From the Department Head’s Desk

The end of every spring semester is a season of numerous receptions, ceremonies, and celebrations. It is a time when the Department of Philosophy and Religion, the various colleges, and the university recognize the excellent work of our students and faculty. It is a time filled with genuine amazement at what we achieve both collectively and as individuals. Thus, it is understandable and appropriate that we take the time in this last issue of the newsletter for the academic year to recognize those individuals who have been singled out for particularly significant achievements this year.

At the same time, it is important to recognize as well all the successes that we (students, staff, and faculty) have enjoyed this year. Day in, day out, week after week, determined individuals in our department work hard to accomplish important goals or simply to do their jobs well. The perseverance of the student who pushed a grade from a C to a B; the faculty member who completely revised a course to serve students better; and the staff member who put everything to the side to help a distressed student—these are the daily accomplishment at the heart of what we do. So to everyone in the department who worked so hard this year, whose achievements may or may not be chronicled here, I congratulate you on another wonderful academic year.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

Congratulations to the Class of 2016

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.

MA students in Religious Studies: John Abercrombie, Matthew Musselwhite, and Emily Potter.

Asian Religions and Cultures majors: Laurel Clutts, Isabella Greene, Colton Hounshell, Steven Phelps, Tyler Prochazka, and Colin Waid.

Philosophy majors: Jessica Blauw, Erika Brown, Casey Fortney, Courtney Hamilton, Ian Robinson, and Emily Sullivan.


Philosophy minors: Hunter Conner, Chelsea McCarty, and Heidi Taylor.

Religious Studies minors: Brad Clardy, Lane Embry, Cesia Heinlein, Noah Richeson, Mary Stockler, and Alana Treon.

Many thanks to all of these students for being a part of our programs and our work during the last few years.
Dr. Anton Wins Teaching Awards

The faculty in the Department of Philosophy and Religion has a distinguished record of achievement as teachers, scholars, and advisers. Two members of the faculty currently are Distinguished University Professors and numerous times faculty have been nominated for awards in Potter College of Arts & Letters in recognition of their excellence.

This year was a particularly exciting year for the Department. Dr. Audrey Anton was nominated for and then selected as the recipient of the Teaching Award in Potter College. Then, during graduation weekend, we learned that Dr. Anton had won the Teaching Award for the entire university!

In addition to her excellent work on campus, Dr. Anton has extended the classroom to share her love of philosophy with other constituencies and to enhance the educational experience of her students. In particular, she has taught a course the last two years at DeBerry Correctional Facility in Tennessee. The courses include both inmates and students from WKU, all grappling together with central issues in moral and social philosophy.

We celebrate the important recognition Dr. Anton has received this year, joining a rich tradition of excellence in the Department.

Outstanding Students Recognized

Each year the Department of Philosophy and Religion recognizes a student in each of its four programs for outstanding academic work. This year the award recipients were:

- Casey Fortney, senior, Philosophy major.
- John Abercrombie, MA program in Religious Studies.
- Patrick “Cole” McDowell, senior, Religious Studies major.
- Jay Todd Richey, junior, Asian Religions and Cultures major.

Congratulations to each of these students for their excellent work. Each student received an engraved award from Potter College as well as a monetary gift from the department. Gifts from the department are made possible by generous donations from alumni and friends of the department.
Several students in the Asian Religions and Cultures program received prestigious scholarships and grants this spring. They are:

- Tyler Prochazka (Fulbright)
- Brian Anderson, Jody Dahmer, and Nathan Read (Critical Language Scholarship)
- Sarah Cook, Mackenzie Donoghue, Ella Shipp, and Kelly Tursic (Boren Scholarships)
- Kate Hart (Freeman-ASIA Scholarship)

Congratulations to all these fine students!

Erika Brown, Philosophy (2016), has been admitted into the philosophy PhD program at Villanova—and with substantial funding. Way to go Erika!

Patrick “Cole” McDowell, Religious Studies (2016), is heading to Notre Dame after being admitted into the MA program in Early Christian Studies. Good luck Cole!

