After an incredibly busy academic year, the quiet that ensues in late May and throughout June and July can be quite welcome. But it doesn’t take long before I miss all the students who have gone home and all the faculty busy tending to summer research and travels around the world. So I’m always happy when my colleagues return and the students move back in. I am especially looking forward to the coming year. Three new faculty members and the beginning of the MA program in Religious Studies promises to make this an exciting year. In addition, we’re finally fully into the new Philosophy program and will continue to grow our new major in Asian Religions and Cultures.

From new personnel to new programs, the third floor of Cherry Hall certainly has been active. And this action has been critical for our intellectual community. Thinking and talking about our programs and courses as well as our pedagogy has helped to make us even more attentive to the interests and needs of our students. At the same time, these conversations have enlivened our work and reinvigorated our commitment to the intellectual life.

It certainly is shaping up to be a great year. Thank goodness we can finally get started.

Congratulations to Student Award Winners

Each spring the faculty in the Department of Philosophy and Religion have a chance to select three students for special recognition of their academic work in our programs.

This year, the Religious Studies program selected senior Joseph Leonhardt for the Excellence in the Study of Religion award. The award is given annually to the top student in the study of religion.

The Philosophy program had two awards. Junior Clayton Graham was awarded the Dr. Larry Mayhew Memorial Book Award, in memory of the late WKU philosophy professor. And senior Kyle A. Young received the Excellence in the Study of Philosophy award as the top student in the program.

This summer, senior philosophy student Kyle J. Green was awarded the Jonathan Evans Scholarship. This award is given annually to a philosophy student based on his or her excellent work in the study of philosophy and overall grade point average.

All of these students are very deserving award recipients and we wish them hearty congratulations.
Welcome to Our New Faculty
Three new faculty members help to enhance department

This fall semester is quite unusual with three new faculty members in the department. That means that 30 percent of our full-time teaching faculty are in their first weeks at WKU!

The search committees last year did an excellent job, and three excellent young scholars and teachers already are making their presence known on the third floor of Cherry Hall.

Joining us on the philosophy side are Dr. Audrey Anton and Dr. Ian Schnee.

Dr. Anton completed her doctoral work this spring at Ohio State University, and specializes in ancient philosophy and ethics. She has an M.A. in philosophy from the State University of New York at Buffalo and a B.A. from Assumption College in Massachusetts.

Dr. Schnee recently completed his Ph.D. at the University of California (Berkeley). He did his undergraduate work at both Middlebury College in Vermont and at the University of Oxford in England. He specializes in epistemology and philosophy of mind.

In Religious Studies as well as the Asian Religions and Cultures program, Dr. Paul Fischer joins us. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in East Asian Civilizations and will be teaching in religious studies and Asian Religions and Cultures. He currently is teaching at the American University in Cairo, and specializes in Chinese religion and intellectual history.

We are delighted to have these exceptional scholars and teachers join our ranks.

Dr. Audrey Anton will be teaching PHIL 320 (Ethics) and PHIL 342 (Reason and the Divine in Hellenism and Late Antiquity) in the spring.

Dr. Ian Schnee will be teaching PHIL 215 (Elementary Logic) and PHIL 331 (Analytic Philosophy) in the spring. He also is offering an online section of PHIL 215 during the Winter Term.

Dr. Paul Fischer will be teaching RELS 102 (Introduction to Religious Studies) and RELS 317 (Confucianism) in the spring. He also will be teaching a course during the summer at Wuhan University in China.
CRLP to host Film Series in BG

The Community Religious Literacy Project, an initiative of the Department of Philosophy and Religion, is teaming up with Presbyterian Church of Bowling Green (1003 State St.) to sponsor the Violence and Religion Film Series. The series was initiated by Dr. Ingrid Lilly, partly as an outgrowth of a course she is teaching this semester—Conflict, Slaughter, and Rage. All the showings are at 6:45 p.m. and are open to the public.

