From the Department Head’s Desk

The Asian Century

The phrase “The Asian Century” has been used for several years now. It refers to the idea that the 21st century will be one in which the continent of Asia will have a preeminent role in the social, political, and economic character of the century. Especially given the burgeoning economies (not to speak of the populations) of countries like China and India, it is little wonder that many experts believe that Asia will dominate this century.

Whether or not Asia dominates, it is clear that the continent will play a greater role socially, politically, and economically. This fact makes it imperative that educational institutions in Europe and the United States make efforts to connect with students and faculty in Asia and that they provide curricula that help students in the West understand the lives and systems of the peoples of Asia.

Western Kentucky University is leading the way in the Commonwealth in Asian Studies. In addition, the Department of Philosophy and Religion is playing a central role in the development of the most comprehensive Asian Studies curricula in Kentucky. Be sure to read more about these developments on page two.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

New Philosophy Program Implemented This Fall

After more than two years of planning and development, the new philosophy curricula for majors and minors are being implemented this year. While current students will continue to follow the old requirements (though being able to take advantage of many new courses), entering students will begin working through programs that are significantly revised and innovative.

The programs feature several new courses. Two new features are the creation of a senior seminar and the Philosophical Writing Workshop (PHIL 299). This one credit course is designed to help students develop their writing and analytical skills in the discipline while working on papers assigned for other courses or papers being prepared for conferences or publication.

As a result of all the revisions, the major has been increased to 32 credit hours and the minor to 25 credit hours. Check out the new programs at:

http://www.wku.edu/pcal/philosophy
Major (and Minor) Developments in Asian Studies at WKU

Recent years have seen significant developments at WKU in regard to the study of Asia. From the Chinese Flagship Language program to study abroad opportunities in Jordan, from international students coming here to study to the establishment of the Confucius Institute, WKU is responding to the major role that Asia will play in this century. This response has included several curricular developments, including many that were initiated and led by the Philosophy and Religion department.

The most significant curriculum development is the new Asian Religions and Cultures major. The major requires 33 credit hours. Students must take courses in Religion (9 credit hours), Language (6 credit hours), History and Politics (6 credit hours), Electives (9 credit hours), and complete the Senior Project (3 credit hours). Students must take courses from at least four different departments. At least 17 hours must be at the 300-level or above. A minor or second major is required.

There also have been revisions to the Asian Studies minor, including the creation of two tracks. Students pursuing the Asian Religions and Cultures track must take courses in Religion (9 credit hours), History and Politics (6 credit hours), and Electives (6 credit hours). Students must take courses from at least three different departments. At least 12 credit hours must be at the 300-level or above. Students pursuing the East and South Asian track within the Asian Studies minor must take courses from at least four different departments. At least 12 credit hours must be at the 300-level or above. For more information about the above major or minors, contact Dr. Jeffrey Samuels at Jeffrey.Samuels@wku.edu.

There also is a Middle East Students Certificate. Students pursuing the certificate must complete 12 hours of approved coursework with Middle East-oriented content. For more information, contact Dr. Scott Girdner at scott.girdner@wku.edu.

Learn more by visiting the following websites: www.wku.edu/pcal/asian-religions-and-cultures or www.wku.edu/asianstudies

Dr. Seidler Publishes in Prestigious Encyclopedia

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is an important and leading resource for philosophers and those interested in all things philosophical. In September, Dr. Michael Seidler, professor of philosophy, published “Pufendorf’s Moral and Political Philosophy.” The article focuses on the work of the 17th-century German philosopher Samuel Pufendorf. Among his many interests and research/teaching areas, Dr. Seidler is recognized as a leading scholar on Pufendorf’s work. In 1994 his translation of many of Pufendorf’s works was published by Oxford University Press as The Political Writings of Samuel Pufendorf. The article can be found at plato.stanford.edu/entries/pufendorf-moral/.

Dr. Seidler’s expertise has led to numerous invitations, including one this past summer to give a presentation at an international conference on “Absolutism, Monarchism and Despotism.” The meeting was held at Sussex University in the United Kingdom. Papers presented at the conference will be revised and published by Chatto & Pickering. Dr. Seidler also was able to spend two days doing research at the British Library following the meeting.
Dr. Cassandra Pinnick to Move to Transitional Retirement

After 18 years of full-time teaching at Western Kentucky University, Dr. Cassandra Pinnick will be moving to a transitional retirement appointment beginning January 2011.

Dr. Pinnick has been an important contributor to the philosophy program. Her introductory logic course (now PHIL 215) is renowned for its rigor, and has been a required element of both the major and the minor. Among many upper-division courses, she has taught advanced logic courses and numerous courses in the area of philosophy of science.

Dr. Pinnick has a distinguished publishing record, with more than 30 articles in leading philosophical journals. Her work is extensively anthologized and cited in the field, particularly in the area of philosophy of science. She has received numerous invitations to speak at professional meetings around the globe. She holds the prestigious position of Senior Fellow at the Center for Philosophy of Science at the University of Pittsburgh. She also has been active in a number of professional societies—including the Kentucky Philosophical Association and the International Society for the History of Philosophy of Science.

Dr. Pinnick will continue to teach and mentor students on a part-time basis in the coming years.

