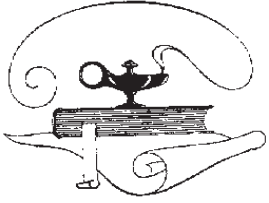


The Lantern



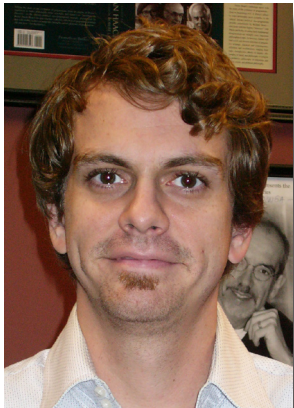
Department of Philosophy Newsletter for Students

Volume 8, Number 1

November 2006

Introduction of Mark Tietjen

My wife Amy and I recently arrived in Carrollton from Waco, Texas, where I completed my Ph.D. in philosophy at Baylor University. My doctoral dissertation was entitled “Kierkegaard’s Practice of Edification: Indirect Communication, the Virtues, and Christianity,” and the title provides insight into my scholarly interests. Those interests include Kierkegaard, philosophy of education, virtue thought (both ethics and epistemology), and philosophy of religion (and/or philosophical theology).



Currently I am involved in two writing projects—a presentation I will give at Emory in the area of philosophy of education and an article I will submit to a Kierkegaard commentary about

Kierkegaard and the concept of sagacity in his writing. You may wonder why one might find this particular concept interesting. Kierkegaard understood the notion of *klogskab*, sagacity or shrewdness or ‘calculated-ness,’ as a vice, yet for many of his contemporaries—and for some ancients with whom Kierkegaard was quite sympathetic—it was a virtue. In analyzing this concept in Kierkegaard’s writings I hope to make sense of this tension and to illuminate our understanding of his (Socratic) philosophical activity.

Besides these papers, I am beginning work on a project about reasons people have for theism, or belief in God. I find this topic fascinating especially because we tend to approach this question very narrowly, either with some psychological reduction in

mind, or by speaking about a ‘variety of religious experiences.’ My contention is that there are many, many reasons people believe in God, and while these reasons vary in strength, one may grasp better why theists are theists if the complexity of reasons for theism is made clear.

Prior to my time at Baylor I earned a Master of Divinity degree and a Master of Theology degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. I completed undergraduate studies at Palm Beach Atlantic University where I studied finance and Russian studies, an odd pairing for sure!

Finally, let me say that I am very enthusiastic about being a part of the new religion track and the philosophy program in general. I think the best place to study religion is in a philosophical setting, and I am pleased to have a foot in both places. Although it is small by some standards, the philosophy program and its faculty have many different strengths and can allow majors to study a wide variety of philosophical subjects. I am honored to join this faculty and program, and I look forward to opportunities to consider some of the most important questions of life with you.

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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. The Society is a registered student organization that meets every other week for lively discussions of philosophical topics. So far this year the discussion topics have ranged from the problem of evil (if God is all-knowing, -powerful, and -good, why do innocent beings suffer?), to the apparent incompatibility between determinism and the belief in human free will, to the question whether man is naturally good or bad. 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. In fall 2006 meetings will be held every other Wednesday at 4:30 pm in TLC 1204. For more information, check out the philosophy bulletin board outside TLC 2254 or the Society's website at <http://www.westga.edu/~philsoc>, or contact Dr. Lane (rlane@westga.edu).

Focus on a student: Kristina Swim Philosophical Musings of a Post-Graduate

The most frequent question I entertain as a recent graduate of philosophy is "What are you planning to do with your degree?" An inevitable question naturally and the typical answer involves graduate school and writing the grand philosophical text. Very few people ask "why" though I find it the better question. Why study philosophy? For me the brilliant thinkers of the past called. Society became what it is in part to the great men and woman of philosophy and to study that is a noble goal.

