



Universität
Zürich^{UZH}

Rechtswissenschaftliche Fakultät
Lehrstuhl für Strafrecht und
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Seminar
Spring Semester 2027
Cambridge / UK

Philosophy of Criminal Law

Seminar Description

The seminar examines the fundamental questions underlying the criminal law: Why do we criminalise certain forms of behaviour? What makes conduct sufficiently wrongful to justify criminal liability? When should an individual be held responsible for wrongdoing? And why, and under what conditions, may the state punish?

Rather than concentrating on the application of existing criminal-law rules, the seminar approaches criminal law from a philosophical and theoretical perspective, engaging with questions of harm, morality, autonomy, paternalism, responsibility, culpability, retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation and the legitimacy of state punishment.

These fundamental theories will be examined through controversial and contemporary examples of criminalisation, with the aim of developing new perspectives on the purposes, boundaries and legitimacy of criminal law.

Number of Participants and Registration

Registration takes place via the faculty's own registration tool. The number of participants is **limited to 10 people** (5 Bachelor and 5 Master students).

Assessment

The assessment consists **of a written paper** and active participation in the block seminar. Participation in the block seminar is mandatory.

The paper has a scope of:

- Bachelor: Max. 22'000 characters (incl. spaces, excl. footnotes and bibliography)
- Master: Max. 31'000 characters (incl. spaces, excl. footnotes and bibliography)

Submission Deadline

The submission deadline for Bachelor students is **April 30, 2027, at 11:59 PM**. Master students can submit their paper by individual agreement. However, for the paper to be credited in FS27, submission must occur no later than **June 4, 2027, at 11:59 PM**.

Language and Formalities

The block seminar will be held in English. Accordingly, the paper must also be written in English. For formalities, the [guidelines of Prof. Dr. iur. Marc Thommen's chair](#) apply.

Preliminary Meeting

A mandatory preliminary meeting will take place on **December 4, 2026, 14:00-15:45** in KOL-F-123.

Travel and Accommodation

Travel to and from the venue as well as accommodation must be organized and financed individually by the seminar participants. The seminar begins on the morning of **March 15, 2027**, which is why arriving the day before is recommended

Contact Person

Yael Wild, BLaw (yael.wild@ius.uzh.ch)

List of Topics

The list of seminar topics will be published on the chair's website at the beginning of November. Please provide us with **three topic preferences** by email to yael.wild@ius.uzh.ch **no later than November 20** (including first and last name, matriculation number, Bachelor's or Master's thesis, and current semester).

Please note that the list consists of broad topics. Students are expected to develop their own research question and narrow down the topic independently. The list of topics serves as inspiration. Students are explicitly encouraged to submit their own topic proposals.

We look forward to your participation.

Marc Thommen

Sebastian Foster

Yael Wild