

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
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Séminaire II : La faiblesse de la volonté (2PH2179)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier secondaire M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Printemps

Equipe enseignante

Juan Pablo Bermúdez & Kathrin Koslicki

Contenu

Why do we sometimes do things we consider to be bad, even when we think we should not do them? Is acting against our own judgments always bad? Is acting in accordance with our judgments always good? What is addiction, and how can we understand it? Weakness of will provides an excellent entry point into the study of all the central topics of action theory: the explanation of action; the roles of judgment, desire, and intention; practical rationality; freedom of the will and moral responsibility. Through our study of weakness of the will we will examine all of these topics and discuss questions that are crucial to understanding our own nature as limited agents. Beginning in a historical vein, we examine first how these questions were addressed by Plato and Aristotle and proceed to consider contemporary treatments during the second half of the seminar. This seminar will prepare students to participate in an international workshop at the end of the term, whose aim is to bring leading scholars in the field to Neuchâtel to discuss their work on self-control and weakness of will.

Forme de l'évaluation

Internal methods of assessment:

- (1) A paper (60% of internal evaluation grade)
- (2) In-class presentation (20% of internal evaluation grade)
- (3) Attendance, participation, discussion forum (20% of internal evaluation grade)

(1) The paper should be approximately 3000 words. Guidelines and a detailed grading rubric with criteria of evaluation will be made available. Students will receive assistance in finding a suitable topic as well as feedback on a draft before handing in the final version of their papers. (2) Students will be asked to give one or more in-class presentations at some point during the semester. In-class presentations should ideally help students find and develop a paper topic, although it is not required that the topic of the presentation will also become the topic of the paper. (3) Attendance and participation, in class and on the discussion forum, are expected and required. Students will receive high marks for participation, if they are successful at demonstrating their engagement with the material discussed in this seminar, e.g., by contributing to class discussions and the discussion forum regularly and in a constructive way. Work that is not submitted by the required deadline, without good cause, will not be accepted and will automatically result in a failing grade for that assessment.

External methods of assessment: MA students in Philosophy are required to take a 30-minute oral examination on the material covered in this seminar. The internal and external evaluation grade each count for 50% of the final grade for this seminar.

Due Dates: Papers are due on Tuesday, May 31, 2022, the last meeting of the seminar, and will be returned to students with comments and a grade. If the grade is not satisfactory (below 4), students who have handed in a paper on May 31, 2022 will have the opportunity to hand in a revised version of their paper by June 30, 2022.

Assessment criteria: level of preparedness; clarity of oral and written expression; specification of technical terms used; structure (e.g., plan, logical organization of ideas); ability to highlight key points; persuasiveness of arguments; originality and creativity of positions defended; speed of reflection during oral presentations.

Language of instruction: The language of instruction for this seminar will be English and French.

Documentation

Aesara of Lucania. (2004). On Human Nature. In I. M. Plant (Ed.), Women writers of ancient Greece and Rome: An anthology (pp. 81–82). Oklahoma University Press.
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, De Anima

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Arpaly, N. (2000). On acting rationally against one's best judgment. *Ethics*, 110(3), 488–513.

Arpaly, N., & Schroeder, T. (1999). Praise, blame and the whole self. *Philosophical Studies*, 93(2), 161–188. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1004222928272>

Brownstein, M. (2018). Self-control and overcontrol: Conceptual, ethical, and ideological issues in positive psychology. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 9(3), 585–606.

Davidson, D. (1970). How is weakness of the will possible? In J. Feinberg (Ed.), *Moral Concepts* (pp. 21–42). Oxford University Press.

Heather, N. (2017). Addiction as a form of akrasia. In N. Heather & G. Segal (Eds.), *Addiction and Choice* (pp. 133–150). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198727224.003.0008>

Henden, E. (2017). Addiction, compulsion, and weakness of the will: A dual-process perspective. In *Addiction and Choice: Rethinking the Relationship* (p. 17). Oxford University Press.

Henden, E. (2018). Addiction as a disorder of self-control. In H. Pickard & S. H. Ahmed (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Science of Addiction* (1st ed., pp. 45–53). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315689197-5>

Holton, R. (1999). Intention and weakness of will. *Journal of Philosophy*, 96(5), 241–262.

Holton, R. (2003). How is strength of will possible? In S. Stroud & C. Tappolet (Eds.), *Weakness of will and practical irrationality* (pp. 39–67). Oxford University Press.

Holton, R., & Berridge, K. (2013). Addiction between compulsion and choice. In N. Levy (Ed.), *Addiction and Self-Control* (pp. 239–268). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199862580.003.0012>

Inzlicht, M., & Friese, M. (2021). Willpower is overrated. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/rfk6z>

Mele, A. R. (1987). Irrationality: An essay on akrasia, self-deception, and self-control. Oxford University Press.

Paul, S. K. (2020). *Philosophy of action: A contemporary introduction*. Routledge.

Pickard, H. (2016). Addiction. In K. Timpe, M. Griffith, & N. Levy (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Free Will* (pp. 454–467). Taylor & Francis.

Pickard, H. (2018). The puzzle of addiction. In H. Pickard & S. H. Ahmed (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Science of Addiction* (1st ed., pp. 9–22). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315689197-2>

Plato, Protagoras, Gorgias, Republic, Phaedrus

Rorty, A. O. (1980). Where does the akratic break take place? *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 58(4), 333–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00048408012341341>

The readings for this course, where applicable, will be made available online.

Pré-requis

None.

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar, 2 hours per week, Tuesday, 14:00-16:00, Spring semester.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Discuss and comprehend central texts in the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia
- Explain key concepts and principles used in the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia
- Identify the principal positions associated with prominent figures in the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia.
- Evaluate how philosophers apply key concepts and principles to central problems in the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia.
- Recognise how prominent figures in the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia are influenced by, and have influenced, their predecessors or successors.
- Describe the main influences and connections between ancient Greek philosophy, the philosophy of action and other areas of philosophy as well as connected disciplines, such as cognitive science, psychology, etc.

Compétences transférables

- Develop group projects and collaborate with other students.
- Produce well-reasoned arguments orally and in writing for or against positions that are advanced in the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia
- Write a well-organized and well-reasoned argumentative paper on a particular text, problem, or position advanced in the the philosophy of action and ancient Greek discussions of the problem of akrasia.