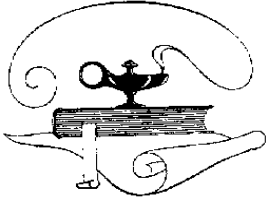


The Lantern



Philosophy Newsletter for Students

Volume 12, Number 1

Fall 2010

Philosophy Can Make You Happy? YES!

It's no surprise that philosophers spend a good bit of time discussing the issue of happiness and what makes us happy. Philosophers, like most people, want to understand how to achieve happiness and have come up with many compelling theories

...substantive conversation is better for our happiness than superficial conversations about the weather.

about what to pursue and how to pursue it in order to attain happiness, from

Aristotelian virtue to Stoic alignment with the order of the cosmos, from Kantian duty for duty's sake to Camusian attentiveness to the absurdity of human existence. But, now, philosophy itself may be seen as a path to true happiness.

In fact, the *New York Times* reported last spring that new studies have shown that those who discuss the meaning of life and other weighty issues are happier than those who do not. Dr. Matthias Mehl, a psychologist at the University of Arizona, published a study in the journal *Psychological Science* indicating that the traditional ideas of "don't worry, be happy" are unsupported by scientific research. Instead, he argues that substantive conversation is better for our happiness than superficial conversations about the weather.

He suggests two reasons for this finding: human beings seek to create meaning in their lives, and as social animals we desire connections with other human beings.

"By engaging in meaningful conversations, we manage to impose meaning on an otherwise pretty chaotic world," Dr. Mehl said. "And interpersonally, as you find this meaning, you bond with your interactive partner, and we know that interpersonal connection and integration is a core fundamental foundation of happiness."

While this is not news for philosophers, perhaps, it does seem to be news for the vast majority of people. News enough, anyway, for the *New York Times* to report it as a significant finding. Dr. Mehl's study involved 79 college students, 32 of whom were (continued, page 2)

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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.

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men and 47 of whom were women. These students wore electronically activated recorders with a microphone attached to their lapel that recorded 30-second bits of conversation every 12.5 minutes for four days. Mehl and other researchers then analyzed the conversations categorizing them as either small talk about the weather or TV, or substantive conversation about philosophy, religion, politics or other significant issues. The participants also reported about their level of satisfaction with life and responded to other measures of happiness. The happiest person spent 45.9 percent of the day's conversations discussing meaningful, substantive issues. The unhappiest person only spent 21.8 percent of conversations on substantive topics.

Science has finally caught up with philosophy in recognizing that the true path to happiness

can be found through the philosophical life! We knew it all along.

(The original New York Times article, Talk Deeply, Be Happy? was published on the "Well" blog on March 17, 2010. Thanks to Dr. Riker for bringing this to our attention.)

PHILOSOPHER'S WISDOM

"Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Philosophy does not result in philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries."

~Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

Spring 2011 Course Descriptions

- Phil 2010-01 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Thomas Brommage**
TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 305
 This course will survey some of the most important figures in Western philosophy, from the 4th century BCE all the way through the 20th century. Emphasis will be placed on understanding each thinker within historical context. The student will develop an understanding of the historical tradition of Western philosophy, as well as a grasp of the basics of each figured covered. The course will trace the dialogue concerning epistemological and metaphysical problems through the ancient, medieval and modern periods, theories of ethics (including virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism), and end by briefly surveying recent trends such as pragmatism, continental philosophy and analytic thought. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.
- Phil 2010-02 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Thomas Brommage**
TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. Paff 305
 Same as above.
- Phil 2010-25H Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Janet Donohoe**
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. Paff 305
 This course takes an historical look at major philosophical questions through the primary texts of such important philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Nietzsche, and Camus among others. 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. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.
- Phil 2020-01 Critical Thinking Dr. Walter Riker**
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. Paff 105
 In this course students learn to recognize and evaluate different kinds of arguments. Students practice their developing skills by analyzing several influential arguments for and against different uses of animals (e.g., for food, research, entertainment, and companionship). This course satisfies the Oral Communication component of the Core Curriculum, so students will discuss these issues in both formal and informal settings. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area B1.
- Phil 2020-02 Critical Thinking Dr. Walter Riker**
MWF 2:00-2:50 p.m. Paff 105
 Same as above.
- Phil 2020-03 Critical Thinking Dr. Thomas Brommage**
MW 3:30-4:45 p.m. Paff 105
 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 this 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. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area B1.
- Phil 2020-04 Critical Thinking Dr. Mark Tietjen**
TR 9:30-10:45 a.m. Paff 105
 This course addresses the basics of how to think critically and how to evaluate arguments. Students will learn to identify both well known argument forms and well known fallacies in reasoning. They will explore the importance of clear definitions, the role of emotion in argumentation, and how critical thinking skills might be useful in analyzing contemporary issues in politics, science, and religion. Students will apply skills they learn to philosophical texts and also to their particular major fields of study. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area B1.
- Phil 2020-05 Critical Thinking Dr. Mark Tietjen**
TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Paff 105
 Same as above.
- Phil 2020-06 Critical Thinking Ms. Brandie Bedard**
TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 105
 The primary focus of critical thinking will be the improvement of those critical thinking skills needed for other college courses and life in general. This will be achieved through an introduction to logical reasoning and critical thinking. Critical thinking is the skill of recognizing, composing and evaluating arguments. We will focus on the nature and analysis of arguments, deductive and inductive reasoning, fallacies, and the uses of language. Critical thinking is an essential skill. Virtually every college course relies on arguments. Examples include: arguments about business plans, arguments about the qualities of a novel, arguments about the significance of historical events, arguments about the nature and function of genetic material, to name just a few. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area B1.

Phil 2030-01 Introduction to Ethics**Dr. Robert Lane****MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. Paff 305**

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 2030-02 Introduction to Ethics**Dr. Robert Lane****MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. Paff 305**

Same as above.

Phil 2030-03 Introduction to Ethics**Dr. Robert Lane****MWF 2:00-2:50 p.m. Paff 305**

Same as above.

Phil 2130-01 Introduction to World Religions**Ms. Brandie Bedard****TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Paff 106**

Have you ever wondered about religions that are different from your own, or have you ever wanted to know more about the historical roots of your own religion? If you have, then you are ready to take introduction to world religions. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the world's major religions traditions. These include Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We will examine each tradition's historical origins, sacred texts, and cultural expressions. We will also consider such topics as cosmology, gods and goddess, myth and ritual, human nature, ethics, mysticism, death and the afterlife, and salvation. We will briefly consider the rise of "new religious movements," such as Scientology, and the methodological problems involved in the study of "other" religions. May count for credit in Core Area E4.

Phil 3110-01 Modern Philosophy**Dr. Walter Riker****MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. Paff 109**

This course in the history of philosophy examines the metaphysical and epistemological theories of influential 17th and 18th-century philosophers. It will focus on works by Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant, and draw on works by Leibniz, Berkeley and others where appropriate.

Phil 3205-01 Religious Texts**Dr. Mark Tietjen****TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 105**

Through an exploration of both scriptural and non-scriptural religious literature from several different religious traditions, this course considers many of the important themes of religion such as the nature and activity of God, the function of religious community, and the challenges of religious belief.

Phil 4150-01 Analytic Philosophy**Dr. Tom Brommage****MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 102**

The dawn of the 20th century was a revolutionary period. Just as quantum theory and relativity were challenging the fundamental tenants of physics, so too a new model of philosophy emerged. Instead of debating the same sorts of questions with which philosophers had occupied themselves for thousands of years, these philosophers—inspired by the new logical developments by mathematicians such as Frege, Russell and Whitehead—sought to not to "solve" the classical questions, but rather to "dissolve" them through an analysis of language. Analytic philosophy is currently the dominant trend in philosophy in the Anglo-American world, and in this course the student will survey the major thinkers who founded this philosophical method in the late 19th and early to middle 20th century. Thinkers and positions that will be covered (among others) include: the reaction of Gottlob Frege and G. E. Moore to Kantian and Hegelian idealism; the logical atomism of Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein; the logical positivism of the Rudolf Carnap and A. J. Ayer; the reaction to positivism including Wilfrid Sellars and W. V. O. Quine; and terminating in the ordinary language analysis of J. L. Austin, Gilbert Ryle and the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. Through the process, the student will come to a better understanding of the contemporary debates in epistemology, the philosophy of language, ethics, metaphysics and the philosophy of science.

