

**Boise State University**  
**ScholarWorks**

---

College of Arts and Sciences Presentations

2014 Undergraduate Research and Scholarship  
Conference

---

4-21-2014

# Experimental Philosophy--An Emerging Discipline

Lauren Stevens

*College of Arts and Sciences, Boise State University*

Kyle Brasil

*College of Arts and Sciences, Boise State University*

Travis Bundy

*College of Arts and Sciences, Boise State University*

Sara Couture

*College of Arts and Sciences, Boise State University*

Kim Hayes

*College of Arts and Sciences, Boise State University*

*See next page for additional authors*

---

---

**Authors**

Lauren Stevens, Kyle Brasil, Travis Bundy, Sara Couture, Kim Hayes, Drew Lindgren, Amanda Lynch, Jared Talley, Patrick Beach, Stephen Crowley, and Kimberly McAdams



# Experimenting With Experimental Philosophy: X-Phi at Boise State University

Lauren Stevens; Kyle Brasil; Travis Bundy; Sara Couture; Kim Hayes; Drew Lindgren; Amanda Lynch;  
Jared Talley; Patrick Beach; Stephen Crowley; Kimberly McAdams

## ROADMAP:

*Left Panel: Brief Overview*

*Center Panel: Kinds of X-Phi*

*Right Panel: Timeline of Events For Boise State's X-Phi Team*

*Bottom Panel: Meet the Team*

## X-PHI AS BURNING THE ARMCHAIR

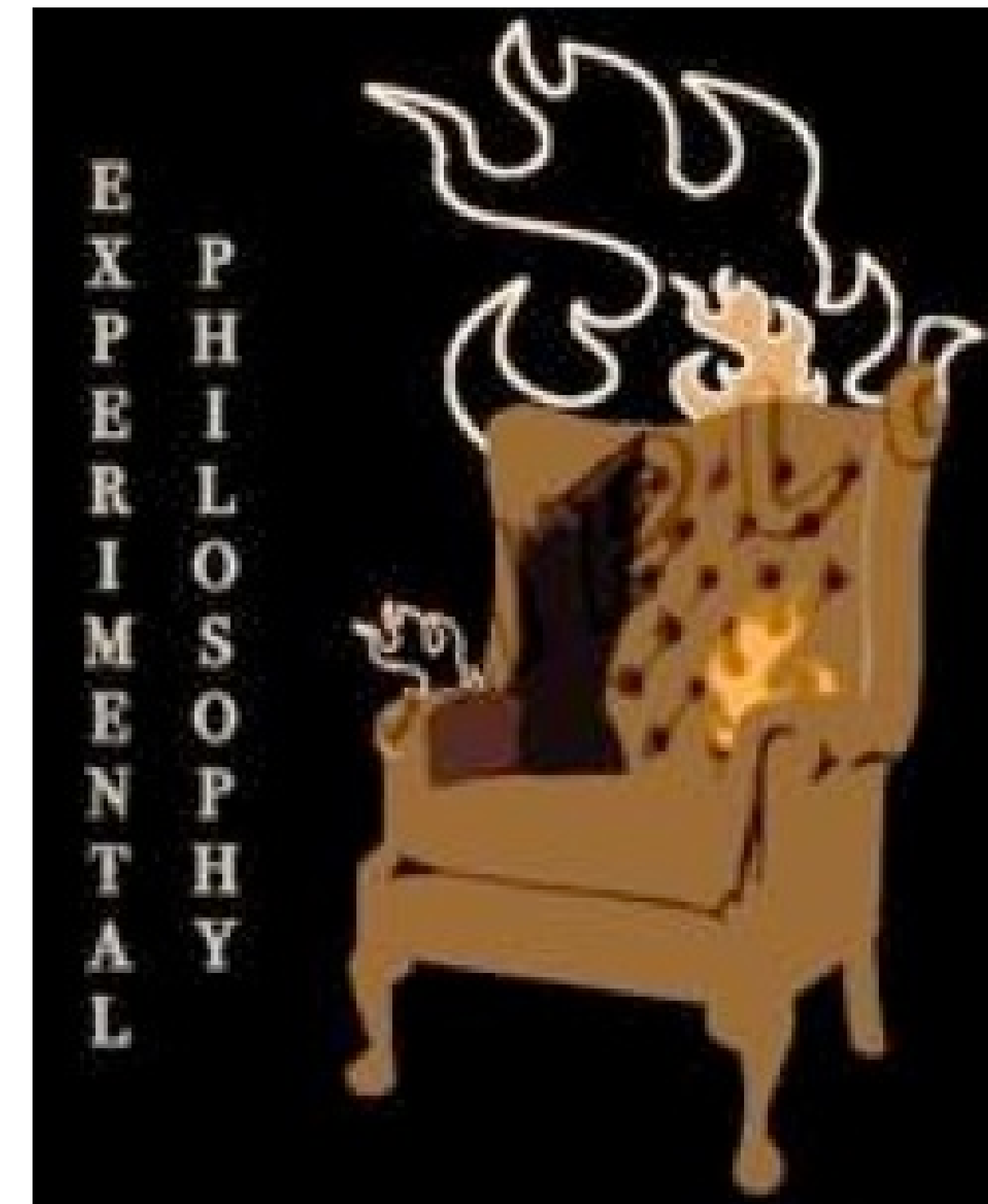
•NOT SO FAST! --don't burn the armchairs

