

Letter from the Chair

Winter Greetings from the GW Department of Philosophy! Though it is rather cold and dreary outside, we have had an unusually vibrant and exciting fall semester with a record number of outside speakers giving talks, many new undergraduate and graduate courses introduced in our curriculum and a new colleague, **Joseph Trullinger**, assistant professor of honors and philosophy, who is featured in the Philosophy Club interview that appears below. We are also excited to announce that we received formal approval for our new MA in philosophy this past summer, and with the invaluable assistance of our new director of graduate studies, **Laura Papish**, and members of the Graduate Studies Committee, we have hit the ground running, launching a major publicity initiative directed to philosophy departments at colleges and universities throughout the country. Here is the link to [our new flyer](#) advertising both the new MA in philosophy and our existing MA in philosophy and social policy. We will begin admitting students this spring and look forward to having our inaugural group of MA students in philosophy at GW next fall.



We offered a record 14(!) sections of Introduction to Philosophy this semester and they are filled to capacity as are the other gateway courses we added over the last few years, including The Meaning of Mind and Introduction to Existentialism. Both of our fall 2014 Dean's Seminars on Animal Minds and Reading Existentialist Literature are also full and we are pleased that our introductory courses have proven to be so attractive to GW students. Our Philosophy of the Environment course, offered by **Michèle Friend** and **Michael Sigrist**, has quickly become one of our most popular new offerings, and it is an important component of the GW minor in sustainability. Several of our courses fulfill GW's Oral Communication, Local/Civic Engagement and/or Global/Cross-Cultural Perspectives general curriculum requirements, and the philosophy department has also been a leader in the development of summer online courses. We are thrilled to be offering our first hybrid online/study abroad summer course in Ancient Philosophy, taught by **Mark Ralkowski**, that will take students to Greece during Summer 2015 Session 1.

We hope you enjoy looking at the photos and reading about our many recent activities in this latest edition of the newsletter. We are very grateful for the huge outpouring of support we received in the wake of our dear colleague **Bill Griffith's** untimely death last spring. It was wonderful to hear from so many of you, and I hope you continue to stay connected with the department. Happy holidays to you all and please stay in touch!

Gail Weiss

2014 Sophia Lecture



Dr. **Şerife Tekin**, assistant professor of philosophy at Daemen College in Buffalo, N.Y., delivered the second annual Sophia Lecture on October 17, 2014. Professor Tekin is an associate fellow at the Center for Philosophy of

Science at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research in philosophy of psychiatry is situated at the cusp of feminist

2014 Elton Lecture



Dr. **Don Garrett**, Silver Professor of Philosophy and Department Chair at New York University, delivered the annual Elton Lecture on November 7, 2014. Professor Garrett was previously the Kenan Distinguished Professor for

Teaching Excellence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and his publications include *Cognition and*

approaches to philosophy of science, philosophy of mind and ethics. Professor Tekin also gave a lecture for the inaugural meeting of the 2014-15 GW University Seminar in the History and Future of Mental Wellbeing during her visit to campus, entitled "Against Grief Erosion: Incompatible Research and Clinical Interests in Psychiatric Taxonomy."

» [Read more about the 2014 Sophia Lecture](#)

Commitment in Hume's Philosophy (1997), *Hume* (forthcoming) and *Nature and Necessity in Spinoza's Necessity* (also forthcoming). He is editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (1996) and has served as co-editor of Hume Studies and as North American editor of *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*.

» [Read more about the 2014 Elton Lecture](#)

Inaugural Dean's Lecture Series

The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences initiated its inaugural Dean's Lecture Series in the Humanities this semester, co-sponsored by our department, as a way to celebrate the humanities and to encourage interdepartmental dialogue amongst the arts and humanities. This semester, CCAS chose to highlight philosophical topics and invited promising philosophers from all over the country to speak on important sociocultural issues, ranging from racial slurs to informed consent.



