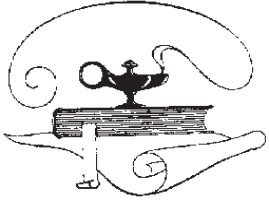


The Lantern

UNIVERSITY of
West Georgia



Philosophy Newsletter for Students

Volume 12, Number 2

Spring 2011

What Your Professors Do When They're Not Teaching

It often seems as if your professors' lives end when they walk out the classroom door or when they leave campus, but, in fact, your professors are very busy with the development of their professional lives in contribution to the fields in which they work. Read on for brief descriptions of the research your philosophy professors are doing.

Dr. Lane

One of Dr. Lane's specializations is the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce (1838-1914), an American philosopher best known for founding the philosophical tradition of pragmatism, which included among its adherents both William James and John Dewey. At the moment, Lane is interested in the different sorts of indeterminacy recognized by Peirce. Peirce recognized two varieties of indeterminacy: generality and vagueness. A proposition is general when it attributes a property to every member of a given group; for example, "All humans are mortal" applies generally, to each specific human. A proposition is vague when it attributes a property to some unspecified individual, as in "Someone is obnoxious"; this attributes the property of being obnoxious to an individual, but it doesn't specify the individual to which it's referring. Peirce believed that these sorts of linguistic indeterminacy have metaphysical parallels, that there are real generality and real vagueness in the world. All of this is well-known by Peirce scholars, but Lane believes that late in his life, Peirce came to recognize a third kind of indeterminacy. Says Lane, "I have come to suspect that Peirce recognized, not only generality and vagueness, but what I call deficit indeterminacy." Lane defines deficit indeterminacy as follows: it is deficit indeterminate whether a given object, S, has a given property, P, if and only if there is no fact of the matter whether S is P and no fact of the matter whether S is not-P. If deficit indeterminacy is a real aspect of the world, then there are some questions about real things, questions that are coherent

and well-formed, to which the world itself provides no answer. One goal of Lane's current work is make clear what this third sort of indeterminacy amounts to and how it differs from both generality and vagueness. This, he hopes, will deepen our understanding of other aspects of Peirce's philosophy, including his pragmatism.

Dr. Riker

Some philosophers argue that all societies ought to be liberal and democratic. That is, they argue that only liberal and democratic societies deserve full and good standing in the international community. There are two main ways of defending this view. The first holds that democracy is instrumentally necessary for the full realization of fundamental human rights. The other holds that there is a basic human right to democracy itself. Dr. Riker argues that some (but not all) non-liberal and non-democratic societies also deserve full and good standing. This means that he has to show that democracy is not instrumentally necessary for the realization of fundamental human rights, and also that the basic human right to political participation (for he accepts this much) does not imply a right to democratic political institutions.

For example, in one of his papers Riker defends certain non-liberal and non-democratic societies against the democratic peace thesis. This thesis is rooted in the widely accepted empirical claim that war is much less likely to occur between two democracies than it

(continued, page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

Philosopher's Wisdom

Summer and Fall 2011
Course Descriptions

Meeting of the Minds

Join the
Philosophical Society;
Philosophy Honors Society

Upcoming Conferences

Summer Reading
Suggestions

(continued from page 1)

is to occur between either a democracy and a non-democratic society, or two non-democratic societies. If this is correct, then our best chance at world peace is a world of democratic societies. This thesis has informed the foreign policy platforms of Presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama, and is in part the cause of our efforts to bring democracy to the world. However, Riker shows that the democratic peace is secured not simply (if at all) through explicitly democratic institutions as such, but through a number of social and political norms and institutions commonly associated with democracies. He then shows that some non-liberal, non-democratic societies have the same, or relevantly similar, social and political norms and institutions. This means that world peace does not require that all societies be democratic.

