

# Addiction and Agency (PHIL G5010)

**When:** Tuesdays, 2:10pm-4pm

**Where:** Philosophy Hall 716

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**Office Hours:** Monday 2pm-3pm, Wednesday 1pm-2pm, or by appointment

## Course description

It is commonly believed that addicts are less blameworthy for their behavior than non-addicts. But what is addiction, and what must blameworthiness amount to, such that this intuition is justified — assuming that it is indeed justified? In this course, we will look at the scientific and philosophical literature on addiction and responsibility with an eye to answering these questions. Topics covered include: What does it matter whether addiction is a “disease”? Can one be addicted to a behavior? Is addiction rational? Is addiction akratic? We will conclude by considering a skeptical argument. This argument purports to show that addiction, in the relevant sense, is so widespread as to undermine paradigmatic judgments of blameworthiness.

## Requirements

**Participation (10%):** Because this class will run on a seminar format, participation is crucial. Along with class participation, we will count discussions we have in office hours towards this component of your grade.

**Presentations (15%):** Presentations are required for registered students and optional for auditors. Presenters should summarize the readings for their week, and should raise questions for discussion. Presenters may focus on a single article for their presentation if they choose. Presentations will be graded not only on the quantity of material prepared but also on the quality of the discussion that results.

**Paper (75%):** One term paper of about 4,000-5,000 words (15-20 pages) will be due via email by **Tuesday, December 20th**. An abstract for your paper is due by class on **Tuesday November 22<sup>nd</sup>** via email.

**Background Reading:** We will cover a lot of ground, but will, of necessity, skip over important perspectives on addiction and responsibility even so. Here is a list of some

resources that you might consult in order to get a fuller picture – please bring others you know of to the attention of the group.

Philosophical resources on addiction and responsibility:

Jeffrey Poland & George Graham, *Addiction and Responsibility* (we have ordered copies of this for you at Book Culture)

Jan Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction and Human Behaviour*

Yaffe, “Recent Work on Addiction and Responsible Agency”

Don Ross & David Spurrett (eds.), *What is Addiction?*

Philosophical resources on agency and responsibility:

Ishtiyaque Haji, “Compatibilist Views of Freedom and Responsibility”

Neil Levy, *Hard Luck: How Luck Undermines Free Will and Moral Responsibility 1st Edition*

Paul Russell & Oisin Deery (eds.), *The Philosophy of Free Will*

Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”

Matthew Talbert, *Moral Responsibility*

Scientific Resources on addiction:

Carl Hart and Charles Ksir, *Drugs, Society, and Human Behavior*

Abigail Herron & Timothy Koehler Brennan, *ASAM Essentials of Addiction Medicine*

Nigel Holt and Rob Lewis, *Psychology of Addictive Behavior*

Robert West and James Brown, *Theory of Addiction*

*The Neurobiology of Drug Addiction* (National Institute on Drug Abuse):

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/teaching-packets/neurobiology-drug-addiction>

Schedule:

◆ **September 6: Introductions and Overview**

◆ **September 13: Phenomenological and Clinical Descriptions of Addiction**

Required: Christian Schültz, “DSM V, RDoC and Diagnostic Approaches in Addiction Research and Therapy” / *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Fifth Edition), “Substance-Related and Addiction Disorders” / Alcoholics Anonymous, “More about Alcoholism”

Optional: Owen Flanagan, “What is it Like to be an Addict?” / Garrett, “Addiction, Paradox, and the Good I Would” / Selections from Carl Hart, *High Price* / Elster, “Addiction” from *Strong Feelings*

◆ **September 20: Can Behaviors Constitute Addictions?**

Required: “Introduction to Behavioral Addictions” by Rosenberg and Feder / Joseph Frascella et al., “Shared brain vulnerabilities open the way for substance addictions: Carving addiction at a new joint?”

Optional: Don Ross: "Syndrome Stabilization in Psychiatry: Pathological Gambling as a Case Study" / Mark Griffins, "Why Anything can be an Addiction" *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.com/news/health-15723834>

◆ **September 27**: Is Addiction a "Brain Disease"?