Dr. Victoria Costa

Dr. Victoria Costa, associate professor of philosophy at the College of William and Mary, delivered the first lecture in this series, titled "Can Ideals of

Freedom Support Informed Consent?" on October 10, 2014, during which she examined whether there is a universal moral duty of doctors to obtain informed consent, and whether this requirement can be vindicated by appeal to the value of freedom. Professor Costa received her PhD in philosophy from the National University of La Plata, Argentina, in 2003, and is author of *Rawls, Citizenship, and Education*. She has also published articles in political philosophy, applied ethics and civic education.



Dr. David Miguel Gray

Dr. David Miguel Gray, assistant professor of philosophy at Colgate University, gave his lecture on October 31, 2014, on the topic "Racial Norms: A

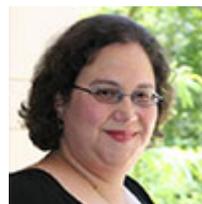
Reinterpretation of Du Bois' 'The Conservation of Races.'" His talk looked at the standard reinterpretation of W. E. B. DuBois' seminal speech "The Conservation of Races," which, Professor Gray asserts, provides a strange and disjointed perspective with which he disagrees. He offered his own interpretation that underlines Du Bois' racial theory as fundamental to his project of solidarity. In 2012, Professor Gray was awarded the William James Prize from the American Philosophical Association for his work on DuBois.



Dr. Luvell Anderson

Dr. Luvell Anderson, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Memphis, spoke on "Notorious Thugs," on November 14,

2014. In his lecture he argued that although some people believe the word "thug" does not carry racist connotations, it is a racial slur that can be appropriated as a form of resistance within African-American linguistic communities. Professor Anderson specializes in the philosophy of language and race, specifically racial slurs. Additionally, his work concentrates on the semantics and ethics of racial language, racist humor, and the normativity of offense.



Dr. Bertha Alvarez Manninen

Dr. Bertha Alvarez Manninen is associate professor of philosophy at Arizona State University in the Arts and Cultural Studies' Division of

Humanities, which is part of the New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences. On December 12, 2014, Professor Manninen gave a lecture on "Mutual Scorn in the Abortion Debate: The Parallels with Race Relations," in which she declared that the mutual scorn between pro-life and pro-choice groups has led to the stagnation of intelligent and respectful dialogue on the topic of abortion. She compared the dehumanizing effect caused by racist thinking and slurs to the extreme language and behaviors of pro-life and pro-choice activists.

Department Colloquia



Dr. **Avery Archer**, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, presented at a department colloquium on December 5, 2014, on “How to Distinguish between Theoretical and Practical Attitudes.” His lecture examined the current inadequate attempts to give a detailed account of the difference between theoretical and practical attitudes, which fall under the broad headings of descriptive and normative, and then offered an alternative account, which he calls the “two-content analysis.” Professor Archer’s current research lies in philosophy of action at the intersection of philosophy of mind, moral psychology and metaethics.

A Semester of Brown Bags

The department hosted six brown bag seminars this fall led by GW philosophy faculty and visiting lecturers. For more information, or to read the available papers, please visit [our website](#):

- October 10: Dr. **Victoria Costa** (College of William and Mary) presented “Republican Liberty and Border Controls.”
- October 24: Dr. **Eric Sidel** (GW) presented “Teleosemantic Problems with Introspection.”
- October 31: Dr. **David Michael Gray** (Colgate University) presented “Cognitive Phenomenology and the Ascription of Thought.”
- November 14: Dr. **Luvell Anderson** (University of Memphis) presented “On the Possibility of Cultural Illocutionary Acts.”
- November 21: Dr. **Laura Papish** (GW) presented “Kant and the Self that Self-Loves.”
- December 12: Dr. **Bertha Alvarez Manninen** (Arizona State University) presented “An Ethical and Metaphysical Analysis of the Phenomenology of Child Abuse.”

