



PHL 382

Agency and the Self

S2 External 2016

Dept of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Paul Formosa

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W6A 728

By appointment

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

39cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit explores some of the central issues in contemporary philosophical moral psychology. The first section focuses on freedom of the will, the nature of autonomy and debates about whether autonomy is compatible with socialisation. In the second section we discuss a range of issues concerning moral responsibility, including the implications of luck and causal determination for responsibility, whether moral responsibility requires an ability to do otherwise, and the conditions under which persons should be exempted from responsibility for their actions. The third section focuses on contemporary theories of personal identity by exploring the differences between metaphysical, practical and narrative theories of identity.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.

An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.

An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.

The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.

Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

An ability to undertake independent research.

Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Due |
|--|-----------|-------------------|
| Tutorial Participation | 10% | On-going |
| Tutorial presentation | 5% | Assigned in class |
| Quizzes | 15% | On-going |
| Short answer test | 30% | 3/10/2016 |
| Essay | 40% | 15/11/2016 |

Tutorial Participation

Due: **On-going**

Weighting: **10%**

An important part of philosophy is engaging in an active dialogue with others. This mark is allocated on the basis of your participation in both LECTURES and TUTORIALS throughout the semester. **Internal students must attend at least 6 out of the 10 tutorials to be eligible for the participation mark.** If you do not attend at least 6 tutorials you will receive 0 marks for participation. **External students must participate in at least six different weekly online discussion forums within in a week of the relevant lecture to be eligible for the participation mark.** If you do not participate in at least six different weekly online discussion forums in time then you will receive 0 marks for participation. If you meet this minimum requirement, then your mark will be awarded on the basis of the overall quality of your participation throughout the semester in lectures and tutorials or forums. If you cannot attend tutorials you can participate in online forums instead.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.

- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Tutorial presentation

Due: **Assigned in class**

Weighting: **5%**

Students will undertake a short presentation in tutorials (max: 5 minutes). This will consist of: 1) a summary of a piece of relevant research beyond the required readings; 2) a brief critical analysis of the main argument of that research; 3) a critical response to that argument; 4) and a single discussion question that should prompt engagement by other students in the tutorial. Note: external students will undertake the presentation via a forum post (either in writing or by uploading audio or video) and subsequent discussion.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.
- An ability to undertake independent research.

Quizzes

Due: **On-going**

Weighting: **15%**

Online quizzes test comprehension and understanding of the required readings. There will be 10 weekly on-line quizzes worth a total of 15% (or a maximum of 1.5% for each of the 10 quizzes). There will be 5 questions each week. You can attempt each quiz once only and there is a time limit. Quizzes start in Week 3 and run until Week 12. Each quiz will only be open for 14 days from the date of the relevant lecture.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.

Short answer test

Due: **3/10/2016**

Weighting: **30%**

The Short answer test is designed to test your comprehension of the essential readings and arguments in the unit, and your ability to present your understanding of the readings clearly and succinctly. You are not expected to undertake research beyond the essential readings. Handed out: 19 August.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Essay

Due: **15/11/2016**

Weighting: **40%**

The essay (2200 words) is designed to extend your understanding of a specific topic and to test your ability to engage with that topic in depth. Essay writing tests your ability to synthesise material from a range of readings and to express, analyse and structure key ideas and arguments clearly, logically and systematically. It also tests your ability to develop your own view, and to argue for that view in a cogent and sustained way. You will be expected to read and incorporate into your paper a minimum of four secondary sources for this assessment (but you can use more) as well as material presented in the unit reader. The questions will be handed out on October 14.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.

- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.
- An ability to undertake independent research.

Delivery and Resources

Technology Used and Required

This unit has an online presence in iLearn. Students will need to be able to access this site.

Required Readings

All required readings are in the unit reader. You are responsible for obtaining access to these readings.

Further Readings

A list of further readings is available on the unit's iLearn site.

What has changed since the last offering of this unit

The assessment requirements have been slightly modified, the reading list and content updated.

Unit Schedule

Week 1 (5 August).

Lecture 1: Unit outline & brief introduction

No readings this week.

No tutorials this week.

Week 2 (12 August).

Lecture 2: Background on Agency and Identity: Locke, Hume and Kant

Required reading:

1. Selections from Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

Book II, Chapter 27 'Of Identity and Diversity'. Sections. 1-11, 14-18, 25-26.

2. Selection from Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*:

Book I, Part IV, Sect VI on 'Of personal identity'.

Book II, Part III, Sec III on 'Of the influencing motives of the will'.

3. Selections from Kant's *Groundwork III*:

On autonomy: 4:446-4:463.

No tutorials this week.

TOPIC 1: AUTONOMY AND CRITICAL REFLECTION

Week 3 (19 August).

Lecture 3 & Tutorial 1: Frankfurt on freedom of the will, Watson on motives and values

Required reading:

4. Harry Frankfurt: 'Freedom of the will and the concept of a person'; *Journal of Philosophy*, 68(1), 1971.

5. Gary Watson: 'Free Agency', *Journal of Philosophy*, 72, 1975.

Short answer assignment handed out – 19 August

Quiz 1 opens

Week 4 (26 August).

