From the Department Head’s Desk
Creating and Supporting a Community of Scholars

One of the most important objectives we have in the Department of Philosophy and Religion is the creation of a vibrant and rich intellectual community on the third floor of Cherry Hall. Achieving this objective requires a strong commitment to the education of our students and a strong commitment to the research and writing of our faculty.

The faculty members in our department are scholars with significant publication records and excellent academic reputations across the country and around the globe. Our new faculty members not only have great potential, they already are making important contributions to their areas of study. They undoubtedly will carry on the strong tradition of scholarly accomplishments that the department has established.

A faculty engaged in research and active in scholarship adds greatly to the intellectual life of a department. They are aware of the most current developments in their fields, and thus are able to serve students in a more dynamic way. Even though their research and writing commitments are very time consuming, student learning remains their top priority. Their goal is to bring the students (undergraduate as well as graduate students) into the intellectual communities in which they work. In this way, students join faculty to form a community of scholars—enriching the intellectual life of all.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

Congratulations to Our December 2011 Graduates

The joy of the holiday season is heightened by the graduation of many of our philosophy and religious studies students. Of course, that joy is tempered by the thought that they also will no longer be in our classrooms and visiting our offices (but they always can come visit!). Congratulations to all of the following students.

**Asian Religions and Cultures major:** Trace H. McGuire

**Philosophy major:** Kevin L. Bonner, Kevin V. Reel, Jacob A. Thomas, and Ryan H. Wright.

**Religious Studies major:** Colleen M. Kirsch Hiltz White, Lois M. Nassar, and Ivan Shelburne.

**Asian Studies minor:** Jessica Vessels.

**Philosophy minor:** Endi Babi, Benjamin I. Brooks, Marc E. Manley, and Andrew D. Swanson.

**Religious Studies minor:** Kevin L. Bonner and Matthew S. Powell.
Student Engagement

Learning Doesn’t Just Happen in Our Classrooms

It goes without saying that some of the most important work we do here on the third floor of Cherry Hall happens in our classrooms. But clearly student learning is not restricted to those rooms, and we continually endeavor to provide our students with other learning experiences. On this page are just a few examples.

Student organizations are a great way for students to share what they are studying in their courses and to learn from one another. A long-standing group in the department is Theta Alpha Kappa, the national honors society in religious studies. Pictured here are a number of students who attended an informational session about TAK, along with the faculty adviser, Dr. Ingrid Lilly (far right). The department also supports an active Philosophy Club (the faculty adviser is Dr. Audrey Anton). For more information about these clubs, contact Dr. Lilly at ingrid.lilly@wku.edu or Dr. Anton at audrey.anton@wku.edu.

Through our Film and Lecture Series each semester, we provide students with multiple opportunities to explore philosophy and religious studies outside the classroom. During Fall 2011, our film offerings included a series on religion and violence in addition to other showings. We also hosted lectures by Dr. Tony Stewart, Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University, and Dr. Timothy Schroeder from Ohio State University (pictured above).

Each semester provides us with opportunities for informal gathering so that faculty and students can talk about their work. Above is a picture from our graduating students reception in December 2011.
Singapore Bound

**Dr. Samuels Awarded Prestigious Research Fellowship**

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, associate professor of religious studies, has been awarded a fellowship to conduct research at the Asian Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. He will be a Senior Research Fellow there this coming summer.

Dr. Samuels’ research will examine how religious identities may function as strategies of legitimation for Chinese Malaysians and other Buddhist minorities (e.g., Sri Lankan, Myanmar, and Thai) living in the dominant Malay-Muslim nation-state of Malaysia. He will also be examining the roles that Singapore, Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka have played and continue to play in the establishment and development of Theravada institutions in Malaysia, as well as how Buddhist monastic and lay leaders in Malaysia negotiate and reconcile competing notions of orthodoxy and contending conceptions of Theravada Buddhism that exist across Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Dr. Samuels also received a grant from the American Academy of Religion to support his research.

ARC Student Spends Summer in India

The Department of Philosophy and Religion encourages students to take advantage of study abroad opportunities. Such experiences enhance and expand what students learn in the classroom.

In the case of Sarah Moody, senior in Asian Religions and Cultures as well as Social Work, going to India also gave her the chance to apply what she’d learned at WKU. Here’s how she describes the experience:

*My experiences during the summer of 2011 as an intern with the Madras Christian Council of Social Services in Chennai, India truly challenged me to apply my previous Social Work and Asian Religions and Cultures coursework in a diverse setting. I worked alongside field workers while traveling to the homes of female self-help group leaders in the slums of the inner city. I researched and planned programs for the agency’s “inmates,” the victims of human trafficking housed in the agency’s protection home. In the evenings, I joined my multi-generational Hindu host family in visits to their temple or exchanged family recipes while cooking together. I had many opportunities to travel to important historical and cultural sites. Additionally, I visited regional civic organizations and met with community leaders to discuss local challenges. I regularly met with the Madras Christian College’s Dean of Social Work to discuss my experiences immersed in a plethora of cultures, ethical dilemmas, and how to synthesize my host family experiences with what I observed within the community.*

Students interested in study abroad are encouraged to talk with their advisers or the Department Head, Eric Bain-Selbo. In many cases, the Department can provide assistance with the travel costs of these important opportunities.

