As any academic year draws to a close, it always is a time to reflect upon the challenges and achievements of the previous semesters. This past year was one of great excitement and learning for me. I want to thank all the department faculty and our students for making this a great first year. I also want to thank our office workers and especially our departmental office associate, Paula Johnson, whose efforts on a daily basis allow our faculty to teach and our students to learn.

This past year we completed our search for a new philosophy faculty member, and I am pleased to announce that Dr. Adrian Switzer will be joining us in the fall (read more about him on page 2). While we were not successful in our search for an East Asian religion specialist, work on that will begin anew in September.

Students will notice a number of other staffing changes in the fall. We sadly say goodbye to Shannon Schaffer, whose teaching in the area of Hebrew scripture and mentorship of our students will be missed greatly. Her energy and creativity in the classroom have inspired many students and contributed significantly to our work in the department. Beginning in the fall we will conduct an international search to fill the Hebrew scripture faculty line.

In addition, the spring brought another faculty member moving to optional retirement—Dr. Jan Garrett. On April 30 the department held a reception to honor our faculty members who have moved to optional retirement in the last year or so. They are Dr. Alan Anderson, Dr. Jan Garrett, Dr. John Long, Dr. Edward Schoen, Dr. Arvin Vos. A story about the reception is on page 3.

Of course, what often is at the forefront of our minds at this time of year is the work we’ve been able to do with students. In particular, we realize that May brings to an end the undergraduate academic careers of many of our students. This year we congratulate one of our largest graduating classes. We hope that they will come back often to visit us at the “Top of the Hill.” We are thrilled to have them join the large contingent of exceptional alumni of our department.

Eric Bain-Selbo
Department Head
Philosophy and Religion
Western Kentucky University

Class of 2008

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<th>Philosophy Majors</th>
<th>Religious Studies Majors</th>
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<td>Rebecca Brandt</td>
<td>Kristi Darks</td>
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<td>Rachel Cook</td>
<td>Kathryn Dillinger</td>
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<td>Ethan Davis</td>
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<td>John Hurley</td>
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<td>Noah Kapley</td>
<td>Allison Hosale</td>
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<td>Philosophy Minors</td>
<td>Bailey Ross</td>
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Dr. Alan Anderson Honored by Knox College

Dr. Alan Anderson, a 1956 graduate of Knox College in Illinois, was honored by that institution with its Alumni Achievement Award. The Knox College Alumni Magazine provided the following description of Dr. Anderson’s achievements:

While pursuing graduate degrees in social ethics at the University of Chicago, Anderson was one of the leaders of Chicago's civil rights movement, organizing Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1965 visit to the city. He offered the first courses on the search for racial justice at the University of Chicago, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Wilberforce University, and Western Kentucky University. He is also the founder of the Social Ethics Seminar, a professional organization of his former students who continue the discussion of race issues. In 1986, he was the co-author of Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

Congratulations Dr. Anderson!

Dr. Adrian Switzer to Join Philosophy Faculty

With a wide range of expertise in the field of philosophy, Dr. Adrian Switzer is certain to make significant contributions to the philosophy program at WKU when he joins the faculty in the fall.

Dr. Switzer has a MA and PhD from Loyola University in Chicago, where he completed his dissertation on “Kant and the Completeness of Metaphysics” in 2006. He also has a BA from Lehigh University and did post-baccalaureate work in philosophy at California State University (San Francisco) and the University of California (Berkeley).

Currently, Dr. Switzer is a Faculty Fellow/Affiliate Professor at Emory University and University Lecturer at Spelman College in Atlanta. He also has teaching experience at a number of other institutions, including Northwestern University.

Dr. Switzer's research is primarily in modern and contemporary Continental philosophy. His dissertation is under review by Cambridge University Press and he also is working on a manuscript about the French reception of Nietzsche in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Among his many professional affiliations, he is a member of the Executive Committee of the Hannah Arendt Circle for the current academic year.

Philosophy and Religion Students Win Awards

Each spring, the faculty in the Department of Philosophy and Religion identifies three outstanding students to be recipients of departmental awards. Once again this was a difficult task given the many excellent students in both the philosophy and religious studies programs.

In philosophy, senior Rachel Cook was this year’s recipient of the Award for Excellence in Scholarship in Philosophy. In addition, junior Rory Padgett was the recipient of this year’s Larry D. Mayhew Book Scholarship, recognizing his exceptional work in the study of philosophy.