Lecture 4 & Tutorial 2: 'Deep Self' and integration theories

Required reading:

6. Marilyn Friedman: 'Autonomy and the Split-Level Self', *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1986, pp. 19-35.

7. Susan Wolf: 'Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility' in Schoeman (ed.): *Responsibility, Character and the Emotions* (1987), pp. 46-62.

Quiz 2 opens

Week 5 (2 September).

Lecture 5 & Tutorial 3: Competence and relational theories of autonomy

Required reading:

8. Catriona Mackenzie & Natalie Stoljar: 'Autonomy Refigured', in Mackenzie & Stoljar (eds.) *Relational Autonomy* (2000): pp. 3-22.

9. Diana Meyers: 'Personal Autonomy and the Paradox of Feminine Socialization' *Journal of Philosophy*, 84(11), 1987, pp. 619-28.

10. Paul Benson: 'Autonomy and Oppressive Socialisation', *Social Theory and Practice*, XVII (3), 1991: pp. 385-408.

Quiz 3 opens

TOPIC 2: MORAL RESPONSIBILITY AND FREEDOM

Week 6 (9 September).

Lecture 6 & Tutorial 4: Moral Luck.

Required reading:

11. Thomas Nagel: 'Moral Luck' in *Mortal Questions*, (New York: Cambridge UP, 1979).
12. Bernard Williams: 'Moral Luck' in *Moral Luck*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981).

Quiz 4 opens

Week 7 (16 September).

Lecture 7 & Tutorial 5: Moral responsibility and 'reactive attitudes'

Required reading:

13. Peter Strawson: 'Freedom and Resentment' in P.F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, (London: Methuen, 1974).
14. Gary Watson: 'Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme', in Schoeman (ed.) *Responsibility, Character and the Emotions* (1987).

Quiz 5 opens

MID SEMESTER BREAK

3 October – short answer assessment due

Week 8: (7 October).

Lecture 8 & Tutorial 6: 'Could have done otherwise', Moral Responsibility and Incompatibilism

Required Reading:

15. Harry Frankfurt: 'Alternate possibilities and moral responsibility', *Journal of Philosophy*, 66, no. 23, 1969.
16. Derk Pereboom: 'Hard Incompatibilism', in *Four Views on Free Will* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 85-125.

Note: Guest lecturer, Prof Neil Levy. LECTURE ATTENDANCE COMPULSORY THIS WEEK

Quiz 6 opens.

TOPIC 3: PERSONAL, PRACTICAL AND NARRATIVE IDENTITY

Week 9 (14 October)

Lecture 9 & Tutorial 7: Parfit: Persons, Bodies, and Survival

Required reading:

18. Derek Parfit: 'What we believe ourselves to be' [Ch 10], 'How we are not what we believe' [Ch. 11] in *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

Quiz 7 opens

Essay questions handed out 14 October

Week 10 (21 October).

Lecture 10 & Tutorial 8: Practical Identity: Responses to Parfit

Required reading:

19. Susan Wolf: 'Self-interest and Interest in Selves', *Ethics* 96 (1986).

20. Christine Korsgaard: 'Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: A Kantian Response to Parfit', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 10 (2), 1989.

Quiz 8 opens

Week 11 (28 October).

Lecture 11 & Tutorial 9: Narrative Self-Constitution

Required reading:

21. Catriona Mackenzie: 'Practical Identity and Narrative Agency' in Catriona Mackenzie & Kim Atkins (eds.) *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1-17.

22. Marya Schechtman: 'The Narrative Self-Constitution View', Ch. 5 of *The Constitution of Selves*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

Quiz 9 opens

Week 12 (4 November).

Lecture 12 & Tutorial 10: The Self and Meaningfulness

Required reading:

23. Susan Wolf, 'Meaning in Life' in *Meaning in Life and Why it Matters*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 1-33.

24. Cheshire Calhoun, 'Losing one's self', in Catriona Mackenzie & Kim Atkins (eds.) *Practical Identity and Narrative Agency*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 193-211.

Quiz 10 opens

Week 13 (11 November).

No lecture or tutorial this week.

No quiz this week.

Week 14

Essay due 15 November

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

New Assessment Policy in effect from Session 2 2016 http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html. For more information visit http://students.mq.edu.au/events/2016/07/19/new_assessment_policy_in_place_from_session_2/

Assessment Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Late penalties

To obtain an extension please see the Disruption to Studies policy and apply via ask.mq.edu.au. For very short extensions of less than three days, you can email the convenor to apply for an extension. Work submitted late will attract a penalty of 5% per day for the first two days and then 2% per day thereafter. Weekends, but not public holidays, count in the calculation of late penalties.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial presentation
- Short answer test
- Essay

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.

- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.
- An ability to undertake independent research.

Assessment task

- Essay

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.
- An ability to undertake independent research.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Quizzes
- Short answer test
- Essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Short answer test
- Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- An ability to evaluate these theories and arguments critically.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Tutorial presentation
- Short answer test
- Essay

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- A good general knowledge of some of the major theories and current debates in contemporary philosophical accounts of autonomy, moral responsibility and personal identity.
- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.
- The ability to develop your own view or perspective through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Essay

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- An ability to understand and analyse arguments in the relevant literatures.

Assessment tasks

- Tutorial Participation
- Essay