Required: Leshner, "Addiction is a Brain Disease and It Matters" / Levy, "Addiction is not a Brain Disease (and it matters)"

Optional: Satel and Lillienfeld, "Addiction and the Brain-Disease Fallacy" / Foddy, "Addiction and Its Sciences: Philosophy" / Selections from Jellinek, *The Disease Concept of Alcoholism* / Scott Vrecko, "Birth of a Brain Disease: Science, the State, and Addiction Neuropolitics"

◆ **October 4**: What is addiction? The Hyperbolic Discounting Model

Required: George Ainslie, "Précis of *Breakdown of Will*" (commentaries optional) / Neil Levy, "Addiction as a Disorder of Belief"

Optional: Becker and Murphy, "A Rational Theory of Addiction" / Skog, "Hyperbolic Discounting, Willpower, and Addiction" / George Ainslie, "Free Will as Recursive Self-Prediction: Does a Deterministic Mechanism Reduce Responsibility?" / Don Ross, "The Picoeconomics of Gambling Addiction and Supporting Neural Mechanisms"

◆ **October 11**: What is addiction? The Stimulus-Response Learning Model

Required: Everitt and Robbins, "Neural systems of reinforcement for drug addiction: from actions to habits to compulsion" / Walton and Nasrallah, "Varieties and Valuation in the Normal and Addicted Brain"

Optional: Bernácer and Giménez-Amaya, "On Habit Learning in Neuroscience and Free Will" / Husak and Murphy, "The Relevance of the Neuroscience of Addiction to Criminal Law"

◆ **October 18**: What is addiction? The Incentive Sensitization Model

Required: Robinson and Berridge, "The neural basis of drug craving: an incentive-sensitization theory of addiction" / Loewenstein, "A Visceral Account of Addiction"

Optional: Robinson and Berridge, "Drug Addiction as Incentive Sensitization" / Brendan Dill and Richard Holton, "The addict within us all" / Schroeder, "Irrational Action and Addiction"

◆ **October 25:** What is addiction? Environmental models

Required: Bruce Alexander et. al., “Effect of Early and Later Colony Housing on Oral Ingestion of Morphine in Rats” / Petry, Alessi, and Rash, “Contingency Management Treatments of Drug and Alcohol Use Disorders”

Optional: Wasmuth et al., “Exploring addiction as occupation” / Hart, *High Price* (selections) / Alexander, “Addiction: the View from Rat Park” available at: <http://www.brucealexander.com/articles-speeches/rat-park/148-addiction-the-view-from-rat-park>

◆ **November 1:** Addiction and Agency 1

Required: Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person” / Selections from Watson, “Free Action and Free Will”

Optional: Gjelskvik, “Freedom of the Will and Addiction” / Leon, “The Willing Addict: Actor or Helpless Bystander?”

◆ **November 8:** NO CLASS (election day)

◆ **November 15:** Addiction and Agency 2

Required: Watson, “Free Choice” / Watson, “Excusing Addiction” / Joshua May and Matt King, “Moral Responsibility and Mental Illness”

Optional: Mele, “Motivational Strength” / Watson, “Disordered Appetites: Addiction, Compulsion, and Dependence” / Vihvelin, “Stop Me Before I Kill Again” / Wallace, “Addiction as a Defect of the Will: Some Philosophical Reflections”

◆ **November 22:** Addiction and Agency 3

Required: Susan Wolfe, “Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility” / Fisher and Ravizza, *Responsibility and Control: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (selections)

Optional: Sinnott-Armstrong, “Are Addicts Responsible”

◆ **December 6:** Addiction and Skepticism about Responsibility

Required: Nagel, “Moral Luck” / Watson, “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil” / Levy, “Addiction and Extended Agency” / Pickard, “Addiction”

Optional: Pereboom, “Optimistic Skepticism about Free Will” / Yaffe, “Free Will and Agency at its Best” / The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study by the CDC:

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/cestudy/> // Foddy and Savulescu, “A liberal account of addiction”