From the Department Head’s Desk
A Community of Scholars

In this issue of the newsletter (as with all our issues, really), you will find many stories about the amazing scholarship being done by our faculty, students, and former students.

For the faculty, an active scholarly life serves several purposes. First, the acts of conducting research and writing keep them engaged in their discipline and area of study. Second, being engaged through their scholarship allows them to share the best and most current research with their students—making the faculty members even better teachers and helping to bring the students into lively academic conversations. Third, being active scholars continues to hone faculty skills of analysis and communication (mainly written, but also oral)—skills that they then work to develop among their students.

But the scholarship that we all engage in does something else—something often hard to articulate at times and even harder to justify in an era of state austerity budgets and government obsession with the STEM disciplines. Our research and writing is what constitutes us as a community of scholars (faculty and students alike). Indeed, our colleges and universities are filled with such communities, and these communities tell us something important about ourselves. They tell us that we—as a society—value reason and critical inquiry; that we understand the human condition to be too rich and complex to ever stop investigating it; that answers to our most pressing questions might come from any number of disciplines or academic areas; and that the life of the mind is something worth cultivating in ourselves and passing along to our children. As we embark on this New Year, here’s a toast to all of WKU’s communities of scholars.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

Congratulations to Our December 2015 Graduates

The joy of the holiday season is heightened by the graduation of our philosophy, religious studies, and Asian religions and cultures students. Of course, that joy is tempered by the thought that they also will no longer be in our classrooms and visiting our offices (but they are welcome to visit any time!). Congratulations to all of the following students.

Asian Religions and Cultures major: Hannah Garland, Andrew Miller, and Chase Thomas.

Philosophy major: Brandon Faller and Laura Harper.

Religious Studies major: Spenser Clark, Corey Gravil, James F. Martin, Jia Ong Ong, Kenneth Sapp, and India Talbott.

Religious Studies minor: Samuel Cherry, John Knight, and Andrew Miller.
Dr. Audrey Anton

This book challenges a basic assumption held by many responsibility theorists: that agents must be morally responsible in the retrospective sense for anything in virtue of which they deserve praise or blame (the primacy assumption). Dr. Anton sets out to defeat this assumption by showing that accepting it as well as the much more intuitive causality assumption renders us incapable of making sense of cases whereby agents seem to deserve praise and blame. She argues that retrospective moral responsibility is a species of causal responsibility (the causality assumption). Then, she illustrates several examples in which agents are not causally responsible for any morally relevant consequences, but they seem to be deserving of praise or blame nonetheless. Dr. Anton concludes that such cases are counterexamples to the primacy assumption, and turns her attention towards discerning what grounds desert of praise and blame if not retrospective moral responsibility.

Dr. Anton advances the moral attitude account, whereby agents deserve praise and blame in virtue of moral attitudes they have in response to moral reasons. These moral attitudes must be sufficiently sincere, which means they reach a threshold that distinguishes such attitudes as eligible for praise and blame. Dr. Anton adds that whether one deserves praise or blame and to what degree is sensitive to the agent’s personal moral progress as well as the status quo of her society. This addition brings with it the welcome consequence that morality may be objective, but we are still justified in judging one another charitably based on personal and societal limitations.

John’s Use of Matthew (Fortress Press, 2015)
Dr. James Barker

The Gospel of John's relationship to the Synoptic Gospels is a perennial question. For centuries, the Gospel of Matthew has been considered the least likely of possible written sources of the Fourth Gospel. In an ambitious reappraisal, James Barker demonstrates John's use of the redacted Gospel of Matthew. After reviewing the history of interpretation on the question, Barker develops three case studies. Concerning ecclesial authority, Barker contends that John's saying concerning forgiving and retaining sins derives from Matthew's binding and loosing logion. Regarding proof from prophecy, he argues that John relies on Matthew for Zechariah's oracle about Israel's king entering Jerusalem on a donkey. Finally, he argues that John's inclusion of Samaritans contrasts sharply with Matthew's exclusion of Samaritans from the early church. Although John's engagement with Matthew was by no means uncritical, Barker at last concludes that John intended his Gospel to be read alongside, not instead of, Matthew's.

Join the Department of Philosophy and Religion to celebrate these two important publications!
Friday, February 19, 3 pm, Cherry Hall, Room 316
In November, Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo traveled to Arizona State University to deliver an invited lecture at its Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict. The invitation came via Terry Shoemaker (2013 MA graduate in Religious Studies) who is working for the Center as he completes his PhD in Religious Studies.


In addition to the lecture at the Center, Dr. Bain-Selbo delivered it at one of ASU’s alternate campuses and was a guest speaker (focusing on religious violence and Quentin Tarantino movies) in Mr. Shoemaker’s religion in America course.

The Community Religious Literacy Project of the Department of Philosophy and Religion is pleased to announce that the 3rd Interfaith Dialogue on Earth Care will take place in Bowling Green on March 18 and 19.

