

PHIL 398: EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to Experimental Philosophy. Generally speaking, experimental philosophers conduct quantitative research in order to investigate philosophical questions. Most work in this field utilizes survey research in order to discern the source of the various intuitions people have to philosophical thought experiments. In addition to surveying prominent work in Experimental Philosophy, the course will consider potential limitations as well as potential further applications of this methodology.

COURSE GOALS

Experimental philosophy is a relatively new field of research. There are many philosophical topics that have yet to be examined at all, and many more that are only beginning to be examined experimentally. In addition to imparting to students an understanding of the important theoretical issues that are raised by the methodology of experimental philosophy and of some of the positive results in the field, the course aims to prepare students to be able to conduct research that may contribute to the development of this burgeoning field.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours will be determined during the first week of class. Students may feel free to stop by the instructor's office to talk at other times, or may schedule appointments at times other than the scheduled office hours.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to follow Lewis & Clark's Academic Integrity Policy as stated in the College Catalog. Failure to do so will likely result in failing the course as well as any additional disciplinary action taken by the college's Honor Board.

DISABILITIES

Students that have learning disabilities or learning differences, which may impact their ability to perform well in this class, may request special accommodation by submitting documentation to the Student Support Services Office on the ground floor of the Templeton Student Center across from the Cashier (ext. 7191). The office will notify the instructor directly concerning any accommodations for which a student is eligible.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

You must attend class having read the assigned material carefully and must be willing to participate in classroom discussion and debate. Your grade for the course will be determined in the following way.

- 10% In-class summary presentations of articles. One student will present each reading for roughly the first 10 minutes class (whenever there is a new reading assignment).
- 10% Attendance and participation.

- 5% A quiz on the basic statistics needed to comprehend the results in experimental philosophy.
- 15% A 3-4 page paper that explains what experimental philosophy is and discusses some of the criticisms of this methodology.
- 20% 5 - 10 page APA (American Psychological Association) style literature review on a topic the student wishes to research.
- 10% A 2-3 page research proposal.
- 30% A 10 - 20 page research paper. Students will be responsible for writing a substantive research paper that follows up on some topic discussed in class. Papers must propose an experiment to test some specific philosophically interesting hypothesis. In some cases, it may be possible to conduct an actual quantitative study. In those cases, the research paper should report the results and say whether the results confirm or disconfirm the predicted hypothesis. In all other cases, research papers should contain a concluding section that draws out the implications of what results would help to confirm or disconfirm the predicted hypothesis.

The standard grading scale will be used

A	93	C+	77
A-	90	C	73
B+	87	C-	70
B	83	D+	67
B-	80	D	63
		F	59 & below

READINGS

The book for the course will be *Experimental Philosophy*, ed. J. Knobe & S. Nichols, Oxford University Press, 2008. All other readings will be placed on reserve in library and/or made available to students by the instructor electronically. The course will be roughly broken up into five topical units.

SCHEDULE

Introduction to Experimental Philosophy: Research on Intentional Action

- M 8/31: Introductory Lecture / Course Overview
- W 9/2: “The Concept of Intentional Action: A Case Study in the Uses of Folk Psychology” – Joshua Knobe.
- F 9/4: CLASS CANCELLED (instructor out of town)
- M 9/7: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

- W 9/9: “Bad Acts, Blameworthy Agents, and Intentional Actions: Some Problems for Juror Impartiality” – Thomas Nadelhoffer.
- F 9/11: “The Knobe Effect – A Brief Overview” – Adam Feltz, *The Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 2007.
- M 9/14: “Notes on Statistics for Experimental Philosophy” – Mike Bruno.
- W 9/16: “Notes on Statistics for Experimental Philosophy” – Mike Bruno.
- F 9/18: QUIZ ON STATISTICS