Laurel Clutts, Asian Religions and Cultures (2016), has been interning at the Tianjin Museum in Tianjin, China. She also will be pursuing graduate work, having been admitted into the Archaeology and Museum Studies Master’s program here at Tianjin Normal University. All the best Laurel!

Alana Treon, Religious Studies (2016), has been admitted into WKU’s MA program in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Good luck Alana!

Two of our graduating MA students will be continuing their graduate studies.

- John Abercrombie has been admitted into the PhD program in Religious Studies at Syracuse University, receiving an impressive financial package as well
- Emily Potter has been admitted into the MDiv program at Boston University with a substantial scholarship.

Scott Brugh, current MA student in Religious Studies, will be spending the summer at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute at the University of Wisconsin. He will be studying the Burmese language. Scott also received a scholarship to participate in the program.


Hooding Ceremony

Every spring the Religious Studies faculty hold a ceremony to bestow masters hoods on graduating MA students. This year, three students were “hooded” by their thesis or project advisers as family, friends, staff, and faculty looked on. Pictured above (from left to right) are Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, John Abercrombie, Matthew Musselwhite, Dr. Nahed Zehr, Emily Potter, and Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo.

Congratulations to all three students!

Dr. Ben Lennertz to Join Philosophy Faculty

The Department of Philosophy and Religion is pleased to announce that Dr. Ben Lennertz will be joining the faculty this fall.

Dr. Lennertz earned his PhD from the University of Southern California in 2014, and has been a visiting assistant professor at Davidson College (North Carolina) and then Colgate University (New York) in the intervening year. He specializes in Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Mind, and Epistemology.

Dr. Lennertz will take the lead with logic instruction for the philosophy program, while teaching a variety of other upper-division courses. Given his expertise in the discipline and his passion for teaching, Dr. Lennertz is certain to be a great addition to the department.
Philosophy and Religion News

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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.

Dr. Audrey Anton, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, published “Using Adobe AfterEffects and Articulate Storyline to Create Interactive Self-Checks,” with Hannah Digges Elliott and Andrew Swanson in the April issue of Online Classroom: Ideas for Effective Online Instruction. Dr. Anton presented her paper “Ancient Western Reconciliations of Justice and Mercy” at the Kentucky Philosophical Association’s annual meeting in Louisville as well as to Austin Peay State University’s Eta Sigma Phi and Ancient Mediterranean clubs (Clarksville, TN). In addition, Dr. Anton presented her paper, “Wicked Misery According to Aristotle: How We Can Be Unhappy and Not Know It” to the Classical Association of the Middle West and South at the 112th annual meeting in Williamsburg, VA. Lastly, Dr. Anton was elected as an at-large senator to the WKU Faculty Senate and will begin serving in the fall.

Dr. James Barker, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, presented a paper entitled “When Were the Gospels Written?” at the Midwest Regional Society of Biblical Literature meeting in February. He presented another paper entitled “Teaching the Bible as a Supernatural Book” at the Sewanee Medieval Colloquium in April.

Dr. Paul Fischer, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, has been promoted to Associate Professor in recognition of his excellent teaching, scholarship, and service.

Dr. Bella Mukonyora, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, has been promoted to Professor in recognition of her excellent teaching, scholarship, and service.

This year, Dr. Mukonyora was very involved with International Year of South Africa 2015/2016 public events. In November she organized and coordinated a visit by Dr. Dwight N. Hopkins, Professor of Theology at Chicago Divinity School, who spent three days on campus. The 3rd Interfaith Dialogue on Earth Care, advertised in the previous newsletter, was also planned in honor of the International Year of South Africa. More recently, on April 20th, Dr. Mukonyora led a faculty and student panel discussion on the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s idea of Ubuntu.

Dr. Mukonyora read papers at the annual conference of American Academy of Religions in November, the Southeastern Regional Commission for the Study of Religion in early March, and spent 10 days as a special guest of the Department of Theology, University of Lund, in Sweden. On April 21, she delivered a public lecture, “A Religious Dialogue on Being Human in an Era of Global Warming,” at the Community and Technical College in Elizabethtown.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Professor of Religious Studies, co-organized a conference titled “Buddhism, Humanities, and Ethnographic Methods” which was held in April at the University of Vermont.

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION NEWS