•Replace the burning armchair with

•The extended armchair (positive x-phi)

•The constrained armchair (negative x-phi)

•The examined armchair (psy-phi)



## POSITIVE X-PHI:

~ Mainly lexicography--Studies patterns in the application of philosophically important concepts potentially extends parts of armchair philosophy

~ Much conceptual analysis (traditional philosophy) is dangerously close to lexicography

~it tells one about the meaning of our words and the content of our concepts

~these conclusions are of interest to the philosopher of language, but only tenuously of interest to others

## NEGATIVE X-PHI

~ Mainly critical

~ Studies disagreement and variation in philosophically important intuitions and judgments

~ potentially undermines traditional armchair philosophy

## PSY-PHI

~Psychological Program: Mainly higher-order

~the psychological program studies the cognitive processes involved in philosophical judgment

~ potentially sheds light on parts of armchair philosophy

## BOISE STATE X-PHI

• We're primarily working with a positive program, but are mixing with (i.e. utilizing) the psychological program.

## CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF BOISE STATE'S X-PHI GROUP:

• Dr. Patrick Beach went to an NEH Conference in the Summer 2012, where he received the inspiration to bring X-Phi to the Boise State campus

• Dr. Stephen Crowley and Jared Talley On board to begin working with the concept of moral luck as a warm-up/practice topic

• Summer 2013, evaluated experiments that had been run on honesty of people (e.g. Hartshorne and May (1928))

• Developed the question: do the subjects in the study view their actions in the same way the experimenters are interpreting their actions (e.g. interpreting the action of taking money left on a desk as "stealing" or "finder's keepers")

• Led to attempting to locate "honesty" in the literature (both psychology and philosophy)—but it was curiously absent. There has not been a thorough analysis what honesty is, i.e. the concept of honesty.

• Fall 2013, gathered Travis Bundy and Lauren Stevens; began designing questions to articulate a concept of honesty

• Late Fall 2013, brought the members of the Psychology Department on board: Dr. Kimberly McAdams, Sara Couture, Kimberly Hayes; as well as gathered a few more philosophy students: Drew Lindgren, Kyle Brasil, and Trevor Adams

• Today, we are analyzing data than has been gathered and working towards identifying the folk theory of honesty

## INTRODUCTION

• A newly emerging field in Philosophy is called "Experimental Philosophy—"X-Phi" for short. It was identified as it's own area of Philosophical study, under the name Experimental Philosophy, in approximately 2001.

