Experimental Philosophy. Current Issues - Autumn 2015

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Course Description This course introduces you to experimental philosophy (aka X-Phi), an exciting field of research at the intersection of philosophy and cognitive science. The course will examine whether and how experimental techniques can be used to address philosophical questions and advance debates in epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of language, ethics, and other fields in philosophy. You will have the opportunity to discuss some important issues in the methodology of philosophy, to examine prominent work in experimental philosophy, and to think about ways in which experimental techniques might help you address philosophical problems.

Background You will significantly benefit from having the following background: (1) A previous philosophy course with a substantial component in epistemology. (2) A previous philosophy course with a substantial component in ethics. (3) At least one course in psychology or a related human science.

Learning Goals Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able:
1) To summarize, explain and compare (using specific examples) the central theories and arguments in the field of contemporary experimental philosophy, in particular about the nature and role of intuition in epistemology and other fields in philosophy.
2) To evaluate the normative implications of empirical findings for problems in philosophy.
3) To bring together knowledge from different sources in philosophy and cognitive science to critically unravel some topic of research in experimental philosophy.
4) To formulate a simple hypothesis about some philosophical issue that could be tested.

Methods of assessment There are three methods of assessment.

Readings and Participation. This is a seminar-based course. You are expected to complete the assigned readings before class, to bring the texts under discussion to class, and to be prepared to critically discuss them.

Project proposal. You will write a project proposal on an experimental study that bears philosophical significance. The main goals are to have you think through an interesting question, and to figure out an experimental design that may help you address that question. Detailed guidance will be given during class.

Essays. You will write two essays of no more than 2,000 words. The essays will be written as a critical reply to any of the papers assigned in this course.

Final mark/Weight of assessment components
- Participation (15%).
- Project proposal (25%).
- Two short essays (30% each).

Readings There is one textbook you are required to have:

We shall also work on articles, and excerpts from books. All readings can be found through the Tilburg University WorldCat catalogue: URL: https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/about/library/wcl/

Other resources you may want to consult include:
- X-phi blog http://philosophycommons.typepad.com/xphi/
Schedule

Class I. 31-08
Topic: What is X-Φ?
Detailed practical information about the course will be provided, and answers to the question “What’s the point of experimental philosophy?” will be explored.

Required readings: Alexander, Introduction.


Class II. 7-09
Topic: The value of thought experiment
The role and nature of thought experiment will be elucidated in the light of past and current philosophical practice.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 1 from page 11 to page 18.


Suggested readings

Class III. 14-09
Topic: The value of intuition
The role and nature of intuition will be elucidated in the light of current philosophical practice.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 1. Read from page 18 to page 27.
Read either of these two papers:


Suggested readings

Class IV. 21-09
Topic: Freedom and moral responsibility.
What intuition tells us about freedom and moral responsibility will be examined.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 2. Read from page 28 to page 36.


Suggested readings:

Class V. 28-09
Topic: Knowing and intuiting
What intuition tells us about knowledge ascription will be examined.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 2. Read from page 36 to page 49.


Suggested readings:

Class VI. 5-10
Topic: Intuiting conscious minds
How intuition can tell us anything at all about ourselves and the world around us.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 3. Read from page 50 to page 57.


Suggested readings:

Class VII. 12-10
Topic: Concepts of intentional action
How intuition can tell us anything at all about our concepts of intentionality.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 3. Read from page 57 to page 69.
Read both articles:

Suggested readings:
First essay due: 13-10 h:12,30pm. Put a hard copy of your essay (with you anr on it) in Matteo’s pigeonhole (Dante bd 1st floor).

Class VIII. 19-10
Topic: Feedback on your essays & detailed guidance for your project proposal.

Class IX 2-11
Topic: Philosophical methodology and intuition. The case of semantics
The question “Are intuitions reliable guides to truth?” will be addressed in the light of semantic intuitions across cultures.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 3. Read from page 70 to page 81.


Suggested readings:

Class X. 9-11
Topic: Philosophical methodology and intuition.
The question “Are intuitions reliable guides to truth?” will be continued to be addressed.

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 3. Read from page 82 to page 88.

Read either of these two articles:

Suggested readings:

Class XI. 16-11
Topic: Whither X-Phi? On philosophical expertise
The objection will be addressed “Experimental philosophy is irrelevant because it is philosophers’ judgements that matter.”

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 4. Read from page 89 to page 100.


Suggested readings:

Class XII. 23-11
Topic: Whither X-Phi? On whether intuitions matter at all
The objection will be addressed “Experimental philosophy is irrelevant because intuitions are philosophically irrelevant.”

Required readings: Alexander, Chapter 4. Read from page 100 to page 108.

Suggested readings:

Class XIII. 30-11
**Topic: Experimental philosophy beyond surveys and intuitions.**
Trends in experimental philosophy will be scouted beyond the use of surveys and a focus on intuition.

Required readings: Alexander, Epilogue.
Read either of these two articles:

Suggested readings:

* Project proposal due: 2-12 h.12,30pm.
Put a hard copy of your proposal in Matteo’s pigeonhole (Dante bd 1st floor).

Class XIV 7-12
**Topic:** The terrain we have covered will be surveyed, and outstanding issues discussed.

* Second essay due 7-01 h.12,30pm.
Put a hard copy of your essay (with your anr on it) in Matteo’s pigeonhole (Dante bd 1st floor).
**IF** you cannot make it on campus, then email your essay to Matteo
(as object of your email write: “XPhi Second essay”)

## Participation in class (15% of the final grade)

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<tr>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
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<th>Application</th>
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<th>Evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
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Project proposal (25% of the final grade)

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Essays (30% x 2 of the final mark),

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