

# Department of Philosophy Colloquium Series

Thursday  
November 11,  
2021  
4:00 p.m.

*in-person:*  
Kingston Hall  
Room 201

*or on Zoom*  
(details below)

**Everyone  
Welcome!**



## **Moral responsibility and public health risks in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic**



### **Jessica Nihlén Fahlquist (Queen's & Uppsala)**

Philosophers have argued that ethical theories are inadequate in managing problems concerning risks, as opposed to harm. Whereas ethical theories primarily focus on actions where the consequences are given, when confronted with problems of risk we lack that information. Instead, we are faced with uncertainty. A better way to approach such problems is through a conceptual-normative analysis of moral responsibility. The concepts are interrelated, as discussions of risk commonly entail questions concerning control and responsibility. However, the complexity and nuances of the concept of moral responsibility are not always acknowledged. The 2020/2021 Coronavirus pandemic is an example of the relevance of responsibility in relation to problems of public health. The risks have primarily been communicated in terms of science and numbers, but give rise to a number of ethical questions. In my paper, I focus on the following questions. First, how should responsibility of governments and individuals be understood? Second, how should responsibility for the Coronavirus pandemic be distributed? These questions are discussed against the background of a framework of moral responsibility, where the conceptual nuances are clarified.

Please note that all in-person attendees must conform to the Queen's vaccine policy:

<https://www.queensu.ca/safereturn/update-queens-mandatory-covid-19-vaccination-requirements>

For those who cannot join us in person, Zoom details will be distributed Thursday morning.  
If you are not on our colloquium mailing list, please contact us at [philug@queensu.ca](mailto:philug@queensu.ca) to receive updates.