

# The Lantern

UNIVERSITY of  
West Georgia

Department of Philosophy Newsletter for Students

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## Philosophy Degree is Valuable

Whenever I bring up the possibility of majoring in philosophy in a class, the first question is always: “What can you do with a philosophy degree?” I will save some of the larger (philosophical) issues behind this question for below. One has to work to eat and eat to live, so the question is not inappropriate.

Unfortunately, the true answer, “Just about anything” is about as helpful as the false answer, “Nothing.” Let’s

a person is three times more likely to be attracted to someone reading Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* than someone reading *Principles of Macro-economics*.

see if we can specify a bit. While it is true that philosophy majors do not master

specific skills like reading a spread sheet or actuarial table, it is not true that they develop no marketable skills. The ability to analyze a problem, to critically evaluate various solutions to that problem, to reach your own decision about the course of action and then to argue your position so that others will follow, are abilities that are prized in management positions in all major companies. Add to this a limp prose style and you should have companies beating down your door to hire you.

Or not. There is no denying that it is a competitive world out there and best people do not always get the best positions. Succeeding with a degree in philosophy will also depend on your initiative, drive, and persistence. But these are precisely the qualities that one develops by majoring in philosophy. No one can do your thinking for you—it is up to you. In philosophy your teacher is your partner, not your boss, and so you need initiative and drive to major in

it. Philosophical texts are tough; they do not render their favors lightly. One has to persistently read and reread to enjoy their delights. Looked at in this way I think that majoring in philosophy is one of the best ways to prepare for the “real” world.

Another aspect of majoring in philosophy that is often overlooked is that of becoming a chick-magnet or man-killer, depending on your preference. It is well-known fact, documented by many scientific studies that upon entering a room a person is three times more likely to be attracted to someone reading Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* than someone reading *Principles of Macro-economics*. The gap closes a bit if the non-philosophical book has pictures. Ask yourself what you look for in a date. Isn’t profound thought at the top of list?

Finally, there is the very real issue of whether the question is properly put or not. What can you “do” with a philosophy degree? Hard to say. But asking questions about who we are, why we are here, what we ought to do, what we can hope for, these questions have an inherent nobility and worth in them.

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## IN MEMORIAM: RACHEL UZMANN January 24, 1985 – August 11, 2005

On Thursday, August 11, 2005 Rachel Uzmann was killed in an automobile accident on her way home to Savannah after having attended her grandmother's funeral. Rachel was a philosophy major here at West Georgia. Her fellow students and the faculty of the program will dearly miss her. Rachel's Uncle wrote the following about her.

Rachel had been very happy during the last few months and seemed to be finding a direction for her life. She finished her second year at the University of West Georgia in the spring where she discovered "Philosophy" and thought it may play a part in her life. She waitressed this summer at Ozzi's near the Isle of Hope while she contemplated her future.

Rachel was a free spirit. She was proud of her independence and she wanted to sample life's options in search of her own path. Rachel was boundless energy that flashed into our lives, touched our hearts, and flashed out again. Her gifts were a smile that overtook her whole face and a friendship she offered to everyone. When your sense of loss and grief become overwhelming, Rachel's mother, Lauran, her father, Mark, and her sister, Alison, ask you to remember that her heart beats on in the body of a 19-year-old Pennsylvania girl. It was one of her final gifts.

Mindy Lindstrom, a fellow student has this tribute to make.

Some philosophers assert that words, if only sometimes, are not able to get at the realness of a thing. One philosophical exploration in particular seems to be beyond our traditional manner of thinking about things. Few words have the capacity to

get at the only thing we cannot experience, which is Death.

"She didn't have a care in the world, but she had all of them."

These are the words expressed by a friend when asked to share an experience with Rachel. It seems to state very well an impression that those who knew her would certainly agree with. Rachel's obituary explained how she discovered philosophy in her life as it grew to be quite full in her experiences. She was curious and eager to invite others to be curious alongside her. She had thoughtful questions as well as an active reflection of her beliefs. Some would use the word "groovy" to describe her, but Rachel carried an energy that seemed more free than merely the flowing clothes she wore.

She believed in the power of *being with*, as she had plans of involvement in the Peace



Rachel was boundless energy that flashed into our lives, touched our hearts, and flashed out again.

Corps. To Rachel, there seemed to be a flow, a basic energy that goes throughout humans, nature, all of life and all of death. Rachel and I talked about death, as she may have with other friends as well. She was a growing philosopher seeking wisdom through sharing ideas and questions with others as well as embracing experiences of solitude and self-motivation. She was beautiful, not only in the body she wonderfully carried, but in an energy not seen, only experienced. She will be missed.

Memorials honoring Rachel's life can be sent to the Rachel Uzmann Scholarship Fund, c/o Savannah Bank, 400 Mall Blvd., Savannah, Georgia 31406.

