

Spring 2014 Advanced Topics/400 Level Courses

**830:441 Advanced Topics in Personality Psychology
Science, psychology, human agency, and personhood**

Dr. Gary Brill

TIL 246 MW6 (5:00-6:20pm)

Prerequisite: 830: 321 (Social Psychology) or 830:338 (Personality Psychology) or 830:364 (Motivation and Emotion)

(Jr/Sr 830 Major or permission of instructor is a prereq for Adv Topics/400 Level courses)

Course description: Do we have free will, also known as human agency? People in every culture ever studied have thought so. People in our own culture, including many scientists and philosophers, also tend to agree that we have free will. The question of human agency goes to the heart of what it is to be a person. But since the enterprise of science aims to uncover the unyielding laws of the universe, in what sense can the study of agents with free will be a science?

This course will explore these questions. We will start by reviewing the philosophical positions that have been put forth over the centuries, including the most recent and modern views. We will then examine the body of relevant psychological research, which includes, for example, Libet's classic experiments and research on split-brain patients, the automaticity of behavior, irrational judgments, and willpower. Once we have done this, we will be in a position to consider and evaluate criticisms of the mainstream scientific approach to understanding persons. Finally, we will take a look at recently proposed alternative approaches to the systematic study of persons that attempt to preserve the notion that human agency is real.