

## Call for Proposals for First-Year Seminar

First-year seminars will be distributed across the disciplines, yet they are structured around a set of common student learning outcomes whose purpose is to introduce first-year students to the pursuit of intellectual inquiry while developing some of the fundamental skills necessary for success in a rigorous academic setting: information literacy and strong written and oral communication skills. Specific topics are determined by the instructor's background and interests. The objective of the first-year seminar is to cultivate the intellectual skills necessary for liberal learning through the in-depth study of a topic and the provision of instruction on how to gather and analyze information for the purpose of formulating and defending an opinion. Seminars will be deep in terms of the critical approach employed, but will involve topics that are accessible to first-year students. In addition, first-year seminars anticipate the experience of the senior seminar without the requisite background knowledge and skills that such seminars demand.

All first-year seminars involve meaningful writing and speaking assignments in which students are given instruction and guidance on writing and speaking at the college level. Resources provided by the QEP are being used to enhance the services offered by the Speaking and Writing Center so that instructors can lean on these centers as they develop this portion of their course. Contact the Director of the Writing Center, Gwen Hale ([ghale@umw.edu](mailto:ghale@umw.edu)), or the Director of the Speaking Center, Anand Rao ([arao@umw.edu](mailto:arao@umw.edu)), for assistance on how the centers can help you. Peter Catlin ([pcatlin@umw.edu](mailto:pcatlin@umw.edu)) of Simpson Library is also a valuable resource for providing instruction on information literacy and a robust introduction to library resources.

**Every course should have the following basic components and use the new student learning outcomes.**

First-year seminars will

- utilize active, discussion-based, participatory learning;
- be exploratory in nature, rather than just presenting conclusions;
- have students read primary sources, not simply textbooks;
- have students synthesize material from multiple sources to develop their own views on the topic; and
- be capped at 15 students.

### Student Learning Outcomes (must be included on your syllabus!)

Upon successful completion of an FSEM, students will

- utilize a variety of research techniques to retrieve information efficiently, evaluate retrieved information, and synthesize information effectively to support their messages or arguments;
- improve development and organization of written arguments;
- demonstrate the ability to edit and revise in the writing process;
- apply the basic theories and principles of oral communication; and
- communicate effectively in a variety of settings, including public speaking and group discussion.

We are looking for seminars, not traditional courses, which illustrate the sort of intellectual inquiry higher education can offer. See, for instance, the sample syllabus appended to this document. In other words, you should not take an existing course and re-title and re-number it.

As we transition to all first-year students taking FSEM their first semester, instructors of FSEM should recognize that first-year advising will merge with the seminar program. FSEM instructors will be asked to devote a small portion of class time to advising issues and will be expected to meet their students individually for advising purposes. The Office of Academic and Career Services will be working with faculty in this endeavor and faculty will not be expected to develop advising materials. It is our hope that a collaborative program between first-year seminar instructors and the staff in the Academic and Career Services is a sound model for the academic component of the first-year experience.

**FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR REAPPROVAL FORM**  
**UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON**

|                      |  |              |          |
|----------------------|--|--------------|----------|
| <b>COURSE TITLE:</b> | <b>PERSPECTIVES ON FREE WILL AND DETERMINISM</b> |              |          |
| <b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> | W. David Stahlman                                | <b>DATE:</b> | 11.25.14 |

**RATIONALE.** Include short statement addressing how this course meets the FSEM's basic components and new student learning outcomes (see FSEM call above).

This class contributes to the FSEM goals for students to engage in active, discussion-based learning and in-depth exploration of a complex and unsolved issue at the heart of the human condition. Students will read primary sources from both the philosophical and psychological literature, including published articles, essays, and book chapters from preeminent thinkers (e.g., Daniel Dennett, B.F. Skinner) from the past century. These readings will reflect a myriad of often-conflicting viewpoints on the answers to the question of whether we possess free will, and even on the question of what it means to have such a thing in the first place. There will be an emphasis on the value of psychological research to inform the question and to posit the personal, biological, and cultural implications of various perspectives. This course will therefore draw from multiple disciplines in the examination of the topic of free will. Students will be encouraged to critically consider information and viewpoints that they have likely never encountered prior to the course. Students will be required to present oral presentations to the class, to write both short- and long-format essays critically examining the literature, and to discuss ideas in an open forum.

