

Letter from the Chair

Fall greetings from Washington D.C.! We have had an extremely busy few months since I took over as chair from **Gail Weiss** in July 2015. This is my first administrative gig, and I must say there have been many challenging surprises! I want to thank Gail for leaving the department in such good shape for me! I truly stand on the shoulders of giants. These last few months have been bittersweet for us. We lost tireless supporter and alumna **Beth Loker** in October. Her devotion to the department persisted through her final days, during which she finalized a very generous bequeathal to help support our graduate programs. We also happily welcomed a new tenure-track faculty member, Vanessa Wills, specializing in Marx and socio-political philosophy. Vanessa already feels like part of the family.



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. 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. She has made my transition to chair remarkably seamless and manageable!

Tad Zawidzki
Chair, Department of Philosophy

Photo: Department Chair Dr. Tad Zawidzki at a spring 2015 conference in Budapest, Hungary.

Department Spotlights



2015 Sophia Lecture

Dr. **Shannon Spaulding**, assistant professor of philosophy at Oklahoma State University, delivered the third annual Sophia Lecture on October 16,



2015 Elton Lecture

Dr. **Charles W. Mills**, John Evans Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy at Northwestern University, delivered the annual Elton Lecture on



Summer 2015 Study Abroad Trip to Athens, Greece, a Success

Dr. **Mark Ralkowski**, assistant professor of honors and philosophy, led a short term study abroad program

2015. Professor Spaulding's general philosophical interests are in the philosophy of mind, philosophical psychology and the philosophy of science. The principal goal of her research is to construct a philosophically and empirically plausible account of social cognition, and her other research interests include the imagination, pretense and action theory. [Read More.](#)

Photo: "Dr. Spaulding delivered the 2015 Sophia Lecture on "Divergent Social Interpretations."



Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Avery Archer

The GW Philosophy Club has chosen incoming Assistant Professor of Philosophy **Avery Archer** as the subject of the Fall 2015 Faculty Spotlight. Below, Professor Archer responds to questions posed by the Philosophy Club's **Harry Rosenberg**.

How did you first become interested in philosophy?

My path to philosophy was a bit unorthodox. I began my academic career studying theology, with the aim of becoming a minister. [Read More](#)

Photo: Dr. Avery Archer will be joining our GW department faculty in spring 2016, teaching Theory of Knowledge and Analytical Philosophy.

Faculty News

Avery Archer has a paper forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies* (expected to appear in print in January 2016) entitled "Do Desires Provide Reasons? An Argument Against the Cognitivist Strategy." He also had a paper published in the September

November 20, 2015. Professor Mills works in the general area of oppositional political theory, and is the author of five books: *The Racial Contract* (1997); *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (1998); *From Class to Race: Essays in White Marxism and Black Radicalism* (2003); *Contract and Domination* (with **Carole Pateman**) (2007); and *Radical Theory, Caribbean Reality: Race, Class and Social Domination* (2010). [Read More.](#)

Photo: Dr. Mills delivering the Elton Lecture to a large audience.



In Memoria: Beth Loker

Alumna, donor and friend of the philosophy department, Ms. **Elizabeth "Beth" St. J. Loker**, BA '69, died of cancer on September 29, 2015, at the age of 69. She had been an active alumna for years, speaking at both the 2012 philosophy alumni conference and Dr. **William B. Griffith's** memorial service in May 2014. Ms. Loker was one of Professor Griffith's first students and contributed the majority of funds to create the William B. Griffith Memorial Endowment in his honor, after his passing in February 2014. [Read More](#)

Photo: Ms. Beth Loker, BA '69, was a devoted alumna, donor, and friend of the philosophy department.

entitled "Ancient Greece and the Origins of Western Thought" from June 1-10, 2015. The trip was an experiential component of the cross-listed online course in PHIL 2111W History of Ancient Philosophy and HONR 2054W The Origins of Western Thought. [Read More.](#)

Photo: Students in Dr. Ralkowski's "Ancient Greece and the Origins of Western Thought" short-term study abroad program in Greece, from left to right: Sabrina Freese, Kaylee McNeil, Albert Anaim, Alex Nelson, Nicola Young, Kunho Park and Marcus Sass.



Visiting Scholar Victor Fernandez Castro

Victor Fernandez Castro is a PhD student at the University of Granada in Granada, Spain. After graduating with an undergraduate degree in philosophy and receiving his MSc in Cognitive Sciences, he was awarded a fellowship from the Programme for the Training of Researchers by the Spanish Government. His primary research interests are philosophy of psychology and philosophy of mind, and he is particularly concerned with issues such as social cognition, inner speech and metacognition. [Read More.](#)

Photo: Victor Fernandez Castro, a PhD student of the University of Granada, is a visiting researcher with the department this fall, researching with Professor Zawidzki on normative aspects of social cognition.