• Notable work has already been completed and published on concepts like "know-how", intentional action, and moral correctness, just to name a few. These results are called "folk theories" to distinguish them from preexisting theories on the same topic

• Boise State's X-Phi group operates via gathering data from "everyday" people, sorting and statistically analyzing the data, then reviewing the trends identified in people's intuitions about the concept of honesty—we are hoping to identify a strong folk theory of honesty.

## The Team:



Philosophy major Jared Talley: "I love science fiction and I love backpacking. Oh, and my dog...and beer. That may be all."

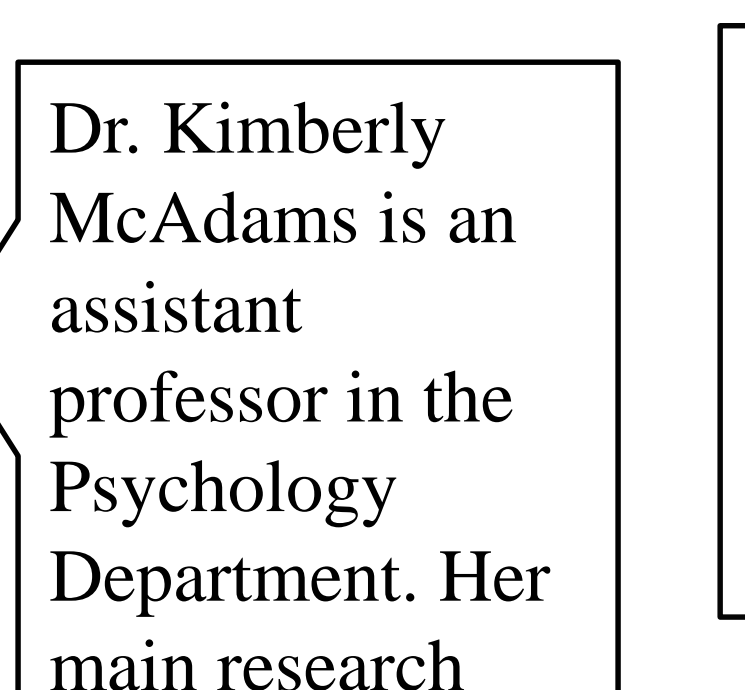


Kyle M. Brasil (left): "I am a Psychology and Philosophy major. My research interests are wide and varying, but I am currently researching masculinity, trauma and prosocial tendencies, masculinity and attitudes towards counseling, and honesty."

Philosophy professor Dr. Stephen Crowley is, in fact, a numbat. This has not negatively impacted our project.



Dr. Patrick Beach: "I have been an adjunct professor in the Philosophy Department off and on since 1987. My research focuses on moral luck, metaphysics, and experimental philosophy. I am a fourth-degree black belt in Shao-lin Kung Fu."



Dr. Kimberly McAdams is an assistant professor in the Psychology Department. Her main research area involves positive psychology.



Psychology student, Kimberly Hayes: "It has been a pleasure working on this research."



Travis Bundy: "I am majoring in both philosophy and physics, I study philosophy of physics, but my primary interest in philosophy is in demonstrating the existence Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, and how experiments may be designed that make that demonstration."



Lauren Stevens: "I am majoring in Philosophy because Boise State doesn't offer a degree in Underwater Basket Weaving; and I still don't know why—it's an invaluable skill and a respectable profession."



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Dr. Susan Martin in the College of Education for allowing our group to consult her on construction of our coding book.; to Boise State University; to Boise State's X-Phi group for their patience with the creator of this poster; and to Geoff Schroeder for printing this poster. Correspondence concerning the content of this poster should be addressed to Lauren Stevens(e-mail: laurenstevens@u.boisestate.edu).

## PLEASE NOTE:

Not Pictured: Sara Couture, Amanda Lynch, and Trevor Adams.

Author List: First listed author is the creator of the poster; afterwards, the names are listed in alphabetical order, students before faculty.

## REFERENCES

[1] Chalmer, David. consc.net/papers/xphi.ppt

[2] <http://www.unc.edu/~knobe/Sosa.pdf>