Upcoming Events in Spring 2014

University Seminar in the History and Future of Mental Wellbeing

Dr. **Natalia Washington**, Purdue University
Friday, January 23, 4:00 pm

Griffith Lecture (formerly the Goutman Lecture Series)

Dr. **Meena Krishnamurthy**, University of Manitoba
Friday, January 30, 4:00 pm

Department Colloquia

Natalie Cisneros, Penn State University and Gettysburg College
February 6, 4:00 pm

Department Colloquia

Vanessa Wills, Saint Joseph’s University
February 13, 12:00 pm

Thacher Lecture

Dr. **Christopher Hom**, Texas Tech University
Friday, March 20, 4:00 pm

Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

Friday, April 3
Deadline for Paper Submissions: February 14, 2015

Philosophy Club Update

The Philosophy Club has been very active this semester, working on expanding programming to include extracurricular activities, as well as supporting members of the philosophy community through assistance programming. In the fall alone, the club has led excursions to the American Art Portraiture Gallery to talk about aesthetics and went on a hike to facilitate discussion about nature. On December 12, the club attended the DC Improv Comedy Club and discussing humor as it relates to philosophy.

Next semester, the club will be hosting GW’s annual Undergraduate Philosophy Conference on April 3. A [call for papers](#) has been distributed, and this year the conference will focus on applied ethics and political philosophy. The club is actively planning events for next spring, including a movie series and a book club. If you have any interest in discussing philosophy on a casual level, visit our [Facebook page](#). Finally, check out the club’s [new website](#) for further updates, a calendar of events and a host of other information about the club and its goings on!

2014-15 GW Philosophy Club Executive Board: President **Derek Lee**, Vice President **Nicholas Sanchiz**, Treasurer **Francis Graham**, Secretary **Nicola Young**, Social Coordinator **Hanna Zikria**, Affinity Liaison **Habon Issa**

New Initiatives

- Introduction to Logic will become a required course for philosophy majors of both tracks, starting fall 2015.
- Study Abroad
 - The first study abroad course sponsored by the philosophy department has been approved for Summer Session I: PHIL 2111W History of Ancient Philosophy. Professor **Ralkowski's** course will take place online and include an in-country component from June 1-10, 2015, in Athens and the island of Aegina, Greece.
 - Professor **Friend** is proposing a study abroad course on sustainability and the environment, which would partly take place at Schumacher College in Devon, England, in January 2016.
 - Professor **Friend** is also exploring the possibility of a course on the logical foundations of the relativity theories and Newtonian mechanics; part of this course would take place in Budapest, Hungary, and possibly Gent, Belgium.

Summer 2015 Course Offerings

- PHIL 2111W: History of Ancient Philosophy offered as a joint online and short-term study abroad program to Athens and Aegina, Greece, in Summer Session I (cross-listed with HONR 2054).
- Ethics: Business & Professions, **Lloyd Eby**
- Online courses
 - Introduction to Philosophy, **Tad Zawidzki**
 - Philosophy and Film, **Chris Venner**
 - Introduction to Logic, **Eric Saidel**
 - Philosophy of Race and Gender, **Megan Davis**
 - Ethics: Theory & Applications, **Jeffrey Brand**
 - Social & Political Philosophy, **Michael Sigrist**
 - Philosophy of Law, **Jeffrey Brand**

Faculty Spotlight: Joseph Trullinger



The GW Philosophy Club has chosen Assistant Professor of Honors and Philosophy **Joseph Trullinger** as the subject of the Fall 2014 Faculty Profile. Below, Professor Trullinger responds to questions posed by the Philosophy Club's Francis Graham.

Where did you go for undergrad & what did you study?

I entered Bucknell University with the notion that I was going to become a historian, since I loved Latin and ancient Rome. That quickly changed about six weeks into my first semester, when a philosophy professor (very graciously) let me explore ideas at length in office hours. After thinking about the competing notions of Plato and Aristotle on what constitutes the best life, I knew at that moment that this is what I had to do for the rest of my life.

Where did you go for graduate school?

What drew me to the University of Kentucky was the opportunity to study Neoplatonism and German Idealism, a combination you can't find everywhere. It's a good school for studying the history of philosophy, among other things. It was a time of intense discussion, thinking, and work—I also taught classes during the seven years I was a graduate student—but the stimulating and friendly environment there always gave me the energy to keep up with it.