Background Methodological and Critical Issues

- M 9/21: “An Experimental Philosophy Manifesto” – Joshua Knobe & Shaun Nichols.
- W 9/23: “Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Intuition” – Ernest Sosa.
- F 9/25: “Analytic Epistemology and Experimental Philosophy” – Joshua Alexander & Jonathan Weinberg, *Philosophers Compass*, 2007.
- M 9/28: Additional readings (from traditional philosophical sources) and classroom debate over the viability of experimental philosophy.
- W 9/30: Additional readings (from traditional philosophical sources) and classroom debate over the viability of experimental philosophy.
- F 10/2: Additional readings (from traditional philosophical sources) and classroom debate over the viability of experimental philosophy.
FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE

Research on Cross-cultural Differences in Folk Intuitions

- M 10/5: Short readings from Lehrer and Kripke, Overview of the philosophical debates relevant to this section.
- W 10/7: “Semantics, Cross-Cultural Style” – Edouard Machery, Ron Mallon, Shaun Nichols, & Stephen Stich.
- F 10/9: NO CLASS (Fall Break)
- M 10/12: “Normativity and Epistemic Intuitions” – Jonathan M. Weinberg, Shaun Nichols, & Stephen Stich.
- W 10/14: “The Instability of Philosophical Intuitions: Running Hot and Cole on Truetemp” – Stacey Swain, Joshua Alexander, and Jonathon Weinberg, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, forthcoming.
- F 10/16: Lecture on cross-cultural differences in other areas.

Research on Free Will, Moral Responsibility, Determinism, and Personal Identity

- M 10/19: Short readings TBA, overview of the philosophical debates relevant to this section.
- W 10/21: “Is Incompatibilism Intuitive” – Eddy Nahmias, Stephen Morris, Thomas Nadelhoffer, & Jason Turner, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Review*, 2006.
- F 10/23: “Moral Responsibility and Determinism: The Cognitive Science of Folk Intuitions” – Shaun Nichols & Joshua Knobe.
- M 10/26: “Is Belief in Free Will a Cultural Universal?” – Hagop Sarkissian, Amita Chatterjee, Felipe De Brigard, Joshua Knobe, Shaun Nichols, & Smita Sirker, *Mind & Language*, forthcoming.
- W 10/28: Classroom discussion and lecture on writing an APA style literature review.
- F 10/30: “Identification, Situational Constraint, and Social Cognition: Studies in the Attribution of Moral Responsibility” – Robert L. Woolfolk, John M. Doris, & John M. Darley.
- M 11/2: “The Self and the Future” – Bernard Williams, *The Philosophical Review*, 1970; and “Intuitions about Personal Identity: An Empirical Study” – Shaun Nichols & Michael Bruno, *Philosophical Psychology*, forthcoming.
- W 11/4: Wrap-up discussion of issues raised in this section / brainstorming ideas for further research.

Experimental Philosophy of Consciousness

- F 11/6: Short readings TBA, overview of the philosophical debates relevant to this section.
- M 11/9: “Intuitions about Consciousness: Experimental Studies” – Joshua Knobe & Jesse Prinz, *Phenomenology and Cognitive Sciences* 7 (1): 67-83, 2008.
- W 11/11: “What Does the Nation of China Think about Phenomenal States?” – Bryce Huebner, Michael Bruno & Hagop Sarkissian, *European Review of Philosophy*, 2009.
- F 11/13: Classroom discussion and lecture on writing a research proposal.
- M 11/16: “How to Study Folk Intuitions about Phenomenal Consciousness?” – Justin Sytsma & Edouard Machery, *Mind & Language*, 2009.
- W 11/18: “The Folk Psychology of Consciousness” – Adam Arico, Brian Fiala, Rob Goldberg, & Shaun Nichols.
- F 11/20: Additional reading on the experimental philosophy of consciousness.
- M 11/23: Wrap-up Discussion.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE

- W 11/25: Wrap-up Discussion.
APA LITERATURE REVIEW DUE
- F 11/27: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holiday)
- M 11/30: TBA*
- W 12/2: TBA*
- F 12/4: TBA*
- M 12/7: TBA*
- W 12/9: TBA*
- S 12/12 Final Exam, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
RESEARCH PAPER DUE

*The readings to be covered during the last two weeks will be determined by the instructor on the basis of the topics students have chosen to work on for their final papers.