**SYLLABUS.** *Attach a course syllabus.*

**SUBMIT** this form and attached syllabus **electronically as one document** to Dave Stahlman ([wdstahlm@umw.edu](mailto:wdstahlm@umw.edu)). All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

# FSEM 100: Perspectives on Freedom and Determinism

Monroe 211, TR: 9:30-10:45  
Spring Semester 2014

## Instructor

Dr. W. David Stahlman

Email: [wdstahlm@umw.edu](mailto:wdstahlm@umw.edu)

Office: Annex B, Room 120

Office Hours: MW 1-2:30PM, R 5-7:00PM



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## **Introduction**

The debate regarding whether we have free will has raged for hundreds of years, with literally millions of pages being written on the topic by countless authors. Traditionally, the debate between determinism and free will has been considered a concern for philosophers. However, over the past century, psychological scientists have increasingly become interested in the nature of freedom. How does a personal belief (or lack thereof) in one's free will impact an individual's behavior? How does a belief (or non-belief) in the freedom of *others* impact the judgments of the individual? If humans have free will, do other animals have it as well? And just what does it mean to "have" free will, anyway? Is it a continuum or a binary property? Is there any room left for a metaphysical account of free will? Does determinism deny moral behavior? This seminar is going to be an introduction to the topics of freedom and determinism largely from a psychological perspective. My goal is for you to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the depth of the problems produced in this debate. For many of you, I expect that the next fifteen weeks will generate more questions than answers – believe it or not, I consider this to be a good thing.

## **Class Structure**

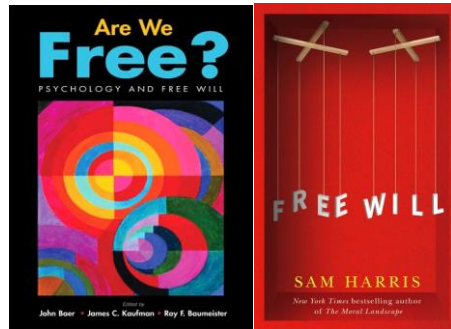
Conversation and the generation of ideas within a group dynamic are vastly superior means to understanding than is a one-way interaction (e.g., a lecture), *particularly* when considering the nature of the topic we are examining. Each class will be entirely dependent on your participation. In order to participate, you must be certain to read the assigned text *prior* to the start of class. I cannot overemphasize how important this is.

## **Learning Outcomes**

Students completing this course will:

- Utilize a variety of research techniques to retrieve information efficiently, evaluate retrieved information, and synthesize information effectively to support their messages or arguments;
- Improve development and organization of written arguments;
- Demonstrate the ability to edit and revise in the writing process;
- Apply the basic theories and principles of oral communication;
- Communicate effectively in a variety of settings, including public speaking and group discussion

**Books:** *Are We Free? Psychology and Free Will* (Baer, Kaufman, & Baumeister, Eds.)  
*Free Will* by Sam Harris



### Grade Components

*You must complete each component in order to pass the class. This class is not curved.*

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| (4) Reaction Papers | 20% |
| Decision Letter     | 10% |
| Team Debate         | 10% |
| Discussion Leader   | 15% |
| Final Paper         | 25% |
| Participation       | 20% |

Reaction Papers. You will be permitted to turn in five short papers (~2-3 pages, double-spaced) in direct reaction to class readings. I expect you to briefly examine the reading(s) for a particular day's topic (see Class Schedule, below). This can involve turning a skeptical eye towards the author's premise or arguments, integrating theoretical components from each of the readings, etc. You have a great deal of flexibility in how you approach these papers. You can focus on a single work or on multiple pieces. You can write about whatever you like on the topic, *provided you write something coherent and meaningful*. Consult with me if you have specific questions. Reaction papers are due within one week of the date from which the discussion of the articles is scheduled. Only your best four papers will be counted in your final grade.