## Spring 2006 Course Descriptions

**Philosophy 2100-01 Introduction to Philosophy**  
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. (HUM 207)

**Dr. Janet Donohoe**

*Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.*

This course takes an historical look at major philosophical questions through the primary texts of such important philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche and Camus. Students are exposed to questions of what it means to be a human being, how to live the good life, what we can know, why we are here, whether there is a God, why there is evil in the world, and whether anything at all has meaning. Through the texts we learn not only the way that philosophers attempt to address these questions, but we also learn what it means to engage in philosophical thought and how the process of thinking philosophically can change our understanding of our own existence.

**Philosophy 2100-02 Introduction to Philosophy**  
TR 12:30-1:45 p.m. (Bonner A)

**Staff**

*Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.*

An historically framed introduction to philosophy, highlighting major developments that have defined Western philosophical inquiry.

**Philosophy 2110-01 Critical Thinking**  
MWF 8:00-8:50 a.m. (HUM 205)

**Ms. Meghan Sweeney**

*Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.*

This course addresses the basics of how to think critically and how to evaluate arguments. By looking at the fundamentals of logic, and addressing contemporary cultural debates, we will focus on how to argue well and how to identify the fallacies of weak arguments.

**Philosophy 2110-02 Critical Thinking**  
MWF 9:00-9:50 a.m. (HUM 205)

**Ms. Meghan Sweeney**

*Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.*

Same as above.

**Philosophy 2110-03 Critical Thinking**  
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. (HUM 205)

**Ms. Meghan Sweeney**

*Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.*

Same as above.

**Philosophy 2120-25H Introduction to Ethics**  
TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. (TLC 2237)

**Dr. Robert Lane**

To some extent we all agree about what actions are right and wrong; for example, we all agree that murder is wrong and that helping those less fortunate than us is right. But there are many moral questions about which people disagree: are euthanasia, abortion and human cloning immoral? what about causing non-human animals pain? is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from malnutrition? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We'll also be dealing with more theoretical questions, such as: where does morality come from?; what makes an ethical argument good or bad?; and what general rules or principles ought we to live by? We will be paying special attention to the issue of morality in our post-Darwinian society: if humanity evolved from other animal species, what does this imply about human dignity and morality?

**Philosophy 2120-L2L & LXL Introduction to Ethics**  
TR 9:30-10:45 a.m. (HUM 312)

**Dr. Jeremiah Alberg**

This course attempts to accomplish two things. First, it will provide an overview of the history of ethical thought by

examining the theories of Aristotle, Kant, and Mill. Secondly, it gives one ethical system from which it views these other theories. This system attempts to incorporate both the development of the individual that Aristotle emphasized and the notion of duty from Kant. There are also discussions of responsibility and forgiveness.

**Philosophy 2130-01 Introduction to Religion**  
**MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. (HUM 207)**

**Ms. Meghan Sweeney**

While studying various theories of religion, and what religion is and means today, this course will investigate and practice various methods and methodologies used in the academic study of religion.

**Philosophy 3110-01 Modern Philosophy**  
**TR 12:30-1:45 p.m. (PAFF 109)**

**Dr. Jeremiah Alberg**

This course continues the cycle of the history of philosophy from Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. We begin with the Scientific Revolution and then will study the primary texts of the rationalists – Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz – and the empiricists – Berkeley, Locke, Hume. We will then turn to German Idealism, studying Kant and Hegel. While looking at the epistemological questions that underpin much of the period, we will also pay attention to the varied attempts to answer the problem of evil.

**Philosophy 3160-01 Philosophy in Literature and Film**  
**MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. (HUM 205)**

**Dr. Janet Donohoe**

Philosophical ideas can present themselves in surprising places. Through analysis of literature and film we can begin to recognize philosophical themes in genres other than straightforward philosophical treatises. This semester this course will address the philosophical themes of knowledge and tradition in philosophical and literary texts as well as in film. We will attempt to grasp how authors understand the relation of tradition to what we know and how we know it. We ask these questions in an effort to come to a deeper understanding of ourselves as human beings and our own relationship to our traditions.

**Philosophy 3240-01 World Religions**  
**MWF 2:00-2:50 p.m. (HUM 205)**

**Ms. Meghan Sweeney**

This course undertakes a comparative study of major religious traditions, studying their particular cultural contexts, practices, and beliefs, as well their influences on other religious traditions and on the world.

**Philosophy 4120-01 Professional Ethics**  
**TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. (HUM 207)**

**Dr. Robert Lane**

This course examines ethical questions that can arise for individuals working in business, the legal professions, and the medical professions. With regard to business, we will examine issues such as corporate social responsibility, the meaning and value of work, employee rights and responsibilities, and diversity and discrimination in the workplace. With regard to the legal professions, we will examine the moral responsibilities of police officers, attorneys, prosecutors, judges, and corrections officers. With regard to medicine, we will consider issues such as moral obligations towards patients in permanent comas, physician-assisted dying, abortion, the moral status of embryos and stem-cells, and the use of human subjects in medical experimentation. To provide a general theoretical background for these questions, we will also examine ethical theories such as cultural relativism, utilitarianism, and Kantianism.