New Faculty in the Department

The Religious Studies program is pleased to have Dr. Monique Moultrie join its faculty for the 2010-11 academic year as a visiting assistant professor. Dr. Moultrie (pictured to the right) has a B.A. from Duke University, a M.T.S. from Harvard, and recently received her Ph.D. from Vanderbilt. She specializes in sexual ethics, African American religious traditions, and gender and sexuality studies. Her dissertation at Vanderbilt University was entitled “Between the Horny and Holy: Womanist Sexual Ethics and the Cultural Productions of No More Sheets.” Her doctoral research investigated black women’s ethical responses to sexual messages provided in faith-based Christian movements. She remains particularly interested in the interconnection of religious communities and HIV/AIDS outreach programs.

The Philosophy program welcomes back Dr. Judy Russell. Dr. Russell has taught in the program both full-time and part-time for a number of years, and we are delighted that she will join us in 2010-11 as a visiting assistant professor. She has a B.A. from the University of Kentucky and a Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Dr. Russell will be teaching a number of introductory philosophy and ethics (including applied ethics) courses. Her recent teaching and research interests have been in biomedical ethics.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS

Adrianna Silver, a senior philosophy major, is this year’s winner of the Jonathan Evans Scholarship. The scholarship is given annually to a philosophy major who demonstrates academic excellence in the field.

Three of the first four WKU graduates of the Carol Marin Gatton Academy of Mathematics and Science in Kentucky, a residential program for exceptional Kentucky high school students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, had ties to the Religious Studies program. Ellen Boswell Duke, who was also Scholar of Potter College, majored in Religious Studies; Christopher Obermeyer double-majored in Religious Studies and Biology; and Tyler Clark majored in Mathematics and minored in Religious Studies. Ellen will attend Case Western Reserve Law School in Cleveland, OH, this fall; Chris will begin work on a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences at George Washington University, in Washington, D.C.; and Tyler will begin a Master’s program in Mathematics at WKU.

Wes Harrell, a 2007 religious studies graduate, was featured in the Bowling Green Daily News for his work with the Life for Children Ministry, serving vulnerable children in Kenya.

Robert Watkins, a 2008 graduate of the philosophy program, joined the Air Force and currently is enjoying life in a seaside village in Italy.

Christina Kayrouz, a 2008 philosophy graduate, has begun graduate work in social work at the University of Louisville.

Please send student or alumni news to eric.bain-selbo@wku.edu.
Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, associate professor and department head, gave multiple presentations at the annual meeting of the American Democracy Project (an initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities). His presentations focused on civic values education and recent developments at the Institute for Citizenship and Social Responsibility.

Dr. Scott Girdner, assistant professor of religious studies, participated in a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar entitled “Free Will and Human Perfection in Medieval Jewish Thought.” The seminar was held at Colgate University, where he spent five weeks researching and discussing the reception of Islamic intellectual and spiritual traditions in Jewish thought.

Dr. Ingrid Lilly, assistant professor of religious studies, secured a contract with Brill to publish her dissertation (forthcoming in 2011). In July, she gave a lecture at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bowling Green entitled “Prophets Revealed: Hip Hop and Hebrew Art.”

Dr. Monique Moultrie, visiting assistant professor of religious studies, graduated from Vanderbilt University in May 2010. In June she presented at the Arcus Foundation’s Sexual Politics in Black Churches Roundtable. As a result of this roundtable, she submitted an article entitled "Interrogating the Passionate and Pious: Televangelism and Black Women's Sexuality" for a forthcoming publication with Columbia University Press. She also completed an article entitled “After the Thrill is Gone: Married to the Holy Spirit but Still Sleeping Alone,” that will be published in a special edition of Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies.

Dr. Bella Mukonyora is now associate professor of religious studies, having been granted tenure at the end of the last academic year. This summer she published "An African Gospel of Survival in an Age of Ecological Destruction" in the journal Worldviews. She also became a member of the Board of the Southern Interdisciplinary Roundtable on African Studies at Kentucky State University.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, associate professor of religious studies, spent 10 weeks collecting material and conducting interviews in Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand as part of a new research project writing a social history of Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia. While in Singapore, he presented a paper at a Theravada under Colonialism conference that was hosted by the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. He was also invited to give a talk on the Sri Lankan diaspora in Southeast Asia for the Migration and Religion Research Clusters of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore. While in Malaysia, Dr. Samuels gave three talks to Buddhist groups. Dr. Samuels will be on sabbatical this fall during which he plans to begin writing up some of his research in the form of articles and conference papers.

Dr. Joseph Trafton, professor of religious studies, and his wife Paula, an Instructor in Interdisciplinary Studies, traveled to Crete this summer as part of their ongoing preparation for leading a travel program in Greece next summer. The trip, tentatively set for about two weeks in late May and early June of 2011, will focus on ancient Greek religions and history from the beginnings down through the arrival of Christianity. Sites will include Athens, Olympia, Delphi, Marathon, Corinth, and perhaps Crete. For more information, contact Dr. Trafton at Joseph.Trafton@wku.edu.

Dr. Tripp York, instructor in religious studies, published a co-edited volume with Chris K. Huebner. The reader is entitled The Gift of Difference: Radical Orthodoxy, Radical Reformation.

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.