September 21 – Doubt
September 28 – Jarhead
October 26 – Paradise Now
November 2 – Earth
November 9 – The Lemon Tree
November 16 – Ip Man

Western Kentucky University’s Community Religious Literacy Project is designed to provide community organizations in the WKU region the opportunity to tap into the expertise of the Religious Studies faculty. Members of the faculty will provide lectures, lead discussions (such as after films), or provide consulting services to community

Film and Lecture Series Set for Fall Semester

Two public lectures highlight the fall schedule of the department’s Film and Lecture Series.

On October 24 at 4 p.m., Dr. Tony K. Stewart, chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University, will give a talk entitled “On the Agnotology of Narrative Islam: Religion in a Subjunctive Mode.” Dr. Stewart was a 1976 graduate of the WKU Religion program, before heading off to the University of Chicago for his MA and doctoral degrees. The presentation will be the first in what is planned as an annual Study of Religion Lecture Series. The series was initiated in recognition of the distinguished history of the study of religion at WKU and the launching of the new MA program in Religious Studies.

In November, Dr. Timothy Schroeder will visit WKU to deliver a public lecture. Dr. Schroeder is a member of the Philosophy Department at Ohio State University. The date and time are not yet set, so be sure to check the website for further details.

In addition to the films featured at the Presbyterian Church, the department also is showing Why Bodhidharma Left for the East on December 1, 6:30 p.m., in Cherry Hall 125. There also is an organized trip to Nashville on December 7 to see a showing of The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema at the Sarratt Cinema at Vanderbilt University. Contact Dr. Adrian Switzer (adrian.switzer@wku.edu) for more information.

All events in the series are open to the public. Please check our website for any further information.
Dr. Audrey Anton, assistant professor of philosophy, presented her paper “The Voluntary Nature of Aristotelian Emotions” at the Center for the History of Philosophy Inaugural Conference, Emotions in the History of Philosophy, held at the University of York, England. This September she will be presenting a talk entitled, “Does Technology Make Old Age Obsolete?” at the Society for Indian Philosophy and Religion Conference, Living Well in the 21st Century: Challenges and Responses, at Barry University in Miami, FL as well as a paper entitled “Willing, Unwilling and Binding Addiction” at the Alabama Philosophical Society Annual Meeting in Pensacola, FL.

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, department head, was promoted to full professor. This summer he delivered a paper entitled “Values Education and the Future of American Colleges and Universities” at the annual meeting of the American Democracy Project (Association of American State Colleges and Universities). The meeting took place in Orlando in June. He also was a co-convener of a Morning Group (“Theorizing Culture”) at the annual meeting of the Society for Values in Higher Education. That meeting took place in Elmhurst, IL in late July.

Dr. Bella Mukonyora, associate professor of religion, has been awarded a sabbatical for the fall semester. She is working on a number of research and writing projects, and will return in the spring.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, associate professor of religion and coordinator of Asian Studies, presented a paper titled “Localizing Theravada in Malaysia: Buddhist Communities and the Formation of Transnational Religious Identities” at the International Association of Buddhist Studies held in Taiwan. During the summer he conducted several weeks of fieldwork in Taiwan and Malaysia. Dr. Samuels also published two annotated bibliographies for Oxford Bibliographies Online, one on Monasticism in Sri Lanka and another (co-written with Hun Lye) on Buddhism in Malaysia.

Dr. Adrian Switzer, assistant professor of philosophy, presented papers at three academic conferences during Spring 2011: “Writing the Diseased Subject: Klossowski on Nietzsche and the Sign of Eternal Return” at the annual meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association (ACLA), hosted by Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia; “The Sexual Politics of May ’68: Derrida, Nietzsche and la question de la femme,” at the annual meeting of philoSOPHIA - a feminist philosophy organization - hosted by Vanderbilt University; and “Foucault’s Painted Animals” at the annual meeting of the Théorie et culture existentialistes et phénoménologiques (TCEP) hosted by the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Dr. Switzer organized a trip with members of his Gender Theory class to attend the philoSOPHIA conference at Vanderbilt University in May 2011. While in Portland, Maine this summer, Dr. Switzer participated in a faculty reading group with members of the Philosophy faculty at the University of Southern Maine, Colby College, Bates College, and the University of New England.

