

# EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY 6000

SPRING 2011

**Course Description:** Philosophy has traditionally taken place from the armchair; experimental philosophy portends a philosophical revolution wherein the methodologies for doing philosophy are expanded from armchair reflection to include broader engagement. As philosophers' intuitions are thrown into conflict with those of more diverse populations, what should be the status of received philosophical wisdom? Do philosophers' intuitions occupy some sort of privileged status? Can "folk" intuitions be informative in the construction of our philosophical theories, or can experimental results only undermine traditional work? What do cross-cultural differences tell us about the epistemic status of our intuitions? What is the relationship between experimental philosophy and empirical approaches to philosophy more generally? In this seminar, we will explore these and other questions; particular coverage will be dictated by student interest.

**Professor:** Dr. Fritz Allhoff  
3006 Moore Hall; Tuesday 2:00-3:00, Wednesday 3:00-4:00  
[fritz.allhoff@wmich.edu](mailto:fritz.allhoff@wmich.edu), 387-4503 (w)

**Seminar:** Tuesday 3:00-5:30, Moore 3014

**Texts:** Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols (ed.), *Experimental Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Other readings will be available online at <http://www.wmich.edu/library/reserves/>. The first time that you visit that site, you must create an account and add this course to that account. The password is xphi.

|                 |  |     |
|-----------------|--|-----|
| <b>Grading:</b> | Attendance/Participation                   | 15% |
|                 | Presentations                              | 20% |
|                 | Experimental Design (March 15)             | 15% |
|                 | Annotated Research Bibliography (April 5)  | 10% |
|                 | Research Paper (6000-9000 words; April 25) | 40% |

**Attendance/Participation:** You are required to attend each seminar and to participate. If you miss a seminar, you may turn in a 1000-word reaction to the assigned readings (half exegetical, half critical) at the beginning of the following seminar to avoid a zero for the previous week. You may do this, at most, two times.

**Presentations:** This will very much be a student-led seminar with some number of students being responsible for presentations each week. I expect *very good* preparation for these presentations, which we will talk more about. In particular, presentations should *not* simply trace through the readings with a bunch of quotations (though these should be incorporated as appropriate), but should rather seek to explicate the project in some integrative manner and to provide substantive questions for discussion. PowerPoint is strongly encouraged.

**Experimental Design:** Students will be expected to design a philosophical experiment during the course of the semester, including preparation thereof for the HSIRB. The experiment should have implications for some philosophical debate; it can either be designed so as to engage other experiments or else so as to bring experimental analysis to bear on traditional approaches. Students are *not* required to execute their experiments—principally due to constraints for institutional review—but are certainly encouraged to do so if they are interested and if time permits.

**Annotated research bibliography:** Before writing your research paper, you will compile a research bibliography which will support the research for that project. There should be at least twenty sources in this bibliography, at least half of which should be from after 2000. For each source, you should provide full bibliographic information as well as a 100-word précis. Comments will be offered on the bibliography as will be useful for developing the research paper.

**Research paper:** Students will incorporate the annotated research bibliography into a research paper, which will be in the 6000-9000 word range. My preference would be for something approximately in the middle of this range as I suspect shorter papers will lack some of the depth of longer ones and that longer ones will lack some of the focus of more intermediate ones. Nevertheless, you have some flexibility on this length.

**Seminar and Reading Schedule:**

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u>   | <u>Readings</u>   |
|-------------|-------------|--|---|
| 1           | 1/11        | Introduction to Xphi   | Knobe and Nichols, "An Experimental Philosophy Manifesto"   |
| 2           | 1/18        | Philosophical Method   | Plato, "Meno", §§71-80; Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§71-80; Stich, "Plato's Method Meets Cognitive Science"; Sosa, "Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Intuition" |
| 3           | 1/25        | Thought Experiments<br><br>HSIRB (@ 400p)                                | Ludwig, "The Epistemology of Thought Experiments"   |
| 4           | 2/1         | Philosophical Expertise  | Weinberg et al., "Are Philosophers Expert Intuiters?"; Williamson, "Philosophical Expertise and the Burden of Proof"; Schwitzgebel and Cushman, "Expertise in Moral Reasoning?"                   |
| 5           | 2/8         | Epistemology   | Weinberg et al., "Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions"; Swain et al. "The Instability of Philosophical Intuitions"   |
| 6           | 2/15        | Theories of Reference  | Machery et al., "Semantics, Cross-Cultural Style"; Mallon et al., "Against Arguments from Reference"  |
| 7           | 2/22        | Experimental Design  | Cullen, "Survey-Driven Romanticism"; add something  |
| 8           | 3/1         | <b>No Class (Spring Break)</b>   | N/A   |
| 9           | 3/8         | Statistics Presentation by Haolai (Lincoln) Jiang, Graduate College      | N/A   |
| 10          | 3/15        | Free Will and Moral Responsibility<br><br><b>Experimental Design Due</b> | Nahmias et al., "Is Incompatibilism Intuitive?"; Nichols and Knobe, "Moral Responsibility and Determinism"  |

|            |      |  |  |
|------------|------|--|--|
| <b>11</b>  | 3/22 | Intentional Action   | Knobe, "Person as Scientist, Person as Moralist"; Nichols and Ulatowski, "Intuitions and Individual Differences" |
| <b>12</b>  | 3/29 | <b>No Class</b>  | N/A  |
| <b>13</b>  | 4/5  | Moral Psychology<br><br><b>Annotated Research Bibliography Due</b> | Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail"; Greene, "The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul"                       |
| <b>14</b>  | 4/12 | Student Research Presentations                                     | N/A  |
| <b>15</b>  | 4/19 | Student Research Presentations                                     | N/A  |
| <b>FEW</b> | 4/25 | <b>Research Paper Due</b>  |  |

**Statement on Academic Honesty:** You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Graduate Catalog (pp. 25-27) that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.