Phil 4220-01W Hermeneutics**Dr. Janet Donohoe****MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. Hum 205**

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 its historical context? This course addresses the development of the hermeneutic tradition through the primary texts of influential philosophers. It also looks at how these theories are applied in areas of interpretation such as legal/constitutional interpretation, interpretation of art, interpretation of religious texts and more mundane interpretations of everyday life.

Upcoming Undergraduate Philosophy Conferences and Publication Opportunities

Are you especially proud of a paper you have written for one of your philosophy classes? Want to know what other people think about your ideas? Below is a list of upcoming conferences and journals that might be interested in your work. Feel free to talk with any of your philosophy professors about how to submit something or ways to polish up a good paper for a conference or publication.

UNC Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

Conference dates: April 23-24, 2011

Submission deadline: January 23, 2011

More info: <http://www.westga.edu/~phil/UNC-CFP-2011.htm>

National Conference on Undergraduate Research

Conference dates: March 31-April 2, 2011

Abstract submission dates: Oct.4-Nov.19

More info: <http://www.ithaca.edu/ncur2011/>

Fourth Annual Southeast Philosophy Congress

Conference dates: February 18-19, 2011

Submission deadline: January 31, 2011

More info: http://a-s.clayton.edu/ahall/philosophy/Congress/2010_cfp.htm

Undergraduate Journals

This is just a random collection of undergraduate journals. There are many journals that take papers from undergraduates. For a listing of more of them, go to <http://www.epistemelinks.com/Main/Journals.aspx?TopiCode=Stud&Format=Print>

Stance: An International Undergraduate Philosophy Journal

is produced and edited entirely by undergraduate students. We aim to enrich student learning by providing an opportunity for undergraduate students to have their original scholarly work reviewed by or published in a peer-reviewed academic journal. It is published annually in April. The deadline for submission is in mid-December. All papers are carefully considered by multiple blind reviewers. Notification of initial decision is early February. All authors receive constructive feedback concerning submissions. More info: <http://stance.iweb.bsu.edu/>

Aporia: Dartmouth's Undergraduate Philosophy Journal

Aporia is a national philosophy journal published biannually by Dartmouth undergraduates. We release issues every fall and spring; the spring issue will feature papers that have been selected to be read at the Dartmouth Conference. A primary goal of *Aporia* is to showcase high quality undergraduate work in philosophy (continued, page 6)

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 2010 meetings are being held at 4pm-5pm, every other Wednesday. Upcoming meeting dates are October 27; Nov. 10. Meetings are held in Pafford 309.

