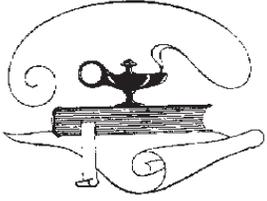


The Lantern



Philosophy Newsletter for Students

Volume 11, Number 2

Spring 2010

Meet Dr. Walter Riker

I grew up in southern California, a bit to the east of Los Angeles. Grad school gave me an opportunity to live in a new part of the country, and I picked Boston. I spent three years there, and met my wife, Dawn. This bit of good

In my work on human rights, I am trying to understand what sorts of political communities deserve full and good standing in the international community. .

fortune led me to Tennessee, where, for 15 years, we lived on her family's dairy farm. This was a true family farm, 50 acres and 50 cows, and organic in all but the certified sense. I learned a lot from this experience, and enjoyed every bit of it. A few summers ago, Dawn's father retired, and our work brought us to Georgia. Dawn teaches in the technical college system. I am very happy to be teaching at UWG.

I received my B.A. in Anthropology at Cal State Los Angeles. This is a big, state college, on the eastern edge of the city. I had a great time there. One of my best experiences was an archeological dig on San Nicolas Island. This small island is about 90 miles off the coast of California. Some of you know it as the "Isle of the Blue Dolphins." The Nicoleños (as Kroeber called them in his Handbook of Indians) lived on

this island until they were removed by Spanish missionaries in the 1830's. We excavated a shell midden, to learn something about what the island's original inhabitants ate during different historical periods.

I continued to study anthropology as a graduate student at Brandeis University, where I received my M.A. I studied culture theory, and was particularly interested in cross-cultural differences in self, emotion, and rationality. Over time, my interest in these issues became less anthropological and more philosophical. After a while, it made sense to change majors. I was already living in Tennessee then, and the Philosophy Department at the University of Tennessee looked interesting, so I signed up. Several years later, I received my Ph.D. in Philosophy.

I now study moral, political and legal

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philosophy. This is not as far from anthropology as you might think. In the broadest sense, I am interested in the nature and import of community. In particular, I am interested in normative aspects of community, e.g., in the nature and significance of different sorts of rules that structure our communities and regulate our conduct as social beings. I study the ways these rules both influence and emerge out of our self-understandings, i.e., our conceptions of ourselves as individuals and members of groups.

I am currently exploring these broader interests through work on political disobedience and human rights. I have argued that governments like our own have a moral right to enforce the law, under certain conditions, and that citizens

generally have some moral responsibility to defer when the government seeks to enforce the law. This does not show, however, that there are never sound moral reasons for violating the law. In fact, it may sometimes be the case that citizens are morally obligated to violate it. In my work on human rights, I am trying to understand what sorts of political communities deserve full and good standing in the international community. My view is that the basic human right to political participation does not imply a right to democratic political institutions. This means that some non-democratic communities might deserve a seat at the international table.

Philosopher's Wisdom

Common sense is the best distributed commodity in the world, for every man is convinced that he is well supplied with it.

~Rene Descartes *Discourse on Method*

Non Philosopher's Non-Wisdom

“Senator Chip Rogers was quoted during the press conference that he’s interested in only one thing, and that is to “cut cut cut”. If the state of Georgia continues to cut, however, there won’t be much healthcare, education, and transportation to support the future of the state.”

~CNN *iReport*, March 4, 2010

Summer Reading Suggestions

Dr. Janet Donohoe:

~*Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* by Bruce Foltz and Robert Frodeman (eds.), Indiana 2004

~*Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* by Bonnie Mann, Oxford, 2006

Dr. Robert Lane

~*Vagueness* by Timothy Williamson

~*Putting Philosophy to Work* by Susan Haack

Dr. Walter Riker

~*World Poverty and Human Rights* by Thomas Pogge, Polity Press, 2008

~*The Unknown God: Agnostic Essays* by Anthony Kenny, Continuum, 2004

Dr. Mark Tietjen

~*Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament* by Thomas Nagel, Oxford, 2010

~*Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode* by Sylvia Walsh, Oxford, 2009

Dr. Tom Brommage

~*Yo! and Lol!: Pragmatic Topography of the Space of Reasons* by Rebecca Kukla and Mark Lance, Harvard, 2009

~*Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundation of Ontology* by David Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), Cambridge, 2009

Summer 2010 Course Descriptions

Session III: June 7-June 29

Phil 2120 Introduction to Ethics
MTWRF 10:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Paff 105

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 physician-assisted suicide? is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from malnutrition? do non-human animals have rights? 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. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.