In other work Dr. Riker is exploring the law's normative force in societies like our own. In the broadest sense, he is trying to determine whether or not democratic citizens have a moral duty to obey the laws of their country, and whether or not a democratic state has a moral right to use coercive force to enforce the law against citizens. Recently he has begun thinking more narrowly about justified political disobedience. He is trying to understand when, if ever, a citizen might have a moral obligation, or at least moral permission, to violate the laws of her country. For example, he thinks that a person might have a moral obligation to sit in or chain herself to a tree to stop loggers from cutting it down, even when this act would violate the law, but that this should only be done under certain circumstances, and then only for a certain amount of time. Riker is currently trying to work out the details of this view.

Dr. Brommage

Recently Dr. Brommage has been working through some social theorists who come to Wittgenstein-influenced positions. Included amongst those include Peter Winch, David Bloor, Ted Schatski, Robert Brandom and Jean-Francois Lyotard, amongst (many!) others. Throughout, Brommage is interested to see the various ways that Wittgenstein's philosophy has been used (and *abused*) in contemporary social theory. He is also interested in critiques of Wittgenstein's thought for social theory—including but not limited to Habermas

In addition, Brommage has been going back to some of the Neo-Kantian influences on the development of the early Analytic tradition, particularly the work of Ernst Cassirer and Franz Brentano, amongst others (the former of whom is undergoing a surprising, but not all that puzzling renaissance). And, as always, he is trying to get clearer on Frege, Russell, Carnap, Sellars,

and the whole intellectual constellation surrounding Wittgenstein's philosophy.

Dr. Tietjen

Dr. Tietjen is currently working on two things. First, he is co-authoring an article on Kierkegaard's psychology with C. Stephen Evans that will be published in the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*. In the article Tietjen and Evans explore Kierkegaard's view of the self as a complicated relation of syntheses such as freedom and necessity, finitude and infinitude. They relate this view to Kierkegaard's detailed explorations of anxiety and despair, and also explore the developmental psychology of his stages of existence.

Tietjen is also working on a book manuscript based upon his dissertation. The tentative title of the book is *The Eyes of Earnestness: Looking for Edification in Kierkegaard*. Tietjen says "the process of taking one's dissertation and transforming it over the course of several years into something that more than five people might want to read is a harrowing one." For example, he just returned from a conference of philosophers of religion where he presented the opening chapter of the book, thinking that it was more or less completed. An excellent Kierkegaard scholar attended the conference, and she offered critical and valuable feedback, which was great news in one sense. According to Tietjen, her input will ultimately lead to the improvement of his work. However, he wasn't as far as he thought he was, and one can see how the process of writing something the size of a book can continue for a long time.

(continued, page 6)

PHILOSOPHER'S WISDOM

"Wherever your life ends, it is all there. The advantage of living is not measured by length, but by use; some men have lived long, and lived little; attend to it while you are in it. It lies in your will, not in the number of years, for you to have lived enough."

~ Michel de Montaigne

SUMMER 2011 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Phil 2130-01 Introduction to World Religions Dr. Mark Tietjen
Session I: May 9-May 21 MTWRF 1:00-4:25 p.m. (Pafford 307)

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. May count for credit in Core Area E4.

Phil 2010-01 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Walter Riker
Session II: June 4-July 24 MWF 10:00 a.m.-11:50 p.m. (Pafford 307)

In this course students examine several philosophical problems by considering what some historically significant philosophers have had to say about them. Our examination will also introduce students to the way philosophers tend to reflect on our world. Problems we will consider include the following: Do we have free will? What does it mean to "know" something? Can we know that we are not dreaming or in the matrix right now? How could we come to know it? If we are free and equal, what gives some people (i.e., the government) the right to tell others (the rest of us) what to do? Even if the government has this right, do citizens always have a duty to obey? Can we prove that God exists? If God exists, why do bad things happen? If God exists, can we know what God wants from us? Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.

