From the Department Head’s Desk

A Very Busy Year

Time flies when you’re having fun. It was a very fast year. In addition to the excellent teaching of our faculty, their impressive scholarship, and the exciting work of our students, the department also had some impressive collaborative achievements that will dramatically change what we do.

The Philosophy program completely revised its curriculum, including adding many new courses. The Religious Studies program, in consultation with departments across campus, developed a new major in Asian Religions and Cultures and helped in a significant revision of the Asian Studies minor. Visit our website to find information on all of these important changes (www.wku.edu/philosophy).

In addition, the Religious Studies program has developed a new M.A. program in Religious Studies. The program has been approved by Potter College, and will be reviewed by the Graduate Council in May. If approved, it will be implemented during the fall semester 2011.

Indeed, it was a very busy year.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head of Philosophy and Religion

Congratulations to the Class of 2010

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:** Thomas Bullen, Gregory Capillo, Travis Plamp, and Edward Rogers.

**Religious Studies majors:** Ashley Amos, Cole Bodkin, Sarah Ellen Boswell, Carley Brooks, Garrett Brown, Kaitlin Christian, Garrett Craig, Samantha Crowe, Jessica Curtis, Jake Davis, Daniel Hassell, Eric Huggins, Matthew Hughes, Kerry Markham, Harold Maxwell, Anne Miller, Christopher Obermeyer, Lauren Pruden, Brian Sergent, Derek Shelton, Seth Smallwood, David Speth, William Taylor, Chase Thompson, and Cody Walls.

**Philosophy minors:** Albert Cesare, Jake Davis, Holly Irwin, Clare Lovekamp, Benjamin Lowery, Nathan Salazar, Ryan Tyler, and Whitney Waller.

**Religious Studies minors:** Thomas Clark, Emily Cooper, Jordan Eagain, Jacob Glover, Chase Goff, Andrew Hays, Laura Hess, Clay Hodges, Michael Laws, Caleb Shrum, Jenna Smith, Ryan Turtle, and Ineka Walker.

Many thanks to all of these students. Your participation in our classes and in our programs has added greatly to our work.
Learning on the Road
Students Head Off Campus to Develop as Thinkers and Scholars

Left: Students Evan Scharlow, Andrew Bergman, Jonathan Spence, Chelsea Lamb, Sarah Kapley, and Emily Fox at St. Meinrad Monastery in Indiana. The students visited the monastery with Dr. Jeffrey Samuels as part of his Buddhist/Christian monasticism course.

Above: Philosophy student Derrick Johnson is headed to the Carnegie Mellon Summer School in Logic and Formal Epistemology in June. He is one of only 30 students selected for the program.

Left: Philosophy students Jacob Thomas and Derrick Johnson went to Kennesaw State University in Georgia to present papers at its undergraduate philosophy conference. They were accompanied by Dr. Cassandra L. Pinnick.

Above: Philosophy students Eddie Rogers, Justin Ankenbauer, Kevin Reel, Kyle Green, and Dr. Adrian Switzer wait for the train in Chicago. A dozen students accompanied Dr. Switzer to visit art museums as part of his aesthetics course.
New Book on Buddhist Monasticism

In this important ethnography of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, associate professor of religious studies, takes an unprecedented look at how emotion determines and influences the commitments that laypeople and monastics make to each other and to the Buddhist religion in general. By focusing on “multimoment” histories, Samuels highlights specific junctures in which ideas about recruitment, vocation, patronage, and institution-building are dynamically negotiated and refined. Positing a nexus between aesthetics and affect, he illustrates not only how aesthetic responses trigger certain emotions, but also how personal and shared emotions, at the local level, shape notions of beauty. Dr. Samuels uses the voices of informants to reveal the delicately negotiated character of lay-monastic relations and temple management. His work breaks new ground in that it answers questions about Buddhist emotions and the constitutive roles they play in social life and religious practice through a close, poignant look at small-scale temple and social networks. Throughout, Dr. Samuels makes the case for the need to account for emotions in making the behavior of religious participants and practitioners intelligible.