Decision Letter. You will serve as a judge in one of two class debates on course material. Your principal role as the judge will be to be an attentive audience for your fellow students. You will hear arguments from the two sides of the debate during class time. You will then have one week to write a maximum 5-page "decision," much like a court judge. Concisely present the relevant positions of both sides. Who won the debate, and how did their arguments convince you?

Team Debate. At whichever debate for which you do not serve as judge, you will participate as a member of the debating group. Your job, as a group, will be to present both (or more) sides of the debate question. Half the points here will be assigned as a group score – your team's performance in the debate will be judged collectively. The other 50% of your points in this category will be based on your team members' assessments of your performance. You will be asked to report to me how your teammates have performed for the preparation and execution of the debate. More details on the debates will be given later.

*Note: I will choose the debate teams. If you have strong feelings regarding the makeup of your team, you should bring your concerns to me personally outside of class time.*

Final Paper. You will be required to write a minimum 10-page paper that will be due during finals week. You will have the option of writing on one of multiple paper topics (TBD).

**Discussion Leadership.** Open conversation about the material is critical to this class. In two-person teams, you will be in charge of the discussion during two meetings (i.e., one week) this semester. Your job in this capacity will be to inform the discussion when appropriate, but more importantly to keep the chatter going amongst your fellow students. To this end, constructing a few questions, a brief introduction to the topic, etc., are good ideas for you to consider. You will be allowed to choose your own partner; together, you will be able to vote on which of the course topics for which you would like to be Discussion Leaders.

*Note: In the event of an odd number of total students, one group will have three members.*

**Participation.** The quality of this class hinges on your participation. As such, participation is a major component of your grade. Each discussion day (i.e., not days during which there is a debate or debate prep), I will be taking copious notes on who is actively engaging in the conversation. Each day, I will assign a point value (e.g., “0” indicating absence or total inactivity, “3” indicating earnest and thoughtful participation) for your performance. Your two lowest scores will be dropped, and the remaining scores will be averaged.

### **Attendance and Make-up Policy**

You should note that your attendance is critically important. I would advise you to avoid missing class at all costs. However, I know that sometimes crises occur. I have attempted to give you a bit of flexibility by allowing you to drop your two lowest daily Participation scores. If a major problem (e.g., car accident, death in the family, etc.) occurs that prevents you from attending class or turning in an assignment on time, you must contact me as soon as possible about it. If you provide a good reason and official documentation (e.g., doctor’s note, police report), I will try to accommodate your situation. I stress that the final determination of all these matters is at my discretion.

### **Academic Honesty**

Science and the legitimate exchange of ideas are absolutely dependent on the trustworthiness of those participating. Honesty is of utmost importance. Be sure that you are familiar with the University’s honor code and to endorse on all assignments the following statement: “I hereby declare, upon my word of honor, that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.” Any occurrence of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) will result in a report to the University’s honor council.

### **Class Schedule**

The next page notes when we will be discussing specific articles, and provides a loose outline of general topics. Note that there will be a fair amount of overlap in readings. I have planned the schedule such that, while there is a good amount of reading overall, each day’s reading assignments should be quite manageable. I advise you to give yourself enough time to process the reading – you ought not rush through it. Readings that are referred to by chapter numbers are found in the text, *Are We Free?*. Except for the Harris book, all other readings will be available as PDFs at the course website.