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**STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS**

Several philosophy students attended the fall meeting of the Kentucky Philosophical Association at Northern Kentucky University in October. The students were Clay Graham, Jim Ingram, Daniel Moore, Zac Robinson, and Ryan Wright, all of whom represented WKU very well by participating in discussions of professional presentations throughout the day.

**Leigh Anne St. Charles**, 2011 graduate in philosophy, began her first year at Columbia Law School in New York City.

**Hunter Rose**, 2011 graduate in philosophy, has been accepted to the MA program in philosophy at the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

**Eddie Rogers**, 2010 graduate in philosophy, just completed a year in South Korea teaching English as a Second Language. He currently is studying video game design at The Guildhall at Southern Methodist University. He says “I thought game design was strictly for people with strong computer backgrounds, but it turns out the game industry is in need of people who can grasp principles of design and game theory, and bring new ideas and life experiences to the table. I think a lot of the philosophy classes I took at Western helped prepare me for that.”

Please send any student or alumni news to eric.bain-selbo@wku.edu.
Dr. Audrey Anton, assistant professor of philosophy, presented her paper, “Willing, Unwilling and Binding Addiction” first at the Alabama Philosophical Association Annual Meeting and again at the Kentucky Philosophical Association Annual Meeting (hosted by Northern Kentucky University). Anton also presented her paper, “Does Technology Make Old Age Obsolete?” at Living Well in the 21st Century: Challenges and Responses, a conference sponsored by the Society for Indian Philosophy and Religion. Since then, this piece has been accepted for publication and will appear in a collection of essays, Morality and Spirituality in the Contemporary World, published by Cambridge Scholars Press. In addition to her own work, Anton reviewed two scholarly books this semester: Moral Psychology: Historical and Contemporary Readings edited by Thomas Nadelhoffer, Eddy Nahmias and Shaun Nichols, (the review of which can be found on Metapsychology Online Reviews, vol. 15 no. 47 (November 22, 2011)), and Myth, Metaphysics and Dialectic in Plato’s Statesman by D. A. White, forthcoming in Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy, vol. 15 (2012).

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, professor of philosophy and religion, presented a paper entitled “Higher Education and the Arts and Humanities in a Consumer Society” at the annual Social Theory, Politics, and the Arts meeting. The meeting was held in October in Lexington, KY. In November, he was on a panel at the American Academy of Religion meeting in San Francisco, focusing on the current state of the study of sports and religion.

Dr. Ingrid Lilly, assistant professor of religion, was active at the conference for the Society of Biblical Literature this fall, presenting her paper ‘Corpses and Rewriting the Bones: Ezekiel 37 in Papyrus 967, MT, and Pseudo-Ezekiel’ and chairing the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible section. She also began her role as Assistant Editor for the journal ‘TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism’ affiliated with SBL. Closer to home, she hosted a fall film series on Violence and Religion at The Bowling Green Presbyterian Church which was well attended by students and the public.

Dr. Monique Moultrie, visiting assistant professor of religion, presented a paper entitled “Don’t Ask Until I Tell: Leadership through Sexual Confession” at the American Academy of Religion meeting in San Francisco in November. In addition to presenting, she was elected to the American Academy of Religion’s Status of Women in the Profession Committee and attended their preconference workshop on Overcoming Barriers to Underrepresented Scholarship. In January, she will present a paper at the Society of Christian Ethics entitled “Interrogating Holy Bodies: A Womanist and Cultural Analysis of Religious Media.”

Dr. Bella Mukonyora, associate professor of religious studies, returns to teaching in Spring 2012 with a chapter of her work on religious language, nationalism and conflict published in the book, Displacing the State: Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa (Kroc Institute: Religion Conflict & Peacebuilding, edited by James Howard Smith and Rosalind I. J. Hackett Dec 30, 2011). Dr. Mukonyora spent her sabbatical writing chapters of a book relating African perspectives religion and nature to attitudes concerning the environment. She also has accepted an invitation to give a keynote speech to mark the start of a new research project on 21st century “Affective Displacements” at the University of Bergen in Norway.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, associate professor of religious studies, gave two invited lectures at the Center for South Asian Studies and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin. The lectures were entitled “Seeking Unity, Seeking Legitimacy: Buddhism as an Alternative Source of Citizenship in Malay-Muslim Malaysia” and “Toward an Aesthetic of Monastic Recruitment: The Monastery as an Avenue for Upward Mobility?” While at Wisconsin, he also led a graduate workshop for MA and PhD students.

Dr. Ian Schnee, assistant professor of philosophy, presented a paper on philosophy and film titled “Ideology, Socratic elenchus, and Inglourious Basterds” at both the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Washington, DC, as well as at the Hawaii University Humanities Conference in Honolulu, HI. At the latter conference he presented a second paper titled “The Feminine Logical Mystique: Rethinking Feminist Critiques of Formal Logic.” Dr. Schnee also attended the fall meeting of the Kentucky Philosophical Association, responding to two papers at the conference.

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

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