

**Self Control, Weakness of Will, and Addiction**  
**(PHIL5200)**

Carleton University, Fall 2018

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

Prof. Myrto Mylopoulos

**Office:** 3A47 Paterson Hall **Office Telephone:** 613-520-2600 x3943

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, Thursdays 2:30pm-3:30pm (and by appointment)

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**Course Description**

This course will examine the topic of self-control and its loss, in cases of weakness of will and addiction, through the lens of contemporary philosophy, and where relevant, cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Among questions to be addressed are the following: What is the best way to understand self-control and its exercise? What is the connection between self-control and willpower, and how ought we to understand this latter capacity? What is the best account of weakness of will? Is it acting against one's better judgement that is at the heart of this phenomenon, or is it the failure to stick to one's resolutions? Is weakness of will even possible? If so, is it always irrational? Is it a natural kind? How does addiction differ from weakness of will? Is addictive behaviour always the result of compulsion? Are addicts morally responsible for their addictive behaviour?

**Course Objectives**

Our aim in this course will be to support and develop the following:

- An understanding of key issues surrounding the topic of self-control and its breakdown in contemporary philosophy and, where relevant, results from psychology and neuroscience.
- An ability to articulate a critical viewpoint on a philosophical text.
- An ability to clearly summarize and guide a group discussion on selected parts of a philosophical text.
- An ability to clearly and effectively argue in favour of a position on a relevant debate within the self-control literature in a well-researched term paper.

**Course Materials**

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

**Course Requirements**

Course Component	Percentage of Final Grade
Participation	15%
Critical Reading Responses (x5)	25%

In-Class Presentation	20%
Term Paper (incl. abstract)	40%

### Readings

Readings will be assigned for every class session except the first and last. All readings are required, except for those marked as 'optional' on the course syllabus. While optional, you are strongly encouraged to do these readings, as they'll help both to fill in the background for and expand on some of the material we'll be covering in class. Please ensure you complete all required readings for a class session before that session. Come prepared to discuss them.

### Critical Reading Responses

You will write **up to seven** critical reading responses (approx. 500 words each) over the course of the semester (starting in week 2). Only your **best five** responses will be counted. These will each be worth **5%** of your final grade for a total of **25%**.

The responses are intended to give you an opportunity to critically reflect, in writing, on the main claims, arguments, or theories you encounter in the readings. As such, **you should not merely summarize** the material you are addressing, though of course some summary will be necessary, but rather **evaluate** and **expand** on it.

I will go over a grading rubric in class and some general guidelines for how you might approach these responses.

Responses will be submitted via cuLearn and are due **by 5pm on the day before** the start of the class for which the relevant reading is assigned. Late responses will not be accepted.

You are encouraged to use ideas you develop in these responses as the basis for your term paper.

### Term Paper

You will write one term paper (**12-15 pages**) due on **Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup>** and worth **40%** of your final grade.

You will write an abstract (**150 – 250 words**) for this paper, to be submitted no later than **November 23<sup>rd</sup>**. This will be worth **5%** of your paper grade, and will be graded on the basis of completion only (pass/fail).

We will discuss further instructions/guidelines in class closer to the due date.

### In-Class Presentations

Starting in **week 3**, each of you will have the opportunity to do a class presentation on some aspect of the assigned readings. This is worth **20%** of your final grade.

You will sign up for presentation slots on cuLearn on a first-come, first-served basis. Presentations will be approximately 20 minutes, followed by a 5-minute question and

answer period. We will have one to two presentations per class, typically during the second half of each class.

You will meet with me no later than one week before your presentation date with an outline of what you plan to discuss. If are presenting on the same day as someone else, please consult with them in order to ensure that you do not significantly overlap in your material.

Guidelines for the presentation itself (we'll discuss further in class):

- Prepare a handout to distribute to the class.
- Approx. 10 minutes of the presentation should be devoted to exposition: What is the main thesis for which the author is arguing? What is the relevant background/context within which this argument is being made? What is the structure of the main argument? What are its premises and the justification the author provides for each one?
- Approx. 10 minutes of the presentation should be devoted to critical discussion: Are there weaknesses you've identified in the author's overall argument? Are there counterexamples to main claims that they have failed to consider? Are there ways the author might strengthen the case they make for their view?

### **Participation**

You can earn up to 15% of your final grade through participation.

There are four main ways to do this:

1. By contributing to our weekly class discussion. You can do so by raising questions pertaining to the course material, answering questions asked by myself or one of your classmates, and generally being active and engaged throughout the duration of each class.
2. Each week, I will set up a discussion forum on cuLearn, where you are encouraged to post your critical responses to the assigned readings (if you wrote one for that week), to respond constructively to those posted by others, to raise questions pertaining to the readings, to answer questions posed by your classmates, etc.
3. By asking questions during the Q&A session after a class presentation.
4. By coming to see me during office hours to discuss course material.

If for any reason you expect to miss class, I would appreciate your sending me a quick note letting me know.

### **Electronic Devices in the Classroom**

Please turn off (or silence) any cell phones and put them away before the start of class. You may use laptops for note-taking. (But, please (!), not for texting, chatting, checking e-mail/news/social media, doing work for other classes, watching cute videos of babies or non-human animals, and any other obviously distracting things. There will be a 10-15 minute break in the middle of each class during which you are free to engage in such understandably rewarding activities.)

**Office Hours and Availability**

My regular office hours are as stated up top. I'm happy to meet you at other days/times as well—just make arrangements with me over email or in person.

I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours, but I may be a bit slower on weekends and holidays. If you think your message will require a lengthy reply from me, please arrange to come and see me in person instead.

**Course Topics/Readings Schedule (may be revised)**

TBA

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2018-19)

### **Assignments:**

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- Must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips.
- Must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box).
- Must include the following on the first page: student name and number; course name and number; instructor's name.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates below.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

### **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 Final Exams:**

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5>

### **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. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](http://carleton.ca/pmc)

**Pregnancy 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 Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**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 Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**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 is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](http://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

**Accommodation for Student Activities:** 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: [students.carleton.ca/course-outline](https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline)

**Important Dates:**

Sept. 5	Classes start.
Sept. 18	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. 8	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 22-26	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 23	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. 7	Last day of fall term classes. <b>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</b> 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. 9-21	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. 21	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 7	Classes begin.
Jan. 18	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. 18	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 18-22	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 26	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. 9	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter 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 two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 12-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 19-21	Statutory holiday. University closed. No examinations take place.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due on this day.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy">www.carleton.ca/philosophy</a> 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/registrar">www.carleton.ca/registrar</a> 520-3500
Academic Advising Centre:	302 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising">www.carleton.ca/academicadvising</a> 520-7850
Writing Services:	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Library <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/">http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/</a> 520-3822
MacOdrum Library	<a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/">http://www.library.carleton.ca/</a> 520-2735