In religious studies, senior Leah Craig was this year’s recipient of the Award for Excellence in Scholarship in Religious Studies. We congratulate these students, whose hard work and perseverance have led them to academic excellence.
On April 30, the Department of Philosophy and Religion held a reception in honor of several faculty members who have gone to optional retirement in the last year and a half. The five optional retirees are Alan Anderson (23 years at WKU), Jan Garrett (24 years), Edward Schoen (32 years), John Long (32 years), and Arvin Vos (38 years).

In his remarks at the reception, Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head of Philosophy and Religion, noted that these teachers "touched the lives of students—generations of students who have gone on to graduate school, seminary, and a wide variety of professions. Most importantly, they have gone on to be the citizens who build and sustain our communities. And they do so, I believe, with greater concern and insight as a result of the teaching they received from these men."

As optional retirees, each faculty member teaches half-time in the department. Thus, students will continue to benefit from their expertise and presence in the classroom.

Dr. Scharbrodt Publishes Book on Islam

Dr. Oliver Scharbrodt has published *Islam and the Baha’i Faith* with Routledge Press. The Routledge website describes the book:

Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) was one of the key thinkers and reformers of modern Islam who has influenced both liberal and fundamentalist Muslims today. ‘Abdul-Baha (1844-1921) was the son of Baha’u’llah (1817-1892), the founder of the Baha’i Faith; a new religion which began as a messianic movement in Shi’i Islam, before it departed from Islam.

Oliver Scharbrodt offers an innovative and radically new perspective on the lives of these two major religious reformers in 19th century Middle East by placing both figures into unfamiliar terrain. While one would classify ‘Abdul-Baha, leader of a messianic movement which claims to depart from Islam, as an exponent of heresy in Islam, ‘Abduh is perceived as an orthodox Sunni reformer. This book, however, argues against the assumption that both represent two extremely opposite expressions of Islamic religiosity. It shows that both were influenced by similar intellectual and religious traditions of Islam and that both participated in the same discussions on the reform of Islam in the 19th century.

*Islam and the Baha’i Faith* provides new insights into the Islamic background of the Baha’i Faith and into ‘Abduh’s own association with so-called heretical movements in Islam.

Congratulations Professor Scharbrodt!
Other Faculty, Student, and Alumni News

Alumni


Students

Several students from the Department of Philosophy and Religion made presentations at the WKU Undergraduate Research Conference. The students were (with mentors listed): Lacey Blankenship (Dr. Joseph Trafton), Sarah Kapley (Dr. Jeffrey Samuels), Rory Padgett (Dr. Jan Garrett), Brian Phillips (Dr. Garrett), Cole Puterbaugh (Dr. Trafton), Kathleen Smallwood (Dr. Trafton), and Corey Smith (Dr. Arvin Vos). This is impressive, both in quantity and quality, given the relatively small size of the department. Congratulations to the students (their mentors too) for their accomplishments.

Steven Kimbler, graduating senior in philosophy, has been admitted to the MA program in philosophy at Ohio University. He also received a teaching assistantship. Congratulations and best of luck Steven!

Faculty

Dr. Cassandra Pinnick, Professor of Philosophy, delivered an invited lecture to a Continental Philosophers’ meeting at the University of Hawaii’s East-West Center, in April. The title was “The Continental Origins of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.”

Dr. Bella Mukonyora, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, was invited to give a presentation at Florida State University in March. Her talk was entitled “Together in the Moonlight: Postcolonialism and Gender in African Spirituality.” She also gave public lectures on Christianity in Africa at WKU regional campuses in Hopkinsville and Glasgow. In addition, she recently was nominated to Who’s Who of American Women.

Dr. Jan Garrett, Professor of Philosophy, has had his article, "The Doubtful Descent of Human Rights from Stoicism," accepted for publication in The Nordic Journal of Human Rights.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, gave an invited talk at Miami University of Ohio on April 4th. The title of the talk was "Monks with Hearts: Emotions and Monastic-Lay Relations in Contemporary Theravada Buddhism."

Just a reminder: As Western Kentucky University embarks on its new capital campaign, please consider dedicating your contributions to the Department of Philosophy and Religion to further the study of our disciplines.