Postponing graduate school leaves me to work in the real world. Currently I am a bookseller for Barnes and Noble. This allowed me to realize philosophy gave me a stronger passion for academia. Even as a child I always loved to read, but since I began studying philosophy I actually yearn for it. It opened my horizons to books that would have gone unread. I love being the dork that reads Aristotle before going to bed. There are authors that the typical person might not ever read or even know about and I look forward to someday reading them all.

With grad school on the horizon my mind turns to the pursuit. The connection between this world and the very first human can be found if one digs deep enough. I would not know that if not for philosophy and my goal now seems clear: to attempt to find that connection.

~Kristina Swim '05

Philosopher's Wisdom

"Human reason has this peculiar fate that in one species of its knowledge it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer."

~Immanuel Kant

Critique of Pure Reason

Spring 2007 Course Descriptions

Phil 2100 01 Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Janet Donohoe

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.

Phil 2100 02 Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Janet Donohoe

Same description as above.

Phil 2100 25H Introduction to Philosophy (Honors)

Dr. Jay Alberg

Plato, the student of Socrates, and Aristotle, the student of Plato, reached divergent answers to fundamental philosophical questions. In many ways these answers, and the dialectical relationship between them, established the course of all the philosophy that has followed. We will alternate between the two philosophers, examining their respective position on a number of topics. These include the nature of philosophy itself, the philosophical explanation of causality, ethics, political philosophy and epistemology. Students will write relatively short (5 pages) papers at the conclusion of each topic.

Phil 2110 01 Critical Thinking

Dr. Mark Tietjen

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.

Phil 2120 01 Introduction to Ethics

Dr. Robert Lane

Everyone has beliefs about morality, and 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: is abortion immoral? what about human cloning? homosexuality? 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? (God? society? or somewhere else?); what makes an ethical argument good or bad?; and what general rules or principles ought we to live by? No prior experience in philosophy is necessary, so if you want to start thinking critically about morality, this course is a great place to begin.

Phil 2130 01 Introduction to Religion

Dr. Mark Tietjen

This course introduces students to the study of religion through the consideration of several themes or problems of religion such as evil, miracles, the reasonableness of faith, and proofs for God's existence, as well as an exploration of particular religions themselves (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and their responses to these issues.

Phil 3110 01 Modern Philosophy

Dr. Jay Alberg

This course covers the history of philosophy from Descartes to Hegel. In this course we will look at the some the same philosophers that you have studied in Intro, but in more depth. For example, we will read Descartes Meditations, but examine in depth its claim to originate modern philosophy. After looking at

the turn to the subject instituted by Descartes we will continue to look at the rationalists in the figures of Spinoza and Leibniz. We will then turn to the British empiricists. Finally, we will turn to the great German philosophers Kant and Hegel. There are three examinations.

Phil 3120 01 American Philosophy

Dr. Robert Lane

What is truth? What's the best way for me to form beliefs about the world? Is absolute certainty possible, or must we be satisfied with beliefs that are not certain? If there is no solid evidence for or against the existence of God, is it legitimate to believe that God exists? What is philosophy, and what is its relationship with science? This course tackles those questions and others by examining how they were treated by the thinkers who founded America's distinctive philosophical tradition: pragmatism. In particular, we will study the works of the classical American pragmatists, including Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, as well as the contemporary American pragmatist Richard Rorty. (Majors in the traditional philosophy track must take either this course or Analytic Philosophy.)

Phil 4110 01 Philosophy of Law

Dr. Robert Lane

This course introduces students to philosophical topics related to the law and legal systems. Questions that we will address include: What is a law? What would the world be like without laws? Why are we obligated to obey the law? Is law essentially tied to morality, or are morality and law independent? What is freedom? What are rights? How can we justify punishing people who violate the law? (Required for pre-law track majors.)

Phil 4220 01 Hermeneutics

Dr. Janet Donohoe

Hermeneutics is the philosophical discipline investigating the process of textual interpretation. How do we know how to interpret what we read? Is the meaning of a text what the author intended? How would we know what an author intended? Should we understand a text within a historical context? This course addresses the development of the hermeneutic tradition through the primary texts of such influential philosophers as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoer. The course is particularly appropriate for those interested in the legal or religious professions.

