From the Department Head’s Desk

The 2012/13 academic year has been one of challenges and great successes. The department has moved forward in numerous ways. We graduated our first students from the MA program in Religious Studies and found a new philosophy colleague in Dr. Grace Hunt. We prepared ourselves to make important contributions to the new Colonnade program (the General Education program that will be implemented in Fall 2014) and hosted a wonderful philosophy conference (the 39th Annual Conference on Value Inquiry). Most importantly, we continued to serve our students as both teachers and mentors. I continue to be amazed at the wonderful work our faculty does on behalf of our students. In addition, many of them completed major scholarly achievements, received grants and awards, and proved once again that we have one of the most accomplished faculties on this campus.

We say goodbye to a few faculty members this May. Dr. Jan Garrett moves on to full retirement with the close of the year. And both Dr. Ingrid Lilly and Dr. Adrian Switzer are embarking on new stages in their lives. We thank them for their contributions to our work and our lives.

I hope the summer is both productive and relaxing, and I'm looking forward already to seeing students and faculty back on campus in August.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

Congratulations to the Class of 2013

The end of the academic year always means having to say goodbye (we hope only “see you later”) to the many students who enliven our department and our teaching. Congratulations to all of the following students.


Philosophy majors: Shouta Brown, Erin Fleischmann, Clayton Graham, Travis Plamp, James Stewart, and Mary Zellmer.


Philosophy minors: Tyler Wittmer

Religious Studies minors: Robert Bunch, Shanna Downey, Jerry Habraken, Laura Long, Lindsey Mattingly, Mary Ellen Moody, Cameron Pickup, Joshua Schofill, Terry Stinnett, Anna Vied, and Andrew Yontz.

Many thanks to all of these students. Your participation in our classes and in our programs has added greatly to our work.
Philosophers Earn Prestigious Awards
Dr. Michael Seidler and Dr. Audrey Anton Receive Grants

Two members of the philosophy program have received significant awards that will result in important scholarly work and the development of a new course here at WKU.

Dr. Michael Seidler has been awarded a Research Visit Grant by DAAD (the German Academic Exchange Service) for Fall 2013. The grant will allow him to spend several months in Berlin (Germany) as a visiting scholar at the Institut für Philosophie, and the Interdisziplinäres Zentrum “Mittelalter - Renaissance - Frühe Neuzeit,” both at the Freie Universität Berlin (FUB). His main project will be to bring his ongoing edition of Samuel Pufendorf, Dissertationes academicae selectiores (1675), to completion. This work is under contract to the Akademie Verlag (Berlin) and will appear as Vol. 8 of Samuel Pufendorf: Gesammelte Werke, ed. Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann. While working at FUB and the Berlin State Library, Dr. Seidler also will conduct research for several other writing projects that he will pursue during an upcoming sabbatical.

Dr. Audrey Anton has been awarded an Enduring Questions Pilot Course Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant is for $23,390. It provides Dr. Anton with resources to conduct research, develop, and implement a new course called “Why Are Bad People Bad?” The department hopes to offer the course as early as Fall 2014. Dr. Anton was one of only four scholars in Kentucky to receive an NEH grant, and the only one in her category.

Dr. Samuels Wins College Advising Award

Faculty members in the Department of Philosophy and Religion regularly receive recognition for the excellent work that they do with students, for the university, and in their disciplines. This year was no different, with Dr. Samuels receiving the Potter College award for excellence in academic advising.

Dr. Samuels, associate professor of Religious Studies, was instrumental in the creation of our new Asian Religions and Cultures (ARC) major. Though only in its third full year, the ARC major already has 30 students in it. Dr. Samuels has been tireless in promoting the major, recruiting students from numerous related programs on campus. In many cases, students may not even have been aware of the opportunity to major in ARC if not for the classroom visits or personal e-mails from Dr. Samuels. Through his many efforts, Dr. Samuels is growing the ARC major into a very successful program and, even more, creating a genuine community of young scholars.

Dr. Samuels encourages students in ARC or Religious Studies to pursue study abroad opportunities, extensively helping them with applications (including fairly laborious Fulbright applications) and figuring out how they can integrate these opportunities into their programs. Without sacrificing any academic rigor, he advocates for his students and comes up with common sense and fruitful solutions to problems that might arise in regard to specific program requirements. His advising moves beyond the merely academic to personal and professional development. In a very important way he understands that the curriculum should serve the personal, academic, and professional needs of the student.