Drawing on a decade of fieldwork that includes numerous interviews as well as an examination of written and visual sources, Attracting the Heart conveys the manner in which Buddhists describe their own histories, experiences, and encounters as they relate to the formation and continuation of Buddhist monastic culture in contemporary Sri Lanka.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS

Christopher Obermeyer, a graduating religious studies student, has been accepted to the doctoral program in Biological Sciences at George Washington University. Mr. Obermeyer is receiving an impressive scholarship package from GWU, worth approximately $300,000.

Each spring the Department of Philosophy and Religion recognizes three students for their exceptional work in philosophy or religious studies. This year, the winners are Sarah Ellen Boswell (Excellence in Scholarship in Religious Studies), Gregory Capillo (Excellence in Scholarship in Philosophy), and Leigh St. Charles (the Larry D. Mayhew Book Scholarship winner for her work in philosophy).

Two philosophy students presented papers at this year’s WKU Student Research Conference. Eddie Rogers (mentored by Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo) presented “Concepts of Self: Science and Buddhism” and Will Simpson (mentored by Dr. Michael Seidler) presented “Particularism and Defining Morality.”

Corey Smith, philosophy graduate from 2009, has been offered a full-tuition scholarship to attend Ave Maria School of Law.

Katherine Hale, religious studies graduate from 2009, has been awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study in Australia.

Daniel Tallent, religious studies graduate from 2009, will be entering the masters program in religious studies at the University of Missouri. He is receiving a full tuition scholarship as well as a teaching assistant stipend.

Sarah Ellen Boswell, religious studies graduate this May, has received a full-tuition scholarship to attend Case Western Law School.

Please send any student or alumni news to eric.bain-selbo@wku.edu.

Dr. Bain-Selbo Named Next Executive Director of SVHE

At its January board meeting, the Society for Values in Higher Education named Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo the next Executive Director of the organization. SVHE began in 1922, and has been dedicated to the promoting the study of religion (in its earlier years) and values education (more recently) in colleges and universities throughout the country. The organization holds an annual summer meeting, administers various grants related to work in higher education, and has published the interdisciplinary journal Soundings since 1968. This year’s annual meeting is in Portland, Oregon, focusing on the moral dimensions of sustainability.

Dr. Bain-Selbo was nominated for membership in 2000, and has served on the Board of Directors since 2007. He also is a member of the Editorial Board of Soundings.
Dr. Alan Anderson, professor of philosophy and religion, spoke about his Civil Rights Movement experience and research to students in the WKU’s Gatton Academy in February and to more than 150 eighth graders in Franklin in early April.

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, associate professor and department head, presented “The Politics of the Romanticization of Popular Culture, or, Going Ga-Ga Over Pop Culture: A Critical Theory Assessment” at the 40th annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association. The meeting was March 31-April 3 in St. Louis. He also participated in a panel (along with Dr. Anthony Harkins from WKU’s Department of History) entitled “‘Why Is This Course So Damn Hard?’: College Students and the Pedagogy of Popular Culture.”

Dr. Scott Girdner, assistant professor of religion, served on a panel entitled “Islam and Social Responsibility” here at WKU. In April he spoke at the Islamic Center of Bowling Green in conjunction with the screening of “Hope for Creation” as part of Earth Day activities. Also in April, Dr. Girdner spoke at a religious awareness event on campus. This summer he will be busy as a participant in a National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar entitled “Freewill and Human Perfection in Medieval Jewish Philosophy.” The seminar is very much related to his current research, which he will continue throughout the summer with the support of a New Faculty Research Scholarship from WKU.

Ingrid Lilly, instructor in religion, successfully defended her dissertation at Emory University. The dissertation is entitled “Papyrus 967: A Variant Literary Edition of Ezekiel.” She will be awarded her doctorate this month.

Dr. Tripp York, adjunct instructor, has published the children’s book Donkeys and Kings . . . and Other “Tails” of the Bible (Resource Publications, 2010). The book is illustrated by Zak Upright. This is Dr. York’s fourth book.

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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