Messages From Our Dean and Chair

I have been the acting dean of the College this year, and in March, was named dean. As such, I have been unable to teach, but have been able to learn a great deal about what is going on in the College overall—especially the many good things. One of these is how many faculty, and students, outside of the department have interests in philosophy. They come from political science, communications, history, the natural sciences, and English—just to name a few areas.

One bit of news I can report is that the College is proposing to host the International Merleau-Ponty Circle in September 2013. We hope that this proposal will be successful. The College is also starting a Faculty Debate series. The first featured Dr. Miller and two other faculty members in a discussion entitled “Belief Today,” about religion in the public sphere. - James Swindal

I look forward to our continuing as a very vibrant undergraduate and graduate Philosophy Department. We seek greater links with the rest of the College and University, with alumni, and with the life of philosophy. - Ron Polansky

Department News

Daniel Selcer has been serving as interim Director of Graduate Studies, replacing Ron Polansky while he serves as interim Chair. Dan has recently spoken on early modern materialism at the University of Pittsburgh, on the importance of history for philosophy at Slippery Rock University, on Spinoza’s account of individualism at the University of Guelph, and on the idea of ‘operative science’ in Bacon and Spinoza at Simon Fraser University. We are also pleased to announce that Dan was awarded the 2012 McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching for his fine classroom work.


Events

Jennifer Bates, with a grant from the NEH, hosted a conference on Hegel’s Logic on October 28, 2011. Panel attendees included: Dr. Jay Lampert (University of Guelph), Dr. John Russon (University of Guelph), Dr. David Morris (Concordia University), and Dr. Tom Rockmore.

On March 6, 2012, the department hosted a panel discussion on faith and society entitled Belief Today. Our Dr. Patrick Miller was among the panel speakers along with Fr. Elochukwu Uzukwu (Theology) and Dr. Bruce Ledewitz (Law) moderated by Alek Schrenk.

Silverman Phenomenology Center

This year’s symposium, April 19-20, was on Phenomenology and its Critics. The event explored how the work of philosophers such as Alain Badiou, Stanley Cavell, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault engages the phenomenological tradition. Speakers included Bruno Bosteels, Claire Colebrook, Leonardi Lawlor, and Paola Marrati.

Jeff McCurry, the director of the Center, taught a Basic Philosophical Questions course in the Fall of 2011 at the Allegheny County Jail as part of the Judicium Learning Community. Plans are underway to offer philosophy courses every semester at the jail.

Ron Polansky and Chelsea Harry received a Faculty Development Grant for 2013 to develop a section of Basic Philosophical Questions that incorporates a spring break trip to Magna Grecia in Italy. This is the first time the philosophy department has incorporated study abroad in the curriculum.

The department developed a curriculum that has been taught to juniors in Charter High School. Duquesne undergraduate freshmen assisted.
Kelly Arenson presented a paper entitled “Plotinus and Psychurgy on the Faculty of Attention” at the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy meeting in October. In August she presented a paper entitled “Augustine’s Defense and Redemption of the Body” at the 16th International Patristics Conference at Oxford University. In addition, she received a Duquesne Student/Faculty Research Grant to pursue the topic of free will and determinism with junior philosophy major Colin Staggs-Reeke.

Jennifer Bates received a book contract for her upcoming edited volume: Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy, with State University of New York Press. (Contributors include Edward S. Casey, Andrew Cotterello, Bernhard Freyberg, Harry S. Harris, Agnes Heller, David F. Hinkins, James A. Knapp, Paul A. Kottman, Casey, Andrew Cutrofello, Bernard Freydberg, Harry S. Harris, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania.


Patrick Miller was promoted to Associate Professor. His “Love’s Ladder’s God” appears on The Immanent Frame, a blog sponsored by the Social Science Research Council. This talk can be accessed at http://blogs.serc.org/2012/04/05/loves-ladders-god.


Tom Rockmore published his latest monograph, Before and After 9/11: A Phenomenological Examination of Globalization, Terror, and History, with Continuum Press in April.

Lanee Rodeymeyer presented her paper: “Similar (but Different) and Different (but Similar): The Possibility for Intercultural Others in Hussein’s Fifth Cartesian Meditation,” at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan. She was invited to speak at the “Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine” conference at Uppsala University where she presented her paper “Feminism, Phenomenology, and Hormones,” which has been submitted for publication in an anthology on Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine.

Joan Thompson, administrative assistant, was awarded the 2012 McNair College and Graduate School Faculty Excellence in Scholarship Award.

George Yancey was awarded the 2012 McNair College and Graduate School Faculty Excellence in Scholarship Award.

In February we were visited by Professor Paula Palmieri, of the History and Philosophy of Science program at the University of Pittsburgh, who delivered “Ethics and Learning: A Deweyan Approach.”

In early March we hosted Dr. Markus Gabriel, holder of the Chair in Epistemology and Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the University of Bonn. In addition to organizing a well-attended seminar for the graduate students, Gabriel spoke on “The Meaning of Existence and the Contingency of Sense.”

On March 30, we hosted our final event of the year featuring Professor Dorothea Olkowski of the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs (Ph.D. from Duquesne, 1986). She spoke on “Postmodern Philosophy and the Scientific Turn.”
Bernie Freydberg. The production process begins at SUNY Press for my seventh book, *David Hume: Platonic Philosopher, Continental Philosopher*. It is my most original. Also, I have just been invited to be a plenary speaker for the October Meeting of the Pacific Association for Continental Thought. My topic is “From the Annals of Ancient Jurisprudence regarding the Political Animal: A Philosophical Inquiry”; the trial in question occurs in Aristophanes’ *Wasps*, where two dogs present their opposing cases regarding a hunk of Sicilian cheese. A paper of mine has appeared in *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, titled “Ihr Hinweis auf Aristophanes Clouds Wichtige Fragen Einschließt, die Ich Hätte Sehen Sollen: Gadamer and the Question of Comedy.”

During the first week of May 2011, I gave two lectures at Istanbul University. The first, “Radically Rethinking Hume,” was presented to the Philosophy Department the second, “Socrates’ eros in the Symposium: Ti legei”, was presented to the philology department. Toward the end of March, I presented another paper on *Wasps*, this time at a Classics Conference with the theme *Nostos* (Homecoming), titled “Philolcon’s Interrupted Odyssean Homecoming: A View from Aristophanes’ Comedy.” It was an amazing conference featuring scholars from the best schools, including ours! I am delighted to report that for our 8:30 AM Saturday session, it was standing room only, and I’m glad no one called the fire marshal.

This summer, I have been invited to give a lecture at Universität Freiburg for the annual Hermeneutic Conference. It is titled “Wirkungsgeschichte vis à vis Ancient Mathematics.”

The Philosophy Department hosted its 50th Anniversary as a Ph.D.-granting department. The first phase, on September 9, featured a documentary film on Heidegger by Jeffrey Van Davis, entitled *Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten* (Only A God Can Save Us). Both Tom Rockmore and Ted Kisiel appear in the film.

Our AFRICAN BOOK PROJECT was immensely successful last year. We were able to send for 12 boxes of donated textbooks for African libraries.