Phil 2030-01 Introduction to Ethics Dr. Walter Riker
Session II: June 4-July 24 MWF 12:00-1:50 p.m. (Pafford 307)

This course introduces students to central concepts in normative ethical theory and explores some contemporary moral problems, such as euthanasia, capital punishment, abortion, gay marriage, and just war. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.

Phil 2020 Critical Thinking Dr. Thomas Brommage
Session III: June 4-June 24 MTWRF 3:00-5:15 p.m. (Pafford 308)

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.

FALL 2011 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Phil 2010 01 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Janet Donohoe
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. (Anthropology 2)

This course takes an historical look at major philosophical questions through the primary texts of such important philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, Descartes, Nietzsche, Camus, and Arendt. 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 in Core Area C2.

Phil 2010-02 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Janet Donohoe
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. (Anthropology 2)

Same as above.

Phil 2020-01 Critical Thinking Dr. Walter Riker
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. (Pafford 109)

In this course students learn to recognize and evaluate several different kinds of arguments. Students will practice their developing skills by analyzing several influential contemporary 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 2020-04 Critical Thinking Dr. Mark Tietjen
TR 9:30-10:45 a.m. (Pafford 109)

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 2030-01 Introduction to Ethics Dr. Robert Lane
MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. (TLC 1200)

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 3100-01 Ancient and Medieval Philosophy Dr. Mark Tietjen
TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. (Pafford 109)

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 3120-01 American Philosophy Dr. Robert Lane
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. (Humanities 209)

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? 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 Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, as well as more recent pragmatists, including Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty.

Phil 3140-01 Existentialism Dr. Janet Donohoe
MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. (Pafford 109)

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.

Phil 4115-01 Political Philosophy Dr. Walter Riker
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. (Pafford 109)

Three theories form the mainstream of contemporary political philosophy: utilitarianism, liberal egalitarianism, and libertarianism. Each defends liberal democracy, though in its own way. We will start this course by considering arguments for each of these theories, and by thinking about how each is related to liberal democracy. We will then consider several alternatives to this political mainstream, including Marxism, communitarianism, feminism, civic republicanism and multiculturalism. Along the way, we will think about the nature and place of values such as equality, liberty, rights, the common good, identity and androgyny in our political culture.

Phil 4230-01W Philosophy of Religion Dr. Mark Tietjen
TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. (Pafford 109)

In this course we will examine philosophical arguments about religious questions such as the existence of God, the problem of evil, the relationship between faith and reason, religious pluralism, and the relationship between religion and science. Required for Religion-track majors.

Phil 4300-01W Senior Seminar: Political Obligation Dr. Walter Riker
MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. (Pafford 309)

Do citizens have a moral duty to obey the laws of their state? This is the problem of political obligation, and it is an old problem in philosophy. It is the main subject of Plato's *Crito*, where Socrates must decide whether to accept a legal punishment or flee from Athens to save his life. We will read influential contemporary work on this problem, including Wolff's *In Defense of Anarchism* and Simmons' *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*. This is a capstone course, required for philosophy majors and restricted to seniors. All philosophy majors planning to graduate before December 2012 should register for this section of Senior Seminar.

11th Annual Meeting of the Minds What is Love?

If you've ever been in love or never been in love, you still know love's got something to do with it! Please join us for this year's discussion about love. The event is free and open to the public.

- WHEN:** Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.
WHERE: Kathy Cashen Hall
WHO: Confucius, Plato, Shakespeare, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Weil.
WHY: Because we're philosophers and we're interested in love.

Philosophers will be played by James McIntyre, Ryan Washington, Donny Smith, Elizabeth Mathis, Daniel Vinson, and Lindy Oller with Kris Aper as the moderator.