While Dr. Samuels’ recent focus has been on the ARC major, he also continues to make critical contributions to the Religious Studies program and its students. He has played a particularly important role in the implementation of the new MA program in Religious Studies.

On behalf of his colleagues and his students, we extend to Dr. Samuels our congratulations on this significant achievement.
Student Award Winners

Each year the Department of Philosophy and Religion selects outstanding students for their excellent academic work. These students are recognized at the Potter College Student Awards Ceremony along with their faculty mentors. Above are (back row, left to right) Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo (Department Head), Dr. Joseph Trafton (Religious Studies), David Leonhardt (Religious Studies, Undergraduate), Terry Shoemaker (Religious Studies, Graduate), William Simpson (Religious Studies, Graduate), Dr. Audrey Anton (Philosophy), Dr. Michael Seidler (Philosophy) and (front row, left to right) Ben Hussung (Religious Studies, Undergraduate), Vanessa Allbright (Asian Religions and Cultures), Shouta Brown (Philosophy), and Ashley Coulter (Philosophy).

Students Earn Scholarships and Grants

Each year students from the Department of Philosophy and Religion compete for various scholarships and grants. And they often are successful.

John Winstead, rising sophomore in Philosophy, has been awarded a Faculty-Undergraduate Student Engagement Grant to work on a project with Dr. Ian Schnee entitled “First-Order Logic Formalization of the Rules of the Game Go in Prolog.” The grant is provided by the WKU Office of Academic Affairs and Office of Research. It provides funding for the purchase of necessary materials and for Mr. Winstead and Dr. Schnee to present their work at a conference.

Daniel Shouse, graduate student in Religious Studies, will be attending the prestigious South Asian Summer Language Institute program to study Tamil at the University of Wisconsin. Mr. Shouse received a tuition scholarship from SASLI, and also was awarded a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship from the University of Chicago. His work also is receiving funding from the WKU’s Office of Scholar Development, the Office of Graduate Studies, the Potter College Dean’s Office, and the Department of Philosophy and Religion.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS

David Leonhardt, senior religious studies major, was named one of 12 College Scholars for Potter College. The distinction recognized David’s exceptional academic work in his four years at WKU.

Rebecca Morgan, senior religious studies major, and Clay Graham, senior philosophy major, successfully completed honors theses in April.

Shouta Brown, senior philosophy major, has been accepted to the graduate program in philosophy at Miami University. He also received a substantial funding package.

Terry Shoemaker, graduate student in Religious Studies, has been selected as a summer researcher for the Harvard Pluralism Project. The Pluralism Project seeks to assess religious diversity across the United States. Terry will be researching religious diversity in Bowling Green/Warren County.

Several students in the department received the President’s Volunteer Service Award this year. They are Allison Feikes, Joanna Williams, Tyler Wittmer, and Nathan Ayers. Good work to all!

Kyle Young, 2012 philosophy graduate, has accepted a teaching position at the Academy of Bordeaux through the Teaching Assistant Program in France. He will be teaching English at the secondary level in the Bordeaux region.

Please send any student or alumni news to eric.bain-selbo@wku.edu.
As you consider your contribution to the New Century of Spirit campaign for Western Kentucky University, please remember that you can designate your gift to the Philosophy and Religion Department. Your contributions are critical to the life of the department and its students.

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION NEWS

Department of Philosophy and Religion
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WKU STUDENTS STUDY RELIGION ON BROADWAY

By Austin Lanter (Religious Studies and Journalism Major)

This past January, 23 students from Western Kentucky University boarded a plane headed for Broadway in New York City. Led by Dr. Joseph Trafton and Paula Trafton, the students saw eight Broadway shows in just seven days, all while learning about “Religion and Broadway.”

For three days before the trip, the students met in Bowling Green for class before heading to the Big Apple. Students learned about literary concepts like plot and character development as well as differing scholarly definitions of religion so they would be able to apply them to shows once in New York.

The list of shows for the trip included a few big names, such as Wicked, The Lion King, Phantom of the Opera, and Chicago. In addition, the group also saw Once, Spider Man, Peter and the Starcatcher and Newsies.

Along with the seven shows, after two of them, The Lion King and Once, the casts from the shows came out after everyone left to talk to the WKU students in a question and answer session.

