

# Colloquia 2021

MARCH 26 | 3-5 PM

## Zoë Johnson King, "Reluctant Heroes"

**Abstract:** This talk is about essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The talk is Janus-faced: I use some philosophical ideas to explicate some empirical phenomena, and I then use some empirical phenomena to challenge some philosophical ideas. I start by summarizing the empirical phenomena that are my focus: the praise and gratitude lavished on essential workers during the first few months of the pandemic, the mixed reception with which this praise and gratitude was met, and some data about the hazardous surrounding circumstances that essential workers face. I then attempt to explain the resistance displayed by many essential workers to their being hailed as heroes, applauded in public rituals, and so on, using the concepts of supererogation and volitional necessity to reconstruct and elaborate on criticisms that essential workers themselves have leveled against this rhetoric. Finally, I use essential workers' reports of their attitudes toward their work during the pandemic to challenge two philosophical dogmas about the nature of virtuous motivation: that a truly virtuous person does not need to overcome contrary inclinations to get herself to act well, and that there is something wrong with being motivated to promote others' welfare by an explicit sense of the moral importance of your doing so.

**RSVP:** for Zoom meeting details, please e-mail Jillian, at: [phil.ugradengagement@ubc.ca](mailto:phil.ugradengagement@ubc.ca).

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