**Philosophy 4140-01 Existentialism**  
**MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. (HUM 205)**

**Dr. Janet Donohoe**

This course examines both atheist and religious existentialism through the texts of major existential thinkers such as Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, DeBeauvoir and Kierkegaard. Students are encouraged to think through the big questions existentialists raise about the meaning of human existence including whether there is any purpose for our existence, how we define ourselves, whether there are any reasons to be moral, and whether human existence is inherently meaningful. We will analyze theories in terms of the ramifications for the way we live our lives.



## Announcements

- Seniors must apply for graduation early in the semester before the semester during which you plan to graduate. The application deadline for spring '06 has already passed. Application deadline for graduating in summer '06 is January 27, 2006.
- Seniors remember that you need to complete your portfolio before graduating. Portfolio includes 2 letters of recommendation, a writing sample, and an intellectual autobiographical statement. Seniors must also fill out an anonymous exit evaluation of the philosophy program.
- First organizational meeting for the Meeting of the Minds will be very early second semester. If you are interested in participating this year, be sure to contact Dr. Donohoe via e-mail at [jdonohoe@westga.edu](mailto:jdonohoe@westga.edu) before the end of the fall semester.
- If you are interested in being considered for the Burdett and Shirley Wantland Scholarship in Religious Studies, or the West Georgia Philosophical Society Essay Prize, be sure to submit an application no later than February 17, 2006.

### Phi Sigma Tau: Georgia Iota Chapter to Induct New Members

UWG's chapter of Phi Sigma Tau, the National Honor Society in Philosophy, will induct new members this semester. Prospective members must have completed at least two philosophy classes, have a philosophy GPA of greater than 3.0, have an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher, and have finished at least 45 hours of coursework toward their degree. If you are interested in becoming a member of Phi Sigma Tau, please contact Dr. Lane at [rlane@westga.edu](mailto:rlane@westga.edu), or in his office in TLC 2247.

### Philosopher's Wisdom

“[Hu]mankind,  
which in Homer's time was an ob-  
ject of contemplation for the Olympian gods,  
now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached  
such a degree that it can experience its own destruction  
as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order.”

—Walter Benjamin  
“The Work of Art in the Age  
of Mechanical Reproduction”

### Interested in Philosophy?

#### Join the West Georgia Philosophical Society

Interested in Philosophy?

Enjoy open discussions on every imaginable topic? Then you should join The Philosophical Society. Reincarnated in the fall of 2003, the society is now a registered student organization and meets every other week to discuss everything philosophical. Meetings involve discussions, paper presentations, community service projects, movie nights, and the occasional night out. Previous discussion topics have ranged from “Morality” to “Just War Theory” to “whether our existence is absurd”. Members of the society have also been involved in canned food drives, bake sales, and trivia nights at local restaurants. All students, regardless of their background or experience are invited to join. This semester meetings will be held every other Wednesday at 3:30 pm in TLC 1204. For more information, check out the philosophy bulletin board outside TLC 2254 or the Society's website at [www.westga.edu/~philsoc](http://www.westga.edu/~philsoc). If you have any questions, contact the society at [philsoc@westga.edu](mailto:philsoc@westga.edu) or Dr. Lane at [rlane@westga.edu](mailto:rlane@westga.edu).

## Undergraduate Philosophy Conferences

Presenting a paper at an undergraduate philosophy conference is a great thing to do for the experience of speaking in public, sharing your ideas with other philosophy students, getting feedback from philosophy students who probably have a different perspective on your theme, and having the opportunity to be part of the larger community of philosophy scholars. It is also something that looks good on your resume. So, if you have a paper that you are proud of, you should consider submitting it. Or, if you are preparing term papers for this semester, think about writing something that you could submit. Remember to check the philosophy program web site for up-to-date information on upcoming conferences.

Upcoming undergraduate philosophy conferences:

February 24-25, 2006

Midsouth Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

University of Memphis

Papers should be no more than 3000 words.

Deadline for submissions is January 14, 2006.

For more information go to [www.lclark.edu/~midsouth/MPC.html#undergrad](http://www.lclark.edu/~midsouth/MPC.html#undergrad)

April 2006

Southern Appalachian Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

University of North Carolina Asheville

Papers should be approximately 10 pages. 15-20 minutes reading time

Deadline for submissions is February 13, 2006.

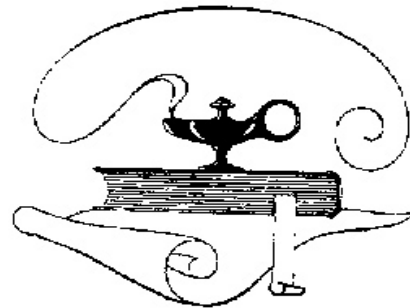
For more information go to [www.unca.edu/philosophy/ugradphconf/callforpapers.html](http://www.unca.edu/philosophy/ugradphconf/callforpapers.html)

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As humans, we need to think about these questions. Philosophy gives us the tools to do that. Majoring in Philosophy gives you a community with which to do it. Not a bad thing, that.

—Dr. Jay Alberg  
Director of Philosophy Program



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*Please direct any questions or comments about this newsletter to Dr. Janet Donohoe, 678-839-4743.*