

# Introduction to the Experimental Philosophy of Responsibility

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Over the last three decades, a new approach to philosophical problems has gained much attention. Experimental philosophers address philosophical questions such as “What is causation”, “What does it mean to be morally good” or “What does it mean to know something” with the help of empirical research methods from psychology, sociology, anthropology, and related disciplines. This seminar provides an introduction to the methods of experimental philosophy. During the course, we will discuss how experiments can be used to gain insights into philosophical problems. We will cover the basics of experimental design and the analysis and interpretation of empirical data.

The rapidly growing body of literature on responsibility will provide the framework for this seminar. The term “responsibility” is extremely vague and used in quite different ways. In particular, it can be used to determine legal accountability (when we say “We should hold him responsible for his crimes”), to pick out someone or something as the cause of an event (“The weather was responsible for the tube delays this morning”), or to describe an agent’s blameworthiness (“She is responsible for hurting his feelings”). Recent empirical research has shown that the three kinds of responsibility just mentioned often interact in interesting and unexpected ways. In this seminar we will read and discuss this research. In addition, students will be given a chance to develop their own experiments and conduct empirical research on the topic.