2015 issue of *Thought: A Journal of Philosophy*, entitled "Reconceiving Direction of Fit." He is currently putting the finishing touches on two additional papers, one that addresses the question of whether there is a practical analogue to withholding belief (he argues there is not) and a second that investigates whether there is a need to posit the existence of partial intentions (which he remains skeptical about). Professor Archer has also begun work on two additional papers, one that limns a novel version of cognitivism about intention (i.e., the thesis that intending to do something involves a belief that one will succeed) and another that responds to an argument against cognitivism advanced in John Brunero's paper "Cognitivism about Practical Rationality." Professor Archer was an invited commentator on an online discussion of Brunero's paper, sponsored by Oxford University Press, and hosted by the philosophy blog PEA Soup. He also helped organize this year's Tennessee Value and Agency Conference, which featured keynotes by **Candace Vogler** and **John Schwenkler**. In addition, Professor Archer was a participant in the final meeting of the Bellingham Summer Philosophy Conference, which took place this August, where he commented on a paper by **Elizabeth Harman**. This fall semester, he taught a seminar on practical reasoning, with guest lectures from **John Brunero**, **Kieran Setiya** and **Nomy Arpaly**.

Jeffrey Brand published a review of F.M. Kamm, *Bioethical Prescriptions: To Create, End, Choose, and Improve Lives* in the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*. Earlier this year, he was inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha, a global honor society for Public Affairs and Administration, by the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration.

[» Read More "Faculty News"](#)

Current Students

Jennifer Romanello is an applied ethics minor (as well as biology major and pre-med). Ms. Romanello had an internship in the Clinical Genetics Service at The Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City over the summer. Part of her internship involved shadowing the clinical geneticists, and observing the ethical issues of genetic testing. She is also president of GW's The Triple Helix (TTH) chapter, which is part of an international organization dedicated to showcasing undergraduate voices in issues of science, society, law and ethics. Members can write articles to be featured in an international online publication, as well as discuss topics of interest, such as how technology and social media affect our psyche and relationships in this day and age. TTH is hosting their national conference on February 12-14, 2016 in Science and Engineering Hall.

This year, **Nicola Young** and **Justin Brandt** have been volunteering to coach students at the School Without Walls for this year's High School Ethics Bowl, which takes place in January 2016. They help the high school students understand ethical theories and apply them to specific cases.

Tyler Loveless praised the department, saying "The philosophy department at GW has become a home for students like myself who want to be surrounded by people that care about helping us grow. I have been in several departments at GW and none of them have shown me the hospitality and encouragement that the philosophy department has gained a reputation for. Professors actually take the time to speak with their undergraduate students, and faculty make it a point to help us, even if it means going out of their way. I regularly hear my classmates talking about their reading assignments outside of class and praising their philosophy professors. The philosophy department has created a wonderful atmosphere for educational growth here, and the students have taken notice."

Department Updates

Philosophy Club Update: In recent years, the GW Philosophy Club has rapidly expanded to include a wide range of discussions and events. This semester, members met to discuss topics ranging from ethics to Stoicism to epistemology. They heard from Professor **Mark Ralkowski** on the philosophy of humor, and attended a talk at Johns Hopkins University delivered by renowned philosopher **David Chalmers**. In addition, the club hosted a movie night where they viewed *Ex Machina* and discussed its philosophical implications. Next semester, the club will be hosting GW's annual Undergraduate Philosophy Conference on March 25, featuring keynote speaker Dr. Bryce Huebner of Georgetown University. If you have any interest in discussing philosophy on a casual level, visit the club's [Facebook page](#). Or, check out the [club's website](#) further updates, a calendar of events and other information.

Upcoming Events in Spring 2016:

Griffith Lecture: Dr. Meena Krishnamurthy of the University of Michigan, Friday, January 29, 4:00 p.m.

Undergraduate Philosophy Conference: "Minds, Brains and Persons"

Friday, March 25, 10:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Deadline for Paper Submissions: February 5, 2016

Questions? Contact gwphilosophyclub@gmail.com

Thacher Lecture: Dr. Jay Garfield of Yale-NUS College, Friday, April 18, 4:00 p.m.

[» Read More "Department Updates"](#)

Alumni Updates

David Anderson, BA '81, recently had his book *Leveraging: A Political, Economic and Societal Framework* published by Springer

Neil Bomberg, BA '72, has been working in public policy since graduating from Rutgers University's School of Public Policy and Urban Planning. He is now the director of policy and government affairs at the American Public Human Services Association in Washington, D.C.

Maddy Bortes, BA '14, changed paths and pursued full-time yoga and meditation teaching in D.C. after some time at the FDA. She continues to call on the teachings from philosophy courses to inform her yoga study and teaching.

[» Read More "Alumni Updates"](#)

Donor Recognition

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Recently, **Marie Sansone**, BA '78, made a six-figure planned gift in support of the department that played such an important role in her success. She hopes her gift will help GW students and faculty make the world a better place. [Click here](#) to read more.

The Philosophy Department would like to gratefully acknowledge the following generous donors who made a gift to the school from July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015.

Chevron Matching Gift Program

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The Department wishes to recognize, and express deep gratitude to, Daniel and Margaret Donoghue, parents of graduating senior Robert "Bo" Donoghue, for their generous donation of \$40,000 to the department, in October 2015. Many of the faculty have fond memories of Bo's enthusiastic and insightful participation in a wide range of classes. During a meeting with Department Chair, **Tad Zawidzki**, all three Donoghues stressed the extremely challenging and rewarding learning environment that the Philosophy Department provided Bo during his time here. Daniel and Margaret were deeply moved by and extremely appreciative of the education we provided Bo. A natural scholar, with insatiable curiosity and a thirst for intellectual discