

Letter from the Chair

Spring greetings from Washington, D.C.! We have had a very busy year that included an amazing speaker series (the talks are described below); two exciting new faculty hires, **Vanessa Wills** and **Avery Archer**, who will be joining us next year; new courses and new opportunities for our undergraduates and graduate students to engage in and share their research. This is also my fifth and final year as chair of the department and I look forward to turning over the reins on July 1st to my successor, Professor **Tad Zawidzki**, as I begin a year-long sabbatical to complete my monograph, *Existential Ambiguities in Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty*.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you, our alumni, for your continued interest in and dedication to our department. We have been bowled over by the generous donations we have received in the past year to the newly established Griffith Fund, as well as to our general philosophy endowment. We are planning to host another philosophy alumni conference in the next couple of years that we hope will bring many of you to campus. It is always wonderful to have the opportunity to catch up in person! In the meantime, please keep in touch. We love getting your updates and there are many new ones in this newsletter. Finally, I want to give a special thank you to our fabulous executive aide, **Amanda McLaughlin**, who makes everything we do run smoothly and who engages in a myriad of difficult and time-sensitive tasks (such as producing this newsletter!) with energy, enthusiasm and a warm smile. I couldn't have run the department these past few years without her!



Gail Weiss

Chair, Department of Philosophy

Spring 2015 Events



Thacher Lecture: Dr. Christopher Hom

Dr. Christopher Hom, associate professor at Texas Tech University, delivered the annual Thacher Lecture on March 20, 2015. Dr. Hom primarily works

in philosophy of language and metaethics, and is particularly concerned with issues surrounding racial epithets, expressive meaning and moral expressivism. Formerly a faculty fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center, Dr. Hom is currently working on a book about racial epithets. His lecture was on "Pejoratives as Fiction" and based off of a paper co-written with Robert May.

[» Read more about the Thacher Lecture](#)



Griffith Lecture: Dr. Dale Jamieson

The department's second annual Griffith Lecture, formerly known as the Goutman Lecture was renamed in honor of the late Dr. William B. Griffith at the request of

his former student and donor, alumnus Thomas Goutman, BA '76. On April 24, 2015, Dr. Dale Jamieson, professor of environmental studies and philosophy, affiliated professor of law, affiliated professor of bioethics and director of the Animal Studies Initiative at New York University, delivered his lecture on "The Ethical Challenges of Climate Change" to a full house.

[» Read more about the Griffith Lecture](#)

Department Colloquia

The department hosted four junior philosophers this spring 2015, who delivered lectures on a diverse range of topics.



Natalia Washington

In conjunction with the GW University Seminar in the History and Future of Mental Wellbeing, Natalia Washington, PhD candidate from Purdue University, delivered "Culturally Unbound: Scientific Psychiatry, Norms, and Human Nature" on January 23, 2015.

[» Read more](#)



Dr. Shay Welch

Dr. Shay Welch, assistant professor of philosophy at Spelman College, presented her colloquium "Women's Self-Perpetuated Oppression: Complicity and Moral Responsibility in Collective Action Problems" on January 30, 2015.

[» Read more](#)



Dr. Natalie Cisneros

Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Gettysburg College Natalie Cisneros delivered her colloquium "The 'Illegal Alien': Intersectionality, Biopolitical Racism, and the Construction of Immigrant Subjectivity" on February 6, 2015.

[» Read more](#)



Dr. Vanessa Wills

Dr. Vanessa Wills, assistant professor of philosophy at Saint Joseph's University and incoming assistant professor of philosophy at GW (!), gave a talk on "Blaming Racists: Moral Responsibility in the Context of Social Control" on February 13, 2015.

[» Read more](#)

Phi Sigma Tau Honor Society

The Spring 2015 Induction Ceremony for new members into GW's chapter of Phi Sigma Tau, the international honor society in philosophy, took place on Friday, April 10, 2015, led by honor society faculty advisor Professor **Mark Ralkowski**. The department is proud to announce that the following students were inducted after careful consideration of their academic records: **Robert Donoghue** (junior), **Harry Rosenberg** (junior), **Andrea Lehn** (senior), **Sam Gubitz** (junior), **Maha Hasen** (junior), **Jacob Lilienfield** (senior), **Dor Hirsh Bar Gai** (junior), **Alexandra Martin** (senior) and **Elaine Murphy** (senior).

Philosophy Club Update

The Philosophy Club was hard at work this past semester developing new programming and increasing its appeal to students. The club held discussions and debates, and organized the annual undergraduate conference this spring. Every Tuesday, the club met to discuss a different topic of philosophical interest, such as the philosophy of mind, ethics, and spirituality. The club also hosted professors who wished to share their work, with Professor **Lee Goldsmith** giving the final presentation on his research.

[» Read more](#)

Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

On Friday, April 3, 2015, the Philosophy Club and the department hosted our annual Undergraduate Philosophy Conference. The conference was a great success, and the presenters all received helpful feedback on their working papers. The presenters came from all over the eastern seaboard, and one presenter even made the trek (with his professor and friends in tow) from Tennessee. A list of the presenters, their academic affiliations, and their paper titles is provided on the department website.

[» Read more](#)

Thacher-Reynolds Fellowship Presentation

On Friday, April 24, 2015, **Mary Arbor**, 2014-2015 Thacher-Reynolds Fellow, presented her research paper "On Concept Meaning: An Intermediary Holist Position" to department faculty, as well as to



Michael Thacher, BA '70, the fellowship sponsor.

Faculty News

Jeffrey Brand, as CCAS associate dean for graduate studies, had the honor of attending the Yale Bouchet Conference on Diversity and Graduate Education, held in April in New Haven, Ct. There he presented four CCAS doctoral students for induction into the Bouchet Graduate Honor Society. Professor Brand's article, "Shapiro's Legality," appeared this year in the *Journal of Moral Philosophy*.

Paul Churchill has been busy teaching two courses this semester, presenting papers and publishing. He published a book chapter entitled "Liberal Toleration" in Fiala, Andrew, (ed.) *The Bloomsbury Guide to Political Philosophy* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), pp. 139-153. He has a forthcoming paper, "Drone Warfare: Ethical and Psychological Issues," in a Special Issue of *The Journal of Technoethics* Iannone, Pablo (ed.) in fall 2015, and a paper of his on the same subject has been accepted for presentation at the 22nd annual conference in North Carolina of the Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary World in July 2015. Professor Churchill's paper "Honor Codes, Violence, and Reconciliation," which he presented in Lancaster, Penn., in October 2014 at the annual conference of Concerned Philosophers for Peace, has been submitted for review. He and co-author **Sarah Holmes**, a graduate student of the Philosophy and Social Policy MA program, presented a Brown Bag seminar on "Honor Killing" to the philosophy department in February, which was based on their joint research for *Women in the Crossfire: The Causes and Consequences of Honor Killing*, four of seven chapters of which have been completed and are currently under review at a major press. "The Metaphysics of Natural Human Rights" is a paper that Professor Churchill presented at a symposium sponsored by the North American Society for Social Philosophy at the December 2014 meetings of the American Philosophical Association (APA) in Philadelphia. He is currently writing a paper on "The Culture of Violence and the Reproduction of Patriarchy" which he will present at a major conference at Loyola University this upcoming September. Professor Churchill also plans to attend a one-week intensive workshop, sponsored by GWIT, on Mount Vernon, on the topic of course design, with the objective of continuing the integration of multimedia into education and increasing students' responsibility for their own learning. His major objective will be to work closely with Sarah Holmes and student assistants to bring *Women in the Crossfire* to a successful completion.

[» Read more "Faculty News"](#)

Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Vanessa Wills



The GW Philosophy Club has chosen the soon-to-be GW Assistant Professor of Philosophy **Vanessa Wills** as the subject of the Spring 2015 Faculty Profile. Professor Wills responded to questions posed by the Philosophy Club's **Harry Rosenberg**.

When did you first start "philosophizing"?

I remember proposing theories to my parents about the phenomenon of time passing when I was still a small child. Then as I got older, I began to develop an interest in science fiction. I was particularly drawn to stories about human nature, time travel, ethical dilemmas, that sort of thing. I was 16 years old when I first read work by a professional philosopher. I was in a summer program for gifted teens, and we read Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. I was blown away, not only by the content of the *Investigations* but also by their poetry-like form. In my first year of college, I took a course called "Dewey, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein." Well, after that, I was hooked.

[» Continue reading "Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Vanessa Wills"](#)

Alumni News

Paul Aloe, BA '80, is partner at the NYC commercial law firm Kudman Trachten Aloe LLP, as well as past chair of the NYS Bar Committee on civil practice law and rules. He is also an Ironman triathlete.

Andrew Guran, BA '09, received his JD magna cum laude from the Case Western Reserve University School of Law in 2013, where he was a member of the Order of the Coif. He is currently an associate at Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP in their Akron, Ohio, office.

Ted Kinch, BA '05, had the pleasure of traveling the world and attending law school after graduating from GW. He currently works as the general counsel for a tech company in Los Angeles. He spends most of his spare time socializing with friends and family.

Allison Markowitz, BA '14, is currently a 1L at the University of Virginia School of Law. This summer she will clerk for a U.S. federal district court judge in the Eastern District of New York.

[» Read more "Alumni News"](#)

Student News

Peter Andes will be attending the University of Alberta in the fall to begin a PhD in Philosophy.

Nicole DiSarno will be starting a full time position at Goldman Sachs this summer after graduation.

Maha Hasen, a rising senior, spent part of spring 2015 applying for several summer programs for philosophy students interested in earning a PhD. The department is extremely happy to report that she was accepted into her first-choice, the **UCSD Summer Program for Women in Philosophy**. This is a tremendous accomplishment; the program has fewer than 20 slots, and last year it had over 200 applicants. Hasen will receive transportation reimbursement, room and board, workshop materials and a \$600 stipend to support her participation in this two-week program, where she'll participate in intensive seminars on ethics and the history of modern philosophy with Professors Anne Eaton and Julie Walsh. She will also participate in numerous workshops to help develop graduate school applications and learn about philosophy as a profession. You can read more about the program in this [article from UC San Diego](#).

[» Read more "Student News"](#)

Department News

Recent Graduates

The department would like to congratulate the following individuals who graduated in 2015:

MA Graduates

Gregory Boison
Haiyun Su
Maggie Taylor
Benjamin Turse

Gregory Bailey
Jenna Bernick
Shilei Chen
Scott Cope
Nicole DiSarno
Kulsoom Jafri
Zachary Klein
Cecelia Lee
Derek Lee

William Manchinton
Alexandra Martin
Alexander Miller
Elaine Murphy
Priyanha Nadasabesan
Eric Padilla
Ian Redman
Zoey Surdis
Kelsey Taylor

BA Graduates

Jon Achtenhagen
Mary Arbor

Photos from the Department's Graduation Reception

Here are a sampling of photos from the department's graduation reception. If you would like to see more of the photos

graciously contributed by CCAS Associate Dean for Graduate Studies Dr. **Jeffrey Brand**, [view the entire gallery](#).



Professor **David DeGrazia** and MA graduate **Maggie Taylor**



Kelsey Taylor, William Manchinton, Kulsoom Jafri, and Professors Jason Fisette and Cameron Bassiri



Students, faculty and families mingle at the department's graduation reception

New Faculty Members

The department is excited to announce that two new assistant professors will be joining the faculty in 2015-2016: Dr. **Vanessa Wills** in fall 2015 and Dr. **Avery Archer** in spring 2016!



Dr. Vanessa C. Wills
PhD in Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, 2011

AOS: Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy; 19th Century German Philosophy (especially Karl Marx); Philosophy of Race



Dr. Avery Archer
PhD in Philosophy, Columbia University, 2013

AOS: Philosophy of Mind, Action Theory, and Moral Psychology

A Semester of Brown Bags

The department hosted eight brown bag seminars this spring led by GW philosophy faculty and visiting lecturers. For more information, please visit our [website](#).

- May 1: Dr. **David Benatar** (University of Cape Town and National Institutes of Health) presented "The Meaninglessness – and the Meanings – of Life."
- April 24: **Peter Andes** (GW) presented "Free Will, Moral Responsibility, and Public Morality."
- April 17: Dr. **Joshua Miller** (GW) presented "Reprobation as Shared Inquiry: Teaching the Liberal Arts in Prison."
- March 27: Dr. **Frederic Kellogg** (GW) presented "Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. and Legal Logic."
- February 20: Dr. **Paul Churchill** and **Sarah Holmes** (GW) presented "Honor Killing."
- February 27: **Nathifa Greene** (American University) presented "Just Looking: Reflections on Artful, Harmful, and Artless Satire."
- January 23: **Natalia Washington** (Purdue University) presented "Who's Responsible for This?: Moral Responsibility, Externalism, and Knowledge about Implicit Bias."
- January 16: Dr. **Michael Sigrist** (GW) presented "Husserl and Heidegger on Original Temporality."

Thank You for Your Support!

The Philosophy Department would like to gratefully acknowledge the following donors who made a gift to our program from January 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015. Your gifts were used to support our new Griffith Fund, scholarly travel for faculty and students, departmental colloquia and the Phi Sigma Tau honor society, among other activities and operations.

We couldn't have done any of this without you. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Andrew Altman +
Sarah A. Binder +
Jeffrey C. Brand
Nancy A. Breslin, RESD '87
Jackson R. Bryer
Peter J. Caws +
Robert Paul Churchill +
Miriam B. Cleeman, BA '14
Mimi Conway
David D. Degrazia **
Lloyd Eby +
Carl Bradley Fields, BA '04, JD '08
Milton Bruce Friedman, BA '72
Christopher C. Fritz, BA '09
Anne H. Ganz **
Robert N. Ganz, Jr. +
Brad Garner
Joseph Lewis Gastwirth +
Robert S. Goldfarb +
Thomas M. Goutman, BA '76

William B. Griffith +
William D. Griffith, MS '71
June Hargrove
Mary G. Jackson
Robert Earle Knowlton +
Jane E. Kozuszek
Charlotte A. Kuenen, BA '69
Elizabeth St. J. Loker, BA '69
Julia Louie, MA '08
Gregory Ludlow +
Forrest A. Maltzman +
David W. McAleavey +
Barbara M. Nelson
Majorie Odle
Laura Papish +
Andrea Pedefferri +
Janice Pevery
Susan E. Pichler
Judith Ann Abrams Plotz +
Sydney M. Prochazka, MA '09

Mark A. Ralkowski +
Jewrisha D. Ransome BA '09
Susan Shreve
Jonathan Thomas Skrmetti, BA '99
Mary Beth Stein +
Andrea W. Stewart, BA '70, MA '92
Michael H. Stewart +
Allyson C. Stokes
Linda J. Terry +
Michael W. Thacher, BA '70
Francine Trachtenberg +
Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, HON '08+
Larry Van Dyne
Gail D. Weiss +
Kara N. Williams, BA '08

* *Student*
+ *Faculty/Staff*
** *Friend*

Support the Philosophy Department!

Gifts to the Department of Philosophy allow us to provide support for faculty and student research and travel, graduate student fellowships, and academic enrichment activities including guest speakers, visiting faculty, and symposia. Each gift, no matter how large or small, makes a positive impact on our educational mission and furthers our standing as one of the nation's preeminent liberal arts colleges at one of the world's preeminent universities. To make a contribution in support of the Department of Philosophy, please see the giving instructions below. Please consider making a gift before June 30th.

Griffith Memorial Fund Honors Professor's Legacy to the Department

Former students, faculty and staff have collectively contributed almost \$85,000 in memory of Dr. Bill Griffith. Through these efforts, the William B. Griffith Memorial Fund was established and will soon be an endowed fund within the philosophy department. This fund will provide financial aid support to qualified students enrolled in the master's degree program in philosophy. Dr. Griffith's passion for philosophy and public policy will be recognized in perpetuity through the fund and support an area he carefully developed and directed for many years. The endowed payout will begin once we reach the \$100,000 threshold. To make a contribution in support of these efforts, please visit go.gwu.edu/griffithmemorialfund.

All gifts to the Department of Philosophy and to the Griffith Memorial Fund will be considered a part of the Making History: The Campaign for GW, a comprehensive, university-wide philanthropic effort to raise funds in support of GW's vision and priorities. To learn more, please visit campaign.gwu.edu.

You can make your gift to the Department of Philosophy and/or the Griffith Memorial Fund in the following ways:

- Securely online at www.gwu.edu/give2gw. Just choose "other" under designation and type in the Department of Philosophy. To give to the Griffith Memorial Fund, visit go.gwu.edu/griffithmemorialfund



By mailing your check, made out to The George Washington University and with "Department of Philosophy" or "Philosophy/Griffith Memorial Fund" in the memo line, to:

The George Washington University
2033 K Street NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20052

- By phone by calling the GW Annual Fund at 1-800-789-2611

Thank You & Congratulations

Thank you to student assistants **Lindsay Serwatka**, **Aimee Liang**, **Nadia Khan** and **Carl Dennis** for their help this spring!

Lindsay graduated this May and we wish her the best of luck as she begins work as a medical assistant at Capital Dermatology in Alexandria, Va., this June! In the next couple of years she has plans to attend medical or physician's assistant school.

Congratulations to the 2014-15 Gauss Prize winner, **Nicole DiSarno**, as well as the 2014-2015 Award for Excellence in Service to the Department of Philosophy and/or the Community winner, **Derek Lee**, who also served as departmental logic tutor and Philosophy Club president!

Congratulations to **Harry Rosenberg** for receiving the 2015-16 Thacher-Reynolds Fellowship!

Credits

This issue of the GW Department of Philosophy Newsletter was edited by our executive aide, **Amanda McLaughlin**, with assistance from Professor **Weiss**, **Derek Lee**, **Harry Rosenberg** and the **CCAS Communications staff**. **Carl Dennis** and **Nadia Khan** contributed their photography skills to the photos in the newsletter.

Alumni Stay Connected



Volunteer with GW!

Whether you are looking to engage fellow alumni, connect with students or support an academic program, we have an opportunity for you.

To learn more about available volunteer opportunities that meet your interest,



Join us on LinkedIn!

Connect with the larger GW community through the **GW Alumni Association** or **Columbian College** LinkedIn groups. Over 31,000 members and counting!



Save the Date: Alumni Weekend 2015

Save the date for **GW Alumni Weekend 2015**: September 24 – 27. Every year during Alumni Weekend, campus comes alive as thousands of alumni, friends and families return to GW. Colonials and their families are invited to participate in 60+ events

experience and schedule and to get involved, [click here](#).

during four fun days of activities. **More information**, including registration, will be posted soon. #GWAW15

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