From the Department Head’s Desk

Changing Times, Changing Curricula

A curriculum is not something that we perfect and never have to revise again. It is a dynamic and ever-changing process—responding to changes in the world around us, to the needs of the students, and to the skills and expertise of the faculty.

For the fall semester, the department has made some important curricular changes. The religious studies program has been slightly revised and developed a new senior capstone course. This course will allow students to demonstrate the depth and breadth of what they have learned through a culminating project.

The philosophy program has developed three new introductory, General Education courses that will begin in the fall. All the courses have the primary title of “Enduring Questions,” but each has a separate focus: PHIL 101 (Truth and Relativism), PHIL 102 (The Good and the Beautiful), and PHIL 103 (The Committed Life). These new courses are just the beginning of a dramatic curriculum revision that will produce a completely new program for philosophy majors and minors beginning Fall 2010.

Eric Bain-Selbo
Department Head

Congratulations Class of 2009!

Spring brings not only the joy of warm weather and blossoming flowers, but the celebration of the graduation for many of our fine students. To all those listed below, we congratulate you on your academic success and wish you the best in your future endeavors. Please keep in touch.

**Philosophy Majors:** Ryan Bailey, Susan Carson, Crystal Harrison, Eric Isbell, and Scott Triplett.

**Philosophy Minors:** Tara Dunnivant, David Eagain, Taryn Hagan, and Elizabeth Mackey.

**Religious Studies Majors:** Lindsay Allen, Ryan Bailey, Ryan Boyd, Nathaniel Chatelat, Heath Dame, David Dewhirst, John Dix, David Eagain, Rachel Evans, Pharris Garcia, Daniel Hibdon, Matthew Jones, Sarah Kirwan, Rachel Moorman, Ashlie Pitcock, Kelli Storm, Jamie Tulenko, and Kalleigh Turnmyre.

**Religious Studies Minors:** Chelsea Beville, Lacey Blankenship, Eric Isbell, Susan Laun, Terry Maggert, Rachel Mosley, Lisa Petty, Keshia Porter, Michelle Reynolds, Richard Sanders, Jacob Sensenig, Terry Nicholas, and Emily Wilsford.
Pia Antolic Piper and Ingrid Lilly to Join Faculty in the Fall

The Department of Philosophy and Religion will be enhanced greatly by the arrival in the fall of Pia Antolic-Piper and Ingrid Lilly.

Dr. Pia Antolic-Piper specializes in medieval philosophy, and will teach courses in ancient and medieval philosophy as well as others. In the fall she will teach the initial offering of Philosophy 102 (Enduring Questions: The Good and the Beautiful). She completed her dissertation in 2006 at Goethe-University, focusing on Roger Bacon’s commentaries on Aristotle. A revision of her dissertation is forthcoming from the German publisher Akademie Verlag.

Ms. Ingrid Lilly specializes in Hebrew scripture, and will teach courses in that subject as well as Hebrew language and Judaism. She is completing her dissertation at Emory University, focusing on the text of Ezekiel. She has a M.A. in religion from Yale Divinity School and a B.S. in physics from Gordon College. She has spent considerable time studying and working at archeological sites in Israel, and will be developing similar opportunities for our students.

A hearty welcome to both Dr. Antolic-Piper and Ms. Lilly!

Religion Students Work on Documentary About Uganda

For many students, the holiday break between fall and spring semesters is a time to rest and relax or perhaps earn a few extra dollars. But that’s not what religion majors Alex Fortson and Kristen Houser did. Instead, they went to Uganda to research and obtain footage for a very special documentary project. Upon returning, Mr. Fortson provided this report:

This past winter break Kristen Houser and I spent one month in the east African nation of Uganda working on a multimedia documentary on street children, child soldiers, HIV/AIDS victims, prostitution, and their connections to the street life of children in northern Uganda. We spent our time in Lira, which is a district of nearly a million people. During our stay in a local orphanage called Saving Grace in Uganda we conducted photo stories and video interviews on a myriad of aforementioned people for the documentary entitled “Sons Like the Dust.” Kristen and I are currently working on post production and hope to finish the documentary [soon] . . .. We had a wonderful experience and were able to initiate a great deal of social change for the people we were photographing. Many of the street children in our documentary are now in school and one has even moved off the street and into the orphanage. This is largely a result of our work and, of course, the grace of SGIU.

The documentary soon will be available at www.alexanderfortson.com. Funding for this project was partly provided by the Department of Philosophy and Religion, with thanks to alumni and friends who generously have donated funds to support student work like this documentary.
Philosophy and religious studies students and faculty were treated to a thought-provoking lecture by Dr. John Thatamanil on April 15. Approximately 50 people were on hand to hear his talk, “The Trouble with ‘Religion’: Theology of Religious Pluralism and Its Struggles with a Thorny Category.”

Dr. Thatamanil is an assistant professor in the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University. He is working on his second book, Religious Diversity After “Religion”: Rethinking Theologies of Religious Pluralism (Fordham University Press), and his talk addressed some of the issues to be worked out in that manuscript. His first book is entitled The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament. An East-West Conversation (Fortress Press, 2006).

Religious Studies Students Attend Biblical Studies Meeting

Six religious studies students travelled to Memphis in April to attend the Qumran, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Biblical Interpretation Conference. It was a unique opportunity to learn from an incredible roster of internationally recognized scholars in the field. Mr. Ryan Stokes, Instructor in Religious Studies, organized and accompanied the students. Funds were provided by the generous donations of alumni to the department.

From left to right: Emanuel Tov (Hebrew U., Jerusalem), Tommy Johnson (WKU), Taylor Hughey (WKU), James C. VanderKam (Notre Dame), Chase Thompson (WKU), Lawrence Schiffman (New York U.), David Eagin (WKU), Nate Chetelat (WKU), Ryan Stokes (WKU), and Ryan Smith (WKU).

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS

Taylor Hughey, junior philosophy and religious studies major, presented “xxx” at the annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. This year’s meeting was in New Orleans. His paper was well received, and he also chaired another session of the Philosophy and Popular Culture area.

Travis Plamp, senior philosophy major, will be spending Fall 2009 studying in Japan as part of WKU study abroad program at Kansai Gaidai. He will be studying language and culture.

Several students from the department or students working with faculty from the department participated in the 2009 Student Research Conference at WKU. They included (with faculty mentor) Colleen Stewart’s “Memory Mysticism in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind” (Dr. Michael Seidler), Chelsea Bevillé’s “Time and Beyond Time” (Dr. Joseph Trafton), Corey Smith’s “An Exposition of Saint Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge” (Dr. Arvin Vos), and Lark Digges-Elliott’s “Preconceived and Embryonic Notions” (Dr. Michael Seidler).

Alumnus Kurt Reesman has joined the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association Air Safety Foundation (AOPA ASF) lecturing circuit. This includes traveling around the country talking about different aspects of aviation safety to crowds of pilots that are anxious to fly better and safer.

Alumnus Luke Harlow has accepted a tenure-track position at Oakland University in Michigan. He currently is finishing his Ph.D. in history at Rice University.

Alumnus Angela (Fairbanks) Carpenter has accepted an offer to enter the Ph.D. program in New Testament at Notre Dame University.

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
Western Kentucky University
1906 College Heights Blvd.
Bowling Green, KY 42101