Phil 2100 Introduction to Philosophy
MTWRF 3:00-5:15 p.m. HUM 209

Dr. Robert Lane

A historically-informed survey of arguments and theories relevant to basic issues in the central areas of philosophy, including logic, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Figures to be discussed include Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Hume. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.

Session IV: July 2-July 27

Phil 2110 Critical Thinking
MTWRF 10:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Paff 109

Dr. Mark Tietjen

This course addresses the basics of how to think critically and how to evaluate arguments. By learning the fundamentals of logical reasoning and addressing contemporary cultural debates, we will focus on how to argue well and how to identify the fallacies of weak arguments. Students will also have the opportunity to apply skills they learn to their particular major fields of study.

Phil 2130 Introduction to World Religions
MTWRF 3:00-5:15 p.m. HUM 209

Dr. Mark Tietjen

This course is a comparative study of the beliefs and practices of several world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will explore not only the history of these faiths and their early doctrinal and communal development but their place in today's world.

. Fall 2010 Course Descriptions

Fall 2010 Course Descriptions

Phil 2010 01 Introduction to Philosophy
MW 1:00-1:50 p.m. Paff 102

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 2010-02 Introduction to Philosophy
MW 2:00-2:50 p.m. Paff 102
 Same as above.

Dr. Janet Donohoe

Phil 2020-30 Critical Thinking
TR 9:30-10:45 a.m. Paff 105

Dr. Mark Tietjen

This course addresses the basics of how to think critically and how to evaluate arguments. By learning the fundamentals of logical reasoning and addressing contemporary cultural debates, we will focus on how to argue well and how to identify the fallacies of weak arguments. Students will also have the opportunity to apply skills they learn to their particular major.

Phil 2020-02, 04 Critical Thinking Dr. Walter Riker

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. Paff 308, MWF 10:00a.m.-10:50a.m. Paff 302

This course teaches students to recognize and evaluate several different kinds of arguments. Students will practice their developing skills by analyzing several developing arguments for and against philosophical theories of Love, Friendship, Trust, Loyalty and Respect, and their applications in particular situations. This course satisfies the Oral Communication component of the Core Curriculum, so students will give speeches on, and engage in informal discussions of these and related issues.

Phil 2020-03, 05, 06 Critical Thinking Dr. Tom Brommage

TR 11:00-12:15 a.m. Paff 109; TR 2:00-3:15 Boyd 304, TR 3:30-4:45 Boyd 302

This course is designed to strengthen students' skills in reasoning about problems and issues of everyday life by helping them to distinguish between good and bad arguments. Students work to achieve these goals through reading and discussion of course materials. Some of the topics to be considered include the structure of inductive arguments, rhetorical fallacies, and the connection between logic and belief. The second half of the course will stress information literacy, developing critical thinking skills necessary for each. Topics will include television and print media reports, advertising, maps and the internet. Throughout the course, the student will develop the skills necessary to become a better consumer of information.

Phil 3100 Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Dr. Mark Tietjen

TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Paff 105

This course explores primary texts of some of the most important philosophers from the ancient and medieval world, including Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas and seeks to make their philosophical thinking relevant to that of their modern and contemporary successors. Required for Philosophy majors.

Phil 3220-01 Christian Thought Dr. Mark Tietjen

TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 105

This new course examines the development of Christian thought from the New Testament to present day (e.g. feminist and liberation theologies). A sample of thinkers to be considered includes Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Schleiermacher, Barth, and Bultmann.

Phil 4100-01W Phenomenology Dr. Janet Donohoe

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. HUM 209

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement of the twentieth century that focuses on descriptive investigations of the ways in which the world appears to consciousness. In this course we will examine the development of the phenomenological method through primary texts of major phenomenologists including Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Derrida, and Ricoeur. We will address such issues as how the phenomenological method attempts to overcome the subject/object dichotomy, and how it lays the groundwork for such contemporary movements as hermeneutics and deconstruction.

Phil 4110-01 Philosophy of Law Dr. Walter Riker

TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. Biol 148

This course examines several philosophical problems related to the law as it exists in modern nations. The course is roughly divided into three parts: (1) theories of the nature of law, e.g., natural law, legal positivist, and interpretivist approaches; (2) constitutionalism (its nature and value), constitutional interpretation, and legal reasoning in general (precedent, analogy, and coherence); and (3) problems related to the law's coercive force, e.g., legal obligation and the authority of law, criminal law and legal punishment, and civil disobedience and direct action.

