

# Metaphysics

## Syllabus Précis

**Instructor:** Dr. Aaron Smuts

### Description

Could pre-cogs predict your holiday plans next year? Or, could a supreme demon with knowledge of the position and projection of every atom in the universe determine what you will have for breakfast next Tuesday? If so, determinism is true. This does not seem to leave room for freedom. If there is no freedom, how could we be responsible for any of our actions? We will spend the first half of the semester thinking about freedom and responsibility. In the second half of the course we will explore the nature of personal identity. What is it that makes you, you? Is it a soul, your body, or your personality? Could you inhabit the body of John Malkovich? What about with a group of like minded friends?

### Texts

1. Robert Kane. *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford UP, 2005). [CIFW]
2. Robert Kane, editor. *Free Will* (Blackwell, 2008). [FW]
3. John Perry. *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*. [DPII]
4. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty. *The Identity of Persons* (U Cal. P, 1976). [IP]
5. Numerous articles posted on Blackboard. [BB]

### Schedule

- Topic I: Free Will** — Movie: "Minority Report" (Spielberg, 2002)
- Week 1:** Compatibilism — Kane, "The Free Will Problem" (ch. 1) [CIFW] | Skinner, "Walden Two" [FW] | Kane, "Compatibilism" (ch. 2) [CIFW] | Nielsen, "The Compatibility of Freedom and Determinism" [FW]
- Week 2:** Incompatibilism — Kane, "Incompatibilism" (ch. 3) [CIFW] | Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self" [FW] | Van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism" [FW]
- Week 3:** Libertarianism — Kane, "Libertarianism, Indeterminism, and Chance" (ch. 4) [CIFW] | Van Inwagen, "The Mystery of Metaphysical Freedom" [FW] | Kane, "Free Will: New Directions for an Ancient Problem" [FW]
- Week 4:** Agent Causes — Kane, "Minds, Selves, and Agent Causes" (ch. 5) [CIFW] | Kane, "Actions, Reasons, and Causes" (ch. 6) [CIFW] | O'Connor, "The Agent as Cause" [FW] | Ginet, "Freedom, Responsibility, and Agency" [FW]
- Week 5:** Hard Determinism — Kane, "Is Free Will Possible? Hard Determinism and Other Skeptics" (ch. 7) [CIFW] | Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility" [BB] | Smilansky, selections [BB]
- Week 6:** Moral Responsibility — Kane, "Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities" (ch. 8) [CIFW] | Dennett, "I Could Not Have Done Otherwise — So What?" [FW] | Fischer, "Frankfurt-style Examples, Responsibility and Semi-Compatibilism" [FW] | Pereboom, "The Explanatory Irrelevance of Alternative Possibilities" [FW]
- Week 7:** New Compatibilism — Kane, "Higher-order Desires, Real Selves, and New Compatibilism" (ch. 9) [CIFW] | Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" [FW] | Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility" [FW] | Kane, "Reactive Attitude Theories" (ch. 10) [CIFW] | Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme" [FW]
- Topic II: Personal Identity** — Movie: "Being John Malkovich" (Spike Jonze, 1999)
- Week 8:** Soul Theory — Perry, First Night [DPII] | Locke, "Identity and Diversity" [BB]
- Week 9:** Body Theory — Perry, Second Night [DPII] | Williams, "The Self and the Future" [BB]
- Week 10:** Personality Theory — Perry, Third Night [DPII] | Dennett, "Where am I?" [BB]
- Week 11:** What matters in Survival? — Lewis "Survival and Identity" [IP] | Perry, "The Importance of Being Identical" [IP]
- Week 12:** Skepticism — Hume, "Of Personal Identity" [BB] | Penelhum, "Self-Identity and Self Regard" [IP] | Stawson, "The Self" [BB]
- Week 13:** Divided Minds — Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons" [BB] | Korsgaard, "Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: A Kantian Response to Parfit" [BB]
- Week 14:** Personhood — Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality" [IP] | Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood" [IP]