Contributions made to WKU and dedicated to the Department of Philosophy and Religion help us to provide important learning opportunities for our students. For example, last year we provided nearly $4,000 to support student travel to conferences and to participate in study abroad programs. Please consider making a gift to benefit our young scholars. Click on “Make a Gift” on our webpage for further information.

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION NEWS

Department of Philosophy and Religion
Western Kentucky University
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Senior Religious Studies major Rebecca Katz pours traditional mint tea in a Moroccan rug shop this summer. Dr. Scott Girdner (right) organized the trip for students. The trip focused on Islamic cultures and history in Morocco and Spain. Last year the department provided nearly $4,000 in support of student travel—partially funded through generous donations from alumni and friends.

Dr. Ingrid Lilly, pictured here in the Forbidden City in Beijing, was among a large contingent of WKU faculty and staff who traveled to China in July. The trip was sponsored by the WKU Confucius Institute and the home departments of the faculty or staff member. The group visited an incredible number of important cultural sites and attended lectures on Chinese culture and language. Prior to joining the group in China, Dr. Lilly toured extensively in Japan.

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, pictured on the Great Wall outside Beijing, was in China for two weeks as an organizer and participant in teaching workshops for Chinese faculty. The workshops were sponsored by the Society for Values in Higher Education. They were conducted at three universities, one in Ningbo (Ningbo University) and two in Beijing (Beijing Normal University and the University of International Business and Economics).
The magnificent Acropolis in Athens, the bema where the Apostle Paul stood before the Proconsul Gallio in Corinth, the ancient oracle of Apollo at Delphi, the Greek Orthodox Monastery of St. Paul in Lavrio, the historic battle sites of Themopyle and Marathon – these are just a few of the places that a group of fifteen, including eight WKU students, visited this past summer under the direction of Dr. Joseph L. Trafton and his wife, Paula.

“It was a great pleasure and honor to take the time to travel with the Traftons and the current students,” remarked Religious Studies alumna Melissa Helton (1996). “The focus of the tour was rooted in the vast culture, archaeology and history of Greece. This is not your basic ‘tour’ that can be booked through your travel agent. It was truly a learning experience for all. I will gladly do it again.”

“We flew out of Nashville on May 22, arriving in Athens the next day,” observed Dr. Trafton. “After three days and nights exploring Athens (with a side trip to Cape Sounion and its spectacular Temple of Poseidon), we departed for the Peloponese, stopping first at Eleusis, the site of an important ancient mystery religion, and then making a circuit that included Corinth, so important in the ministry of Paul; Mycenae, which dates back to the fourteenth century B.C.; Epidaurus, where we saw a complex of buildings associated with the ancient healing god Asclepius; Olympia, the original site of the Olympic games (and where the students decided to race each other along the 192-meter track!); and the beautiful Church of St. Andrew in Patras, where, according to tradition, the remains of Andrew, the brother of Peter, are kept. Then it was on to Delphi, the battle sites, and Athens again. We even took a day trip by ferry to the island of Aigina, with its marvelously preserved temple of Aphaia (and where some of our group found a nice beach for swimming!). I don’t think that anyone was ready to return home on June 2.”

In the words of sophomore Religious Studies major Keaton Brownstead: “My trip to Greece was everything a student should look for in a study abroad experience – new experiences, beautiful places, and intellectual adventures that cannot be had in a classroom setting.” Senior Religious Studies major Laura Williams agreed: “Greece was absolutely the perfect start to the summer and one of the highlights of my WKU career. All around, the trip, the people, and the class proved to be a wonderful learning experience that I would not trade for anything.”

The Traftons plan to continue to lead trips that focus on the history and religion of Greece and are finalizing the details for a trip to the island of Crete (with a stopover in Athens) for next summer. It will be open to students, alumni, and other interested parties.

**If you would like to learn more about the Crete trip, or about how you can give a tax-deductible gift to help a student to participate in the trip, please e-mail Dr. Trafton at joseph.trafton@wku.edu.**