Phil 4120-01 Professional Ethics Dr. Robert Lane

MWF 10:00-10:50 p.m. Paff 105

This course examines ethical questions that can arise for individuals working in medicine, business, and law. To provide a general theoretical background for these questions, we will also examine the most important traditions within normative ethics: utilitarianism, Kantianism, and virtue ethics. Required for philosophy majors in the pre-law track.

Phil 4300-01W Senior Seminar: Charles Sanders Peirce Dr. Robert Lane

MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. TLC 1204

This annual course serves as a "capstone" to the study of philosophy at UWG. It is required for all philosophy majors. This year, our topic is the work of Charles S. Peirce, the American philosopher and logician who founded pragmatism. We will consider Peirce's contributions to a number of different areas of philosophy, including metaphysics, epistemology and logic. Students will produce a major written work: the seminar paper, a high-quality essay that is suitable for submission to undergraduate philosophy conferences and that will become part of the student's senior portfolio. Students will present their seminar papers to the class and respond to questions from the professor and their peers. All philosophy majors planning to graduate before December 2011 should register for this section of Senior Seminar.

Tenth Annual Meeting of the Minds What is the Real?

This year the Philosophy Program will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Meeting of the Minds. Please join us in the celebration by coming to this year's production.

When: Tuesday, March 30, 2010 7:00 p.m.

Where: Kathy Cashen Hall

Who: Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Dewey and Merleau-Ponty.

Why: Because we're philosophers and we're interested in reality.

10th Annual

Meeting of the Minds

"What is the Real?"

Plato
played by
Alice Barker



John Dewey
played by
Danny Smith

Augustine
played by
Ace Mendez



Maurice
Merleau-Ponty
played by
Igor Chemoknizhnyy

Rene Descartes
played by
Phil Brewer



Moderated by
Anna Potter

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.

INTERESTED IN PHILOSOPHY?

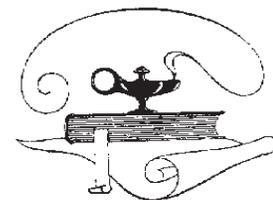
Join the West Georgia Philosophical Society

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 role of technology in our lives, 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 2009 meetings will be held every other Tuesday at 3:45 p.m. in Pafford room 309.

For more information, check out the Philosophy Society's website at <http://www.westga.edu/~philsoc>, or contact Dr. Tietjen (mtietjen@westga.edu).



Philosophers' Birthdays

Rene Descartes March 31, 1596
French Philosopher and Scientist

Moses Maimonides March 30, 1135
Jewish Philosopher and Physician

David Hume May 7, 1711
Scottish Empiricist

Karl Barth May 10, 1886
Swiss Theologian

Bertrand Russell May 18, 1872
British Philosopher and Mathematician

Annual Philosophy Awards Ceremony

This year's awards ceremony will take place on Friday, April 9, 2010 at 3:00 p.m. at The Border. All Philosophy majors are invited to attend. There will be light refreshments available. This is a fun annual event where students and faculty have an opportunity to relax together and celebrate the accomplishments of students within our program. This is also when students who have been accepted into Phi Sigma Tau will be inducted into the honors organization. Students who have presented papers at conferences in the course of the year will also be recognized.

Students who will be recognized are:

Best New Major Award: Kevin King

Gordon Watson Award in Philosophy: Alice Barker

Burdett and Shirley Wantland Scholarship: Tony Garcia

Inductees to Phi Sigma Tau: Leviell Waits, William Campbell, Tony Garcia, Zachary Hogan,
Alice Barker

Meeting of Minds participants: Alice Barker, Charles Bauch, Philip Brewer, Igor Chernoknizhny,
Ace Mendez, Anna Potter, and Donny Smith

Student Conference Presenters: Philip Brewer, Geoff Lundeen, Anna Potter, Alice Barker,
Ace Mendez, Kevin King, Donny Smith

College of Arts and Sciences Student Development Grant Recipient: Alice Barker

This list may not be exhaustive. If you have been involved in a philosophical activity which is not listed here, please contact Dr. Donohoe to let us know. Congratulations go out to the students. Come help us celebrate the success of our students and our program!

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