Phil 4230 01 Philosophy of Religion

Dr. Mark Tietjen

An examination of philosophical arguments about such religious questions as the existence of God, the problem of evil, the relationship between faith and reason, and the concept of human destiny. (Required for Religion-track majors)

Department of Philosophy

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Fax: 678-839-4849

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Faculty Offices

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Alberg, Jay	TLC 2254	678-839-4738
Donohoe, Janet	TLC 2250	678-839-4743
Lane, Robert	TLC 2255	678-839-4745
Tietjen, Mark	TLC 2249	678-839-6294

Standardized Test Performance by Undergraduate Major

(Percentages by which the mean scores of majors in each field were above or below the mean scores of all test-takers)¹

LSAT Law School Admissions Test
GMAT Graduate Management Aptitude Test
GRE Graduate Record Examination

Undergraduate Major	LSAT	GMAT	GRE Verbal	GRE Math
Philosophy	8.7%	11.0%	17.6%	4.6%
English	5.6%	4.1%	14.5%	-5.7%
History	2.9%	4.6%	10.8%	-5.5%
Biology	4.0%	3.3%	5.4%	8.0%
Chemistry	7.6%	7.5%	2.1%	18.3%
Engineering	8.0%	10.0%	-7.3%	25.1%
Business	-4.5%	-5.0%	-9.1%	-2.3%
Sociology	-0.7%	-0.5%	-0.7%	-1.5%
Political Science	-1.6%	0.6%	3.5%	-5.0%
Education	-8.7%	-4.2%	-10.4%	-15.8%

From 2001-04, **philosophy majors nationally scored first among all disciplines in both the verbal and analytic portions of the GRE** and, among humanities and social sciences departments, second (behind economics) in the math portion:²

	GRE Verbal	GRE Math	GRE Analytical
Philosophy	589	594	5.1
English Language & Literature	559	552	4.9
Physics & Astronomy	534	738	4.5
Political Science	522	589	4.8
Economics	504	706	4.5
Psychology	470	543	4.5
Computer & Information Sciences	469	704	4.2
Business Administration & Management	439	562	4.2

¹ Clifford Adelman, *The Standardized Test Scores of College Graduates*.

² Graduate Record Examination 2005-2006 Guide to the Use of Scores
 <<http://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/994994.pdf>, pp.18-20>

Philosophers' Birthdays

October 14, 1906
Hannah Arendt,
German, Jewish Philosopher

October 15, 1844
Friedrich Nietzsche,
German Philosopher

October 29, 1910
A. J. Ayer
British Philosopher of
Language and Epistemologist

November 15, 1932
Alvin Plantinga
American Philosopher of Religion.

November 16, 1938
Robert Nozick
American Political Philosopher

Philosophy Honors Society

The Georgia Iota chapter of Phi Sigma Tau is West Georgia's philosophical link to the world of honor societies. The chapter consists of students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and a sincere interest in philosophy. Founded to recognize and reward philosophical scholarship, the chapter provides both an academic and a social environment for its members. The criteria for membership are: a 3.0 overall GPA, the completion of at least two philosophy courses, a GPA higher than 3.0 in all philosophy courses taken, and the completion of 45 hours of coursework. For more information, go to <http://www.westga.edu/~pst>, or contact Dr. Lane (rlane@westga.edu) if you are interested in applying for membership.

The Thirty-first Annual MidSouth Philosophy Conference University of Memphis Friday afternoon and Saturday, February 23-24, 2007

Papers in any area are welcome. Submissions must not exceed a length of 3000 words, and must include a cover letter stating the author's name, university or college, mailing address, telephone number and/or email address. Send two printed copies to:

Undergraduate Philosophy Conference
Department of Philosophy
327 Clement Hall
University of Memphis
Memphis, TN 38152

Papers for the Undergraduate Philosophy Conference must be postmarked by January 14. Direct questions about the Undergraduate Philosophy Conference to [Mary Beth Mader](#).

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