

**Methods Seminar: Friendship, Family and Morality**  
**Philosophy 90**  
**Spring 2017**  
**Syllabus**

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**Course Description:**

In this course, we are going to explore two main debates concerning our closest relationships. The first begins with a skeptical challenge to the idea that human beings are free and responsible agents. While much of the philosophical discussion about free will has centered on the questions of whether we have it, recently there has been more attention to the question of what would we lose (or gain) if we aren't really free agents. For example, some have argued that if we are not free, then we are not the sorts of agents for whom it is appropriate to direct certain attitudes such as gratitude, resentment, indignation, forgiveness, and love. But if such attitudes are not appropriate, then we cannot have the kinds of valuable interpersonal relationships we think we have. Or, to take another example, others have argued that friendship and loving relationships that are not freely chosen are less valuable than ones that are freely chosen. In the first part of this course, we will examine and assess a variety of arguments like these, and in the process try to figure out what is at stake and how valuable it is in the debate over whether we are free and morally responsible agents. In so doing, we will have occasion to explore the nature of so-called "special obligations" we have as friends and family members, among others. With an understanding of different theories of such duties, in the second part of the course, we are going to turn to questions about how these duties fit with or, perhaps, conflict with duties we have as fellow citizens and human beings.

**Specific course topics and readings**

All readings are available through the Tritoned course web site, but one book, *Family Values* by Swift and Brighouse, is highly recommended.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
4/3	Introduction
4/5	Robert Kane, <i>The Significance of Free Will</i> , excerpt
4/7	Peter Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"
4/10	Continued
4/12	Susan Wolf, "The Importance of Free Will"
4/14	Derk Pereboom, "Free Will, Love and Anger"
4/17	Tamler Sommers, "The Objective Attitude"

4/19	Seth Shabo, "Where Love and Resentment Meet"
4/21	Continued
4/24	Derk Pereboom, "The Dialectic of Selfhood and the Significance of Free Will"
4/26	Gary Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility" (excerpt)
4/28	Dana Kay Nelkin, "Friendship, Freedom, and Special Obligations"
5/1	David Annis, "The Meaning, Value, and Duties of Friendship"
5/3	Diane Jeske, "Special Obligations"
5/5	Diane Jeske, "Families, Friends, and Special Obligations"
5/8	Samuel Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities"
5/10	Michael Sandel, <i>Liberalism and the Limits of Justice</i> (excerpt)
5/12	Jennifer Whiting, "Impersonal Friends"
5/15	David Brink, "Impartiality and Associative Duties"
5/17	No new reading
5/19	Midterm
5/22	Susan Moeller Okin, <i>Justice, Gender, and the Family</i>
5/24	Hugh La Follette, "Licensing Parents"
5/26	Matthew Liao, <i>The Right to Be Loved</i> (excerpt)
5/29	Continued
5/31	Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, <i>Family Values</i> (excerpt) (paper due)
6/2	Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, <i>Family Values</i> (excerpt)
6/5	Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, <i>Family Values</i> (excerpt)
6/7	Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, <i>Family Values</i> (excerpt)
6/9	Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, <i>Family Values</i> (excerpt)

**Requirements:**

- (1) Short 100-200 word reading responses. (Grade based on top 15 out of 27 opportunities; you are only required to do 15). (25%)
- (2) 1 midterm 5/19 (15%)
- (3) 1 medium-length paper (due 5/31) (25%)
- (4) 1 take-home final. (35%)

- Up to 5% extra credit available for good class attendance and participation.
- All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Notes

- If accommodations are needed for a disability or for religious reasons, please notify me during the first class period or as soon as possible.
- The **Academic Honor Code** must be observed in this course. Violations will be reported, and an "F" on the assignment and possibly the course will result.
- **Electronic devices may not be used in class except with special permission of the instructor.**
- Please note that the policies and readings described above are subject to minor change.