» [Continue reading "Faculty Spotlight: Joseph Trullinger"](#)

Faculty News

Jeffrey Brand made a sudden and bittersweet transition in October when he was appointed associate dean for graduate studies in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. He will continue to teach two classes yearly while serving in the Dean's Office. His first book, *Limits of Legality: The Ethics of Lawless Judging* (Oxford University Press, 2010), was just

commissioned for Chinese translation by the China Renmin University Press.

Paul Churchill's paper "The Ethics of Teaching and the Emergence of MOOCs: Should Philosophers Support the MOOC" was published in *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (Spring 2014), pp. 26-40, and a book chapter, "Liberal Toleration," was published in the *Bloomsbury Guide to Political Philosophy* (Bloomsbury, 2014), (ed.) Andrew Fiala, pp. 139-150. He presented a paper, "Honor Codes, Violence, and Reconciliation," at the Annual Conference of Concerned Philosophers for Peace at Millersville University in Lancaster, Penn., from October 11-13, 2014. In November, he and **Sarah Holmes** submitted the first three chapters of *Women in the Crossfire* to a prospective publisher, and he spoke on global gender violence on a panel following the showing of *Honor Diaries* on November 24, 2014. Professor Churchill will be presenting a paper on human rights at the late December American Philosophical Association (APA) meetings in Philadelphia.

[» Read more "Faculty News"](#)

Alumni News

Paul H ("Pete") Aloe, BA '80, is a named partner at the New York City law firm Kudman Trachten Aloe LLP. After leaving GW, he earned his law degree at the Hofstra School of Law, where he was second in his class, and after a judicial clerkship and large firm experience, where he became a partner, he helped form his current firm. His practice areas are commercial litigation and bankruptcy. The firm focuses on business law. Paul is also a member of the North Hempstead Zoning Board of Appeals and is the past chair of the New York State Bar Association Committee on Civil Practice Law and Rules. He is also an active marathon runner (45 marathons) and recently was first in his age group at the Hamptons Marathon and an Ironman Triathlete.

Grant Babcock, MA '12, has accepted a position at the Cato Institute. He will be a research assistant on the libertarianism.org project, which focuses on political philosophy, especially the theory and history of the idea of liberty, broadly construed.

[» Read more "Alumni News"](#)

Student News

Maggie Taylor presented at the 10th annual Harm Reduction Conference in Baltimore. She was part of a panel that discussed the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in King County, WA, which allows police officers to divert low-level drug offenders and sex workers into the care of a social worker instead of booking and prosecuting them. Her panel included a representative from the LEAD program and an advocate from the ACLU's Washington office. Taylor's presentation explored whether LEAD and programs influenced by LEAD are coercive, utilizing the definition of coercion constructed by Alan Wertheimer. The implications of using coercive means to 'help' offenders was then explored in connection with harm reduction goals, which require respect for the self-determined choices of all persons and emphasize the moral authority of persons to make objectively harmful decisions on their own behalf.

Keep Us Posted!

Any news that you would like to share with GW Philosophy faculty, students, and alumni? Just send your submission via e-mail to Amanda McLaughlin at philosop@gwu.edu.

Donations

The Department of Philosophy would like to gratefully acknowledge the following generous donors who made a gift to the school from July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014. Your gifts were used to create an endowment in honor of Dr. William B. Griffith, as

well as to support guest lecturers and faculty scholarly travel.

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Gifts to the Philosophy Department allow us to provide support for faculty and student research and travel, graduate student fellowships, and academic enrichment activities, including guest speakers. 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. Please consider making a gift before June 30th.

You can make your gift to the department in a number of ways:

- Securely online at www.gwu.edu/give2gw. Just choose "other" under designation and type in the name of the department.
- By mailing your check, made out to The George Washington University and with the name of the department in the memo line, to:

The George Washington University
2100 M Street NW, Suite 310
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- By phone by calling the GW Annual Fund at 1-800-789-2611.

Thank You & Congratulations

Congratulations to our Office Assistant **Meredith Thomas** for graduating this fall! Our sincere thanks go out to her and our other Office Assistants, **Lindsay Serwatka**, **Nadia Khan**, and **Aimee Liang**, for their hard work this semester.

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** and the **CCAS Communications Office**. Our office assistant **Aimee**

Liang took many of the photos in this issue.

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