write on.

### **Final—25%**

There will be a final cumulative exam given on December 14. Prior to the exam I will post *the exam* on my.gcc. The exam will consist of 10 numbered (1-10) essay questions. On the day of the final exam, I will roll a ten-sided die twice: whatever numbers the die lands on will be the essay questions students write on. If I roll the same number twice, there will be a surprise.

Consult the exam schedule now, and make appropriate travel preparations in light of the exam schedule published by the Registrar's office. College policy is that final exams may only be administered during finals week, in accordance with the times scheduled by the Registrar's office, and may not be changed or eliminated to suit the convenience of either the instructor or the students. Students who have 3 exams on a particular calendar day during the final exam period may request permission to change the exam time, but I cannot guarantee that there will be a time that will work for the student.

### **Computer Policy**

Computers are not allowed. Digital technology *is* how Socrates *appeared* to the Athenians: corruptor of the youth and creator of false gods. As Socrates was meant to be, so digital technology will be in my classroom, banished. However, if you have a concern about this policy, please contact me.

### **Honesty**

College policies with regard to honesty in taking tests and writing papers will be strictly followed. The college administration and faculty are very concerned about cheating and take active steps to prevent it. **Any student caught cheating on or plagiarizing any assignment will receive an F for the course.**

See the college's policy on Academic Integrity in the 2018-2019 college *Bulletin*. The use (or possession) of former examinations from this course in preparing for tests is considered a violation of the GCC honesty in learning policy as stated in the college *Bulletin*.

### **Policy on late assignments:**

Do not ask for exceptions on late work; I accept no excuses except Provost excuses. Without a Provost excuse, late work is assigned a 0. It is crucial that you realize that failure to turn in an assignment you finish before the deadline constitutes turning in the assignment late. Failure to remember to bring the assignment or failure to print out the assignment in time are not excuses: they are confessions of negligence

### **Disability**

**Accessibility & Accommodations:** It is Grove City College's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on a disability, please let me know immediately so that we may discuss options. You are also welcome to contact the disability services office to begin this conversation or to establish accommodations. The Disability Services Coordinator may be reached at 724-264-4673 or [DisabilityServices@gcc.edu](mailto:DisabilityServices@gcc.edu)

### **Counseling**

If you are experiencing undue personal or academic stress at any time during the semester or need to talk to someone who can help, you should contact the Counseling Center at 724-458-3788 or email Mrs. Hummel, staff assistant, at [mhummel@gcc.edu](mailto:mhummel@gcc.edu).

## **TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS<sup>1</sup>** (schedule subject to change)

### **I. The Nature of Free Will**

#### **Introduction**

8/28 Introduction to the problem of free will

Reading: Kane chapter 1; 'Free Will Lexicon' (my.gcc)

Optional background reading: O'Connor and Franklin '[Free Will](#)'

#### **Classical Compatibilism**

8/30 Classical compatibilism

Readings: Kane chapter 2; 'A Semantics for Subjunctive Conditionals' (my.gcc); A. J. 'Freedom and Necessity' (my.gcc)

9/4 Objections

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<sup>1</sup> Note that, in general, I list the readings in the order that they should be read.

Reading: Keith Lehrer ‘[Cans without Ifs](#)’<sup>2</sup>

### First Argument for Incompatibilism

9/6 The Consequence Argument

Reading: Kane chapter 3; Franklin ‘Freedom Is not Compatible with Determinism’, pp. 1-9 (my.gcc)

9/11 Objections

Reading: David Lewis ‘Are We Free to Break the Laws?’ (my.gcc); Franklin ‘Freedom Is not Compatible with Determinism’, pp. 9-15 (my.gcc)

### New Compatibilists

9/13 Free Will and Alternative Possibilities

Reading: Kane chapter 8; Harry Frankfurt ‘[Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility](#)’; Mele and David Robb ‘[Rescuing Frankfurt-style Cases](#)’ (just section 2)

Further reading: Derk Pereboom ‘[Alternative Possibilities and Causal Histories](#)’; Christopher Franklin ‘[Neo-Frankfurtians and Buffer Cases: The New Challenge to the Principle of Alternative Possibilities](#)’

9/18 Hierarchical Accounts

Reading: Kane chapter 9, sections 1-4; Gary Watson ‘[Free Agency](#)’

First critical response due

9/20 Semi-compatibilism

Reading: Kane chapter 10, only section 5; John Fischer ‘Responsiveness and Moral Responsibility’ (my.gcc)

### Second Argument for Incompatibilism

9/25 Manipulation Arguments

Reading: Alfred Mele selections from *Free Will and Luck* (my.gcc); Derk Pereboom selections from *Living without Free Will* (my.gcc); John Fischer ‘[The Zygote Argument Remixed](#)’

### Libertarianism

9/27 Libertarianism

Reading: Kane chapter 4; Franklin ‘The Luck and *Mind* Arguments’ pp. 1-12 (my.gcc)

10/2 Worries about Libertarianism

Reading: Roderick Chisholm ‘Human Freedom and the Self’ (my.gcc)

Optional: Gary Watson, ‘[Free Action and Free Will](#)’

10/4 Midterm

## II. Providence and Omniscience: Libertarian Accounts

10/9-10/11 Two Accounts of Strong Providence

Reading: Thomas Flint ‘Two Accounts of Providence’ (my.gcc)

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<sup>2</sup> All hyperlinks require you to be connected to the Grove City College network.

10/9 Second critical response due

10/16 Molinism: Objection

Reading: Robert Adams '[An Anti-Molinist Argument](#)'

10/18 Fall break

10/23 Risky Providence I: Simple Foreknowledge

Reading: David Hunt 'Divine Providence and Simple Foreknowledge' (my.gcc)

10/25 The Problem of Freedom and Omniscience

Reading: Nelson Pike '[Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action](#)'

10/30 Boethian Solution

Reading: Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann '[Eternity](#)'

11/1 No class: I will be away at conference

11/6-11/8 Ockhamism

Reading: Alvin Plantinga '[On Ockham's Way Out](#)'

11/13 Riskier Providence: Open Theism

Reading: Dale Tuggy 'Three Roads to Open Theism' (my.gcc)

### III. Providence and Omniscience: Compatibilist Accounts

11/15-11/27 Compatibilist Accounts of Providence

Reading: Alexander and Johnson, ch. 1

11/15 Third critical response due

11/19-11/23 Thanksgiving break

11/29 Author of Evil Objection

Reading: Alexander and Johnson, ch. 3

Paper due

12/4 Calvinism's Problem of Evil

Reading Alexander and Johnson, ch. 10

12/6 Calvinism's Problem of Hell

Reading: Alexander and Johnson, ch. 11

Fourth critical response due

12/11 Final reflections

12/13 study day

Final Exam Friday December 14, 7pm