This public event is possible thanks to the organizing work of Dr. Bella Mukonyora and the support of numerous campus and community organizations. For more information, contact Dr. Mukonyora at bella.mukonyora@wku.edu.

**Dr. Bain-Selbo Delivers Lectures at Arizona State**

**Student & Alumni News**

**Erika Brown**, senior philosophy major, co-presented “Vicious Art or Vicious Audience? Understanding the Effects of Art on the Youthful and Vicious Audience in Aristotle’s Poetics” with Dr. Audrey Anton, at the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy annual meeting in New York City. The research and presentation were funded through the WKU Faculty-Undergraduate Student Engagement grant program.


**Deborah Sorrels**, MA student in Religious Studies, published an online article about recent work she’s been doing in Israel. Go to http://212.150.209.210/~givathaviva/index.php?dir=site&page=content&cs=3089&langpage=eng to access the article.


Please send any student or alumni news to eric.bain-selbo@wku.edu.
Dr. Audrey Anton, assistant professor of philosophy, co-presented two papers in October. First, she presented with Hannah Digges-Elliott, WKU Instructional Designer, a paper titled “Creating Interactive Formative Assessments and Simulations to Foster Engagement,” which features new interactive assessments launched in Dr. Anton’s PHIL 102 On Demand course. Second, she co-presented “Vicious Art or Vicious Audience? Understanding the Effects of Art on the Youthful and Vicious Audience in Aristotle’s Poetics” with co-author and FUSE grant recipient, Erika Brown, at the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy annual meeting in New York City. In January, Dr. Anton presented “Wicked Misery According to Aristotle: how we can be unhappy and not know it” for the Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary World Group Panel on “Philosophy and Happiness” at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Meeting in Washington D.C. Last semester, Dr. Anton’s paper, “Kant on Irresistible Inclinations: Moral Worth, Happiness, and Belief in God,” was published in Minerva: An Open-Access Journal of Philosophy. Lastly, Dr. Anton was selected as a WKU Evidence & Argument Fellow for 2016-2018.

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, professor of philosophy and religion, had a very busy October and November. In addition to his visit at Arizona State University, Dr. Bain-Selbo co-presented a paper at the Spirit of Sport Symposium at Baylor University in October. The paper was co-authored with Terry Shoemaker, and was entitled “Southern Reconstructing: Sport and the Future of Religion in the American South.” The paper later was published as a chapter in Sport and Religion in the Twenty-First Century (Lexington Books, 2016). In early November, Dr. Bain-Selbo gave a lecture as part of the WKU Thoughts on Pop Lecture Series. The title of the presentation was “Love and Liberty: The Case of V for Vendetta.” Later in the month, he participated in a roundtable discussion about stand-alone MA programs at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta. More recently, Dr. Bain-Selbo attended the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico and the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges & Universities in Washington, DC. At the latter meeting, he also co-facilitated a seminar discussion about current proposals for tuition-free higher education.

Dr. James Barker, assistant professor of religious studies, presented a paper entitled “Christians and Torah Observance in Second-Century Perspective” at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta this past November. He also published an article entitled “Written Gospel or Oral Tradition? Patristic Parallels to John 3:3, 5” in the latest issue of the journal Early Christianity.

Dr. Grace Hunt, assistant professor of philosophy, published a double book review on Christa Davis Acampora’s Contesting Nietzsche, and Yunus Tuncel’s Agon in Nietzsche in the journal The New Nietzsche Studies. Dr. Hunt also took part in a podcast interview by WKU honors student and radio host Haddy Badjie on the topic of intersectionality and feminism. Dr. Hunt presented her views on how social identities and their related privileges and oppressions overlap in complicated ways alongside Political Science Department Chair Dr. Saundra Ardrey and Potter College Senior Jasmine Jones. Dr. Hunt also was named recently as Chair of the Gender and Women’s Studies Awards and Scholarship committee.

Dr. Bella Mukonyora, associate professor of religious studies, hosted a group of 12 members of the American Academy of Religion at a research workshop held at WKU’s Upper Green River Preserve. Dr. Mukonyora and her guests from the University of Emory, Mississippi, Wake Forest, Florida and Texas, spent four days working on “Place Based-Pedagogy” (May 14-17, 2017).

Dr. Nahed Zehr, assistant professor of religious studies, published two articles. The first, “Thomas Aquinas and Muhammad al-Shaybani on War, Law, and Statecraft: An Experiment of Theory and Method” was published in Soundings. The second, “Assessing the Current State of Conversation on Islam and the Cultural Regulation of Armed Force,” was published the the journal Religion and Violence. She also published the proceedings from the symposium she organized last fall, “A Symposium on Peace, Islam, and Counter-narratives” in a special issue of the journal Soundings. Dr. Zehr also contributed to an issue of Religious Studies News Spotlight on Teaching focused on “Teaching the Moral Traditions of Others.” Lastly, she completed the manuscript to her book, tentatively entitled, Responding to the Call: Just War and Jihad in the War against Al-Qaeda.