

Introduction to philosophy: do we have free will?

Date	17 June 2020	Time	16:00 – 19:30
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Dr Alex Carter	Course code	1920NDX317

Director of Academic Centres Dr Corinne Boz

For further information on this course, please contact The Arts and Sciences Team on artscience@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 761322

Tutor biography

Dr Alex Carter is Academic Director for Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies at the Institute of Continuing Education. He is a Bye-Fellow at Fitzwilliam College. Alex was awarded his PhD in Philosophy by the University of Essex in 2015; his thesis explores some of the surprising aspects of Wittgenstein's views concerning freedom and fatalism. Before this, Alex studied Philosophy at the University of Wales, Swansea and the University of Bristol.

Alex's approach to teaching is to encourage students to feel the "pain of the problem" - to make plain the very real ways in which philosophical problems affect our lives. Accordingly, Alex is most keen to offer his support to philosophical projects that, not only inform contemporary debates, but actively affect change. Alex's ongoing research interests include Wittgenstein's later philosophy, the theology of Simone Weil and the philosophy of humour. He is currently researching the relationship between humour and creative practice via the concept of 'serious play'.

Course programme

16:00	Free Will: The compatibilism debate
17:30	Sandwich tea
18:00	Free Will: A practical approach
19:30	Finish

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. To explore theoretical approaches and practical solutions to the free will problem;
2. To critically assess and summarise the view points of compatibilist and incompatibilist commentators;
3. To appreciate the cultural and ethical significance of our attitudes to freedom and responsibility.

Content:

Free will is the ideal topic for anyone wishing to learn more about philosophy. It is a logical/conceptual/ethical problem that tests our ability to understand and offer nuanced arguments. But it is also a problem we care about. We all want to think that we are free, and we all hold people responsible for their actions. But should we and, perhaps just as importantly, *could* we ever stop holding ourselves and others responsible?

Presentation of the course:

The course will be delivered through seminars comprised of lectures and short activities.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Recognise and utilise different philosophical techniques and methods;
2. Articulate the main theoretical arguments for and against human beings having freedom of the will;
3. Appreciate an alternative, practical conception of freedom and responsibility.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Kane, R.	<i>A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will</i>	Barnes & Nobel, 2005
Nielsen, K.	“The Compatibility of Freedom and Determinism” in <i>Reason and Practice</i>	Harper & Row, 1971
Wittgenstein, L.	“The Lectures on the Freedom of the Will” in <i>Philosophical Occasions</i> by Klagge and Nordmann (Eds)	Hackett, 1993

Website addresses

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freewill/>

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

A sandwich tea will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 04 March 2020