## Schedule

| Week | Date   | Topic                          | Readings  |
|------|--------|--------------------------------|---|
| 1*   | 14-Jan | Introduction to Course         | -   |
|      | 16-Jan |                                | Dennett, "Please Don't Feed the Bugbears"   |
| 2*   | 21-Jan | Behaviorism and automaticity   | Ch. 7 (Bargh); Marr, "On terms"   |
|      | 23-Jan |                                | Ch. 13 (Howard); Skinner, "What is man?"  |
| 3    | 28-Jan |                                | Ch. 8 (Kihlstrom); Bargh & Ferguson, "Beyond behaviorism"   |
|      | 30-Jan |                                | Skinner, "Why I am not a cognitive psychologist"; Wegner & Wheatley, "Apparent mental causation"  |
| 4    | 4-Feb  |                                | Baumeister et al., "Free will in consumer behavior"; Libet, "Unconscious cerebral initiative"   |
|      | 6-Feb  |                                | Ryan & Deci, "Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy"  |
| 5    | 11-Feb | Compatibilism                  | Ch. 3 (Myers); Dennett, "Skinner skinned"   |
|      | 13-Feb |                                |   |
| 6    | 18-Feb |                                | Ch. 16 (Baer); Davis, "The radical consequences of free will"   |
|      | 20-Feb |                                | Ch. 14 (Miller & Atencio); Dennett, "Nihilism neglected"  |
| 7    | 25-Feb | Creativity                     | Ch. 15 (Simonton); Epstein, "'Insight' in the pigeon"   |
|      | 27-Feb |                                | Epstein, "Generativity theory and creativity"; Epstein, "Just how predictable is human behavior?"   |
| 8*   | 4-Mar  |                                | Harris, p. 1-30 (No class)  |
|      | 6-Mar  |                                | Harris, p. 31-66 (No class)   |
| 9    | 11-Mar | Responsibility and morality    | Ch. 12 (Dennett); Strawson, "The impossibility of moral responsibility"   |
|      | 13-Mar |                                | Sarkissian et al., "Is belief in free will a cultural universal?"; Ch. 17 (Pinker)  |
| 10   | 18-Mar |                                | Smart, "Free will, praise and blame"; Vohs & Schooler, "The value of believing in free will"  |
|      | 20-Mar |                                | Baumeister et al., "Prosocial benefits of feeling free"   |
| 11*  | 25-Mar | Human belief and mental health | Taylor & Brown, "Illusion and well-being"; Burger, "Desire for control, locus of control, and proneness to depression"                        |
|      | 27-Mar |                                | NO CLASS!   |
| 12*  | 1-Apr  |                                | Davis & Davis, "Internal-external control and attribution of responsibility for success and failure"; Meynen, "Free will and mental disorder" |
|      | 3-Apr  | Human and non-human freedom    | Smith, "Taking aim at free will"; Dennett, "Are you out of the loop?"   |
| 13   | 8-Apr  |                                | Obhi & Haggard, "Free will and free won't"; Filevich et al., "There is no free won't"   |
|      | 10-Apr |                                | Brembs, "Toward a scientific concept of free will as a biological trait"; Brembs, "Spontaneous decisions and operant conditioning"            |
| 14   | 15-Apr |                                | Ch. 5 (Baumeister)  |
|      | 17-    |                                | Ch. 11 (Wegner); Nichols, "Experimental philosophy and  |

|        |            |           |   |
|--------|------------|-----------|---|
|        | Apr        |           | the problem of free will”                               |
| 15*    | 22-<br>Apr | Debate #1 | -   |
|        | 24-<br>Apr | Debate #2 | <b>Final paper due!</b>                                 |
| Finals |            |           | <b>Decision letter due by end of Final Exam period!</b> |

\* denotes weeks that students are **unable** to serve as Discussion Leaders.

- The readings are listed in the class schedule in shorthand. If you require a full citation and cannot find it online, please let me know.

*Note: Under fair use, copyright law dictates that the PDFs provided on the course website are to be explicitly used only within the confines of this course. Do not duplicate or distribute these works; print them only for the purposes of class use.*