“Being able to see the Original Broadway Cast (of Once) and have a talkback with them was super exciting and something that most people can't say that they have done,” Lexington sophomore Eric Mattingly said. “It really made that part of the trip special and unique.”

Mattingly also said Once was his favorite show and that it was “neat” being able to see and listen to the original cast live because he had been listening to the soundtrack, which the cast made, for months prior to the trip.

Although seeing eight shows in seven days could be seen as tiring, Owensboro senior and theatre major Jessica Basham said it was a good thing that all the shows were seen in such a short amount of time.

“I think seeing the shows back to back helped me compare and contrast them, and really get a sense of which shows were my favorite,” Basham said. “The Lion King, Wicked, and Newsies were the most fun, and I really enjoyed Once and Peter and the Starcatcher.”

For Basham, and several others on the trip, it was the first time they were able to spend time in the city. The students were also able to see a different side of New York by staying in a hostel with people from all over the world, which helped add to the NYC experience.

“This was my first trip to NYC, and getting to live in the city for a week and find my way around Manhattan was challenging, but a lot of fun,” Basham said.

“Religion and Broadway” provided the students with a unique experience to study an uncommon topic while providing a classroom that did not just consist of desks, but instead involved stages and actors. It is an experience the students will not soon forget.

“Before this trip I hadn't seen any show in NYC, after this trip I've seen more than most people ever see up there,” Mattingly said. “It was so inspiring to be able to experience that world so deeply. After the trip I wanted to just move up there and live that week over and over again.”
Department Graduates First MA Students in Religious Studies

On May 10, Terry Shoemaker (second from the right) and William Simpson (second from the left) became the first graduates of the Masters of Arts program in Religious Studies at Western Kentucky University. The program is the only one of its kind in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

At an impromptu hooding ceremony before commencement, Terry and William were hooded by Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo (far left) with the assistance of Dr. Jeffrey Samuels (far right). They were joined at the ceremony by several family members and friends of the graduates.
DEPARTMENT HOSTS 39TH CONFERENCE ON VALUE INQUIRY

This April 9-11th, the Department of Philosophy and Religion hosted the 39th Conference on Value Inquiry with the research theme: Virtue, Vice, and Character. WKU welcomed 59 speakers from all over the world to present original research related to the conference theme. Among them included two esteemed keynote speakers: Julia Driver and John Doris (both from the University of Washington at St. Louis). Driver presented recent work on the Humean concept of empathy (sympathy) and how this relates to persons with autism and sociopathy. Doris presented his work on situationism. He argued for a moral psychological stance that claims that while people have traits, situational influences (even seemingly small and insignificant ones) are often more integral to the explanation of behavior than a person’s character. Other papers covered themes such as the moral status of using drugs, the possibility of virtuous villains, the relationship between intellectual and moral virtues, the possibility of corporations having virtues, and how best to encourage moral education and character development.

In addition to the wealth of cutting-edge research the department was able to attract to Bowling Green, the university writ large contributed significantly to the event. We are grateful for financial support from the Honors College, the Potter College of Arts and Letters, WKU’s Psychology Department, and the Society for Values in Higher Education. Four of the 59 presenters represented WKU: Dr. Paul Fischer (Religious Studies), Dr. Ian Schnee (Philosophy), Dr. Sam McFarland (Psychology), and Wolfgang Brauner (Honors College). At least 50 students attended and participated in the conference and, of those, 19 volunteered to undertake essential organizational tasks, such as chairing sessions, handling registration, and designing the conference program. The conference was truly a university-wide effort and we celebrate the local participation that we enjoyed as well as the international reach the event demonstrated.
Above: Dr. Audrey Anton and senior philosophy majors Clay Graham (left) and Shouta Brown (right) review the program for the conference. Students were critical to the success of the meeting by leading sessions, planning events, creating the program, and much more. In addition to Graham and Brown, the other students who helped were David Allen, Sarah Becker, Erika Brown, Ashley Coulter, Forrest Deacon, Marcus Evans, Jim Ingram, Cullen Pittman, Ian Robinson, Alex Stewart, Heidi Taylor, Rachel Taylor (alumnus), Tiffani Walton, John Winstead, Timothy Witthuhn, and Mary Zellmer.

Left: Dr. Julia Driver of Washington University in St. Louis delivers one of the keynote addresses at the conference. Her colleague, Dr. John Doris, was the other keynote speaker.