Annual Philosophy Awards Ceremony

This year's awards ceremony will take place on Friday, April 8, 2011 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: Ryan Washington and Savannah Bergevine

Gordon Watson Award in Philosophy: Kevin King

Inductees to Phi Sigma Tau: Jason Barton, Michelle Bryant, Kevin King, Katie Murphy, Leviell Waits, Lewis Williams

Meeting of the Minds participants: James McIntyre, Ryan Washington, Donny Smith, Elizabeth Mathis, Daniel Vinson, Lindy Oller, Kris Aper

Student Conference Presenters: Leviell Waits, Joshua Moore, Matt Lee, Elizabeth Mathis, Donny Smith, Lewis Williams

Philosophical Society Essay Prize Winner: Kevin King

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!

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 spring 2011 meetings are being held every other Tuesday at 3:45 in the Dean's conference room on the third floor of TLC. For more information, check out the Philosophy Society's website at <http://www.westga.edu/~philsoc>, or contact Dr. Tietjen (mtietjen@westga.edu).

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.

Upcoming Undergraduate Conferences

Although most of the submission deadlines for the following conferences have passed, students should think about attending one or more of these conferences to see what it is like so that you can present a paper in the future. It's great experience and gives you feedback from people outside the department. Keep these conferences in mind for next year!

UNC Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill; Conference dates: April 23-24, 2011; Submission deadline: January 23, 2011.

Continental Drift: Undergraduate Philosophy and Religion Conference

University of North Carolina—Wilmington; Conference dates: April 9, 2011; Submission deadline (abstracts): March 4, 2011.

First Annual Classic City Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

University of Georgia; Conference dates: April 8-9, 2011; Submission deadline (abstracts): March 11, 2011.

8th Annual North Georgia Student Philosophy Conference

Kennesaw State University; Conference dates: April 8-9, 2011; Submission deadline (abstracts): March 7, 2011.

National Conference on Undergraduate Research

Cornell University; Conference dates: March 31-April 2, 2011; Abstract submission dates: Oct.4-Nov.19, 2010.

Annual Georgia Student Philosophy Symposium

Georgia State University; Conference date: March 19, 2011; Submission deadline: January 20, 2011.

Appalachian Regional Student Philosophy Colloquium

East Tennessee State University; Conference dates: March 18-19, 2011; Submission deadline: February 4, 2011.

(continued from page 2)

Dr. Donohoe

Dr. Donohoe is working on a couple of major projects as well as some smaller articles. The smaller articles include one about the phenomenological shift involved when one becomes a parent. Donohoe outlines how the world begins to seem like a much bigger and scarier place when one is suddenly responsible for the care of a small child who can be easily hurt by everyday things in the world. Donohoe uses Husserl and Heidegger to support this investigation. The other article is a piece engaging with a hermeneutic analysis of monuments. Donohoe is asking about the ways in which national traditions become embedded in the built environment and whether monuments are necessarily ideological, or whether it is possible for monuments to engage the viewer in critique or even existential reflection.

In keeping with this second article, Donohoe is also working on a book-length project dealing with memory,

tradition, and monuments. This project has been in the works for a couple of years and although she has much written, Dr. Donohoe says she continues to rework and add more to the project. In addressing the ways in which collective memory is produced and supported by monuments, Donohoe finds herself lucky enough to be able to analyze many specific monuments from those on The Mall in Washington, DC, to District 6 in Cape-town, South Africa, to Stalinist monuments of Russia. This type of analysis of particular monuments has led to her main project for this coming summer which is a less strictly academic approach to Georgia monuments. Donohoe is working with Professor Kirk in the art department, as well as a local historian, to put together a glossy coffee table book about Georgia monuments including photographs, historical background, and phenomenological analysis of many of Georgia's interesting and prominent monuments.

Summer Reading Suggestions

Dr. Janet Donohoe

- Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*
- Richard Kearney, *On Stories*

Dr. Robert Lane

- William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*
- Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*

Dr. Walter Riker

- Stan van Hoofft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics*
- Janet Broughton, *Descartes's Method of Doubt*

Dr. Mark Tietjen

- William Rowe, ed., *God and the Problem of Evil*
- T. Morris, ed., *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*

Dr. Tom Brommage

- Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*
- Theodore Schatzki, *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*