

Learning, Planning, and Agency
Tuesdays 13:00 - 15:30

What does it mean to be an agent? And what kind of control do we have over how our lives unfold? I'll try to guide us through a set of readings that will help us to examine the possibility that investigations in the cognitive and biological sciences will tell us something interesting about human agency. Some of the folks who we read will Skype in for discussion in the 14:30-15:30 block, and one will come as a visitor! (more on that as I work out all of the details).

Course Requirements:

As with all of my seminars, this one will be writing intensive. You will each write a brief response to one of the readings each week; these papers will be no longer than 600 words in length, and they will be due by midnight on Monday. These papers can link ideas from the reading to other ideas you are working on; they can offer an objection to one of the arguments we are addressing; or they can attempt to extend an idea from the reading to a novel domain. To be quite frank, I don't care what you write about, as long as you show me that you are trying to make sense of the reading, and as long as you are trying to see what possibilities the readings afford.

Each seminar member will also write a short paper, which is no longer than 3000 words in length. This paper should address an argument or position that we discuss in the class, but it can do so in any way that could yield a paper that is submittable for a conference presentation. In past semesters, I have often worked with students to get these papers read to send out for a CFP, and I am happy to do so again this semester!

Finally, you will have the option of doing an individual presentation, or a group presentation. If you would like to do so, let me know, and we'll work out the details!

Accessibility and diversity:

One finds a great deal of diversity in teaching and learning styles in a modern university. These styles may not always mesh in ways that are conducive to the success and wellbeing of everyone in a course. But there are often ways of improving things. I am happy to discuss the structure of this course, and to work with the learning styles people have to the best of my abilities. So please feel free to talk to me in office hours. I sincerely think that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating classroom experience! Disabled students and students on record with the university as requiring particular accommodations, please let me know that this is the case, in confidence, during the first few weeks of the semester—and please take advantage of services provided by the university. Finally, please let me know if you learn during the semester that something would make the classroom accessible.

Tentative reading schedule:

Skill and control		
9/6	Edward Slingerland, <i>Trying not to try</i>	
9/13	Michael Brownstein, "Rationalizing flow" Wayne Christiansen et al, "Cognition in skilled action" Doris McIlwain & John Sutton, "Yoga from the mat up"	
9/22	Barbara Montero, "A dancer reflects" John Toner et al "The perils of automaticity" Barbara Montero & CDA Evans, "Intuitions without concepts lose the game"	
Attending, Planning, and Regulating		
9/27	Chandra Sripada, "At the Center of Agency, the Deep Self" Chandra Sripada, "Free will and the construction of options" K. Luan Phan & Chandra Sripada, "Emotion regulation"	
10/4	Judson Brewer & Jake Davis, "Craving to quit" Rebecca Todd et al., "Affect-biased attention as emotion regulation" Jake Davis & Evan Thompson, "Developing Attention and Decreasing Affective Bias" Jake Davis "When You Know for Yourselves"	Jake will Skype in; 1st Half of class
10/11	Peter Railton, "Reliance, trust, and belief" Julia Haas, "Multiple decision systems and the problem of weakness of will" Bryce Huebner, "Planning and prefigurative politics"	Julia will Skype in; 2nd Half of class
Responsibility for embedded agents		
10/18	Manuel Vargas, "Moral Responsibility and Desert" Manuel Vargas, "Implicit Bias, Responsibility, and Moral Ecology" Manuel Vargas, "The Social Constitution of Responsible Agency"	Manuel will Skype in; 2nd Half of class
10/25		

Maureen Sie, "Moral Soulfulness & Moral Hypocrisy"
Maureen Sie, "Moral Agency, Conscious Control, and Deliberative Awareness"
Maureen Sie, "Self-Knowledge & the Minimal Conditions of Responsibility"

Power and agency

11/1 Glenn Adams et al., "Behavior as mind in Context"
Alisa Bierrria, "Missing in action"
Olúfẹmi O. Táfawò, "Why We Are Not What We Seem"

Femi will
Skype in;
2nd Half of
class

11/8 Sally Haslanger, "What is a (social) structural explanation"
Sally Haslanger, "Social structure, narrative, and explanation"
Susanna Siegel, "Affordances and the contents of perception"

Biology and sociality

11/15 Gillian Barker, *Beyond Biofatalism*

11/22 Victoria McGeer, "The regulative dimensions of folk psychology"
*Tad Zawidzki, "Self-Interpretation as software"
*Tad Zawidzki, "Mindshaping"

Tad will
attend;
2nd Half of
class

New topics in the philosophy of agency

11/29 Zoe Drayson & Andy Clark, "Augmentation, agency, & the spreading of the mental"
Samuel Perry, "Urban hybrid space and the homeless"
McKay Holland, "Homelessness and the extended cognitive reserve" (draft)
(optional) Iris Marion Young, "House and Home"

McKay will
lead class

12/6 Aurora M. Sherman, et al. "Dietary Adherence: Characteristics and Interventions"
Brian Wansink, "Environmental factors that increase the food intake and consumption volume of unknowing consumers."
Anna Kirkland, "An environmental account of obesity"

Megan will
lead class