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

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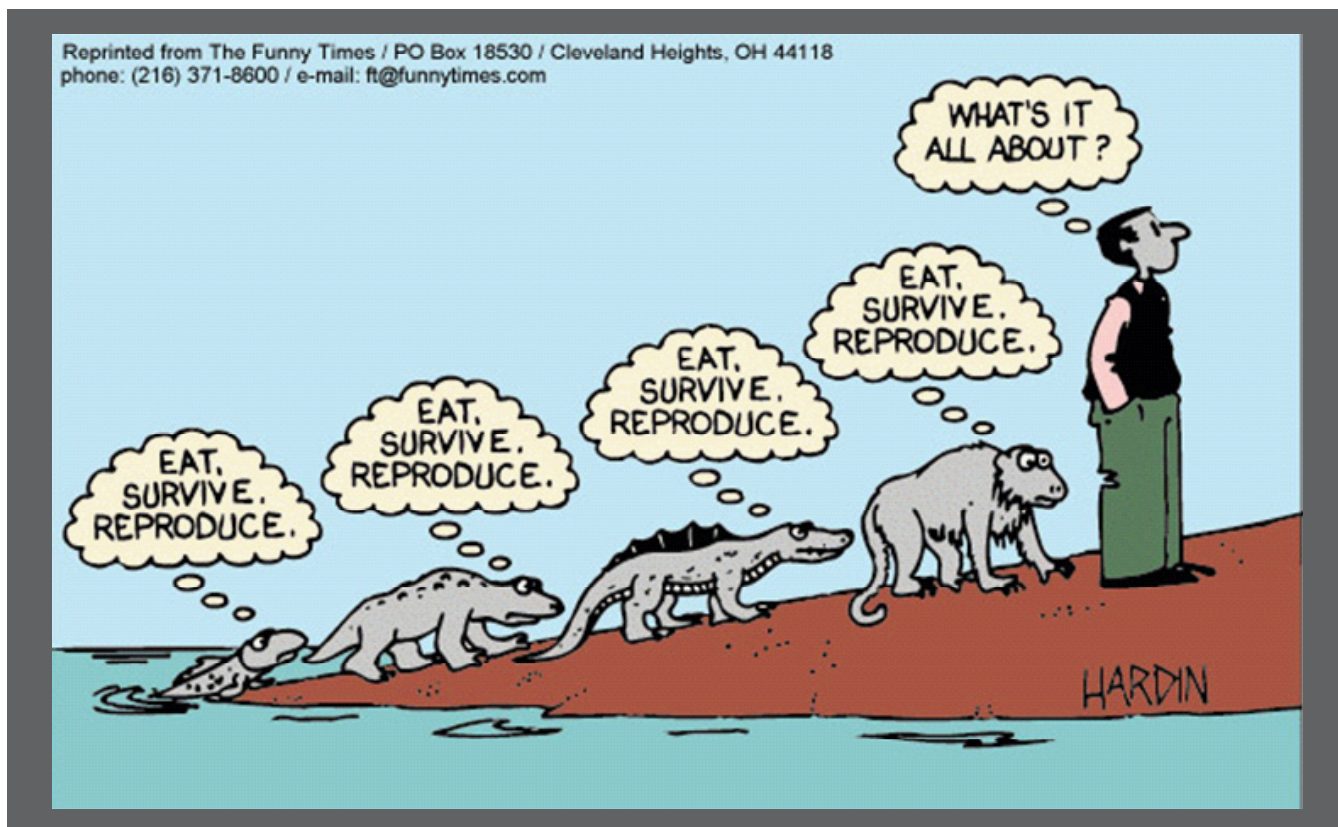
and act as a catalyst for engaging students in the puzzles inherent in the world around us. *Aporia* accepts submissions from students at any college or university. Issues tend to center on a common theme that varies from publication to publication, but thoughtful submissions on any philosophical topic are welcome. More info: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~aporia/>

Dialogue

Dialogue is the official journal of Phi Sigma Tau, the International National Honor Society in Philosophy. It is the continuing goal of *Dialogue* to provide a vigorous and lively vehicle for the exchange of philosophical ideas among graduate and undergraduate students interested in philosophy. *Dialogue* accepts for publications articles, discussions, and reviews in all areas of contemporary philosophical research. It appears twice each academic year: a single issue in October, and a double issue in April. Prospective authors should email a copy of their paper to the editor. Any word processing format is acceptable though RTF (rich text format) or WORD files are preferred. The texts for papers should be double-spaced throughout (including quotations and notes), and with notes gathered at the end. More info: <http://phi-sigma-tau.org/dialogue.html>

Ephemeris: The Undergraduate Journal of Philosophy

Ephemeris is a student-run undergraduate journal of philosophy; its mission is to harvest exceptional undergraduate writing in philosophy in all areas of the philosophical discipline. Format: All work must be submitted as electronic copy in standard Word (doc or docx) or RTF format. Suitable stylistic guides are the MLA standard or the Chicago Manual. Simultaneous submission is acceptable on condition of immediate notification if the paper has been accepted elsewhere. Be sure to include your name, postal and email addresses, and the university or college in which you are enrolled as an undergraduate. Email: Please send your work and any correspondence to <ephemeris.uc@gmail.com>. You should receive a confirmation of receipt in a matter of days. Submission deadline is February 15, 2011. More info: <http://punzel.org/ephemeris/>



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