**Philosophy of Agency (PHIL4220A/5200B)**

Carleton University, Winter 2023

**Day/Time:** Monday, 11:35 am – 2:25 pm **Location:** Paterson Hall 3A36

Dr. Joshua Shepherd

**Office:** 3A61 **Office Telephone:** 1783

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 2:30-3:30

**E-mail:** [Joshua.Shepherd@carleton.ca](mailto:Joshua.Shepherd@carleton.ca)

**Course Description**

This seminar will explore the notion of ‘agency’ as it figures in the philosophical psychology of several notable philosophers over the past 50 years or so. As agency has many different aspects, the work we will explore is at intersections between philosophy of action, philosophy of mind, epistemology, and the philosophy of cognitive science. We will also see how different philosophers emphasize different facets of agency, including consciousness, rationality, free will, attention, and executive control.

**Learning outcomes**

Familiarity with key issues, themes, terms, distinctions in current philosophy of agency; improvement in critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

**Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Please turn off (or silence) your cell phones and put them away before the start of class. The use of laptops for the **sole purpose** of note-taking is permitted.

**Course Materials**

All required readings and additional resources will be made available on cuLearn.

**Course Requirements and Grade policies**

*Grade Schematic*

4007A

Papers: due each week at the beginning of class. Grades distributed evenly amongst them to reach 90% of the overall grade.

Attendance and participation: 10%.

5500A

Papers: due each week at the beginning of class. Grades distributed evenly amongst them to reach 90% of the overall grade.

Attendance and in-class discussion: 10%. (I require 5500A students to be ready to discuss aspects of the papers if called upon in class.)

*Papers*

You will write a one-page paper on each reading assignment. Each paper should present a very tight summary of the main argument of the reading assignment, as well as a very tight assessment of the cogency of the main argument. These will probably get better over the course of the term, as you begin to see what I want out of these.

Papers will be single-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point, with one-inch margins. One page only. Any failure to follow these rules will result in the paper being given a zero.

Bring the papers to class. Late papers are not accepted.

**PLAGIARISM**

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.”* This can include:

 reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;

 submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;

 using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

 *using another’s data or research findings;*

 failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

 handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

*Late assignments policy*

Late assignments will generally not be accepted. If you wish to appeal this, then we will have a conversation about this and I will make a judgment based upon details of the case. This may include accepting the assignment at a reduced grade; it may include not accepting the assignment. If you miss the class due to illness, then e-mail the papers to me along with an explanation.

**Readings**

I will assign readings each week based upon our previous progress. **We may not discuss all of these readings in class. Some of these may be relegated to ‘optional reading’ as we move through. Some readings may be added as we go along.** The course outline gives a general prediction regarding the progress we will make.

**Course Outline**

**Big picture treatments of human agency (weeks 1-3)**

Frankfurt, H. G. (1971). Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *68*(1), 5-20.

Watson, G. (1975). Free agency. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *72*(8), 205-220.

Shoemaker, D. W. (2003). Caring, identification, and agency. *Ethics*, *114*(1), 88-118.

Bratman, M. E. (2000). Reflection, planning, and temporally extended agency. *Philosophical Review*, *109*(1), 35-61.

Mele, Alfred (2003). *Motivation and Agency*, chapter 10

**Non-human agency (weeks 4-5)**

Steward, H. (2009). Animal agency. *Inquiry*, *52*(3), 217-231.

Burge, T. (2009). Primitive agency and natural norms. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *79*(2), 251-278.

Arnellos, A., & Moreno, A. (2015). Multicellular agency: an organizational view. *Biology & Philosophy*, *30*(3), 333-357.

Godfrey-Smith, P. (2016). Individuality, subjectivity, and minimal cognition. *Biology & Philosophy*, *31*(6), 775-796.

**Psychological approaches to agency (weeks 6-10 or 11)**

Dennett, Daniel (1984). Elbow Room, chapters 1-4

Ismael, Jenann (2016). How Physics Makes Us Free, chapters 1-3, 9

Christensen, W., Sutton, J., & McIlwain, D. J. (2016). Cognition in skilled action: Meshed control and the varieties of skill experience. *Mind & Language*, *31*(1), 37-66.

Mylopoulos, M., & Pacherie, E. (2019). Intentions: The dynamic hierarchical model revisited. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, *10*(2), e1481.

Watzl, Sebastian (2017). The Structuring Mind, chapters 2 and 7

**Cognitive agency (week 11 or 12)**

Metzinger, T. (2013). The myth of cognitive agency: subpersonal thinking as a cyclically recurring loss of mental autonomy. *Frontiers in psychology*, *4*, 931.

Irving, Z. C. (2021). Drifting and directed minds: The significance of mind-wandering for mental agency. *The Journal of Philosophy*, *118*(11), 614-644.

**Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)**

**Assignments:**

Please follow your professor’s instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

**Evaluation:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Deferrals for Term Work:**

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

**Deferrals for Final Exams:**

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/examinations/#deferred-final-exams)). Visit the [Registrar’s Office](https://carleton.ca/registrar/special-requests/) for further information.

**Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of ‘plagiarism’ as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/academic-integrity-and-offenses-of-conduct/#academic-integrity-policy))

**Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

* *Pregnancy or religious obligation*: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](https://carleton.ca/edc/teachingresources/administrative-pedagogy/academic-accommodations/) website.
* *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](https://carleton.ca/pmc/) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
* *Survivors of Sexual Violence*: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton’s Sexual Violence Policy](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/).
* *Accommodation for* [*Student Activities*](https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf)*:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

**Important Dates:**

Sept. 7 Classes start.

Sept. 20 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.

Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Oct. 10 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Oct. 24-28 Fall Break – no classes.

Nov. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.

Dec. 9 Last day of fall term classes. ***Classes follow a Monday schedule***. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.

Dec. 10-22 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Dec. 22 All take-home examinations are due.

Jan. 9 Classes begin.

Jan. 20 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.

Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Feb. 20 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Feb. 20-24 Winter Break – no classes.

Mar. 15 Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.

Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.

Apr. 7 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. ***Classes follow a Friday schedule.*** Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.

Apr. 13-14 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 15-27 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 27 All take-home examinations are due.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:

[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)

520-2110

Registrar’s Office:

[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)

520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:

[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising)

520-7850

Writing Services:

<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

520-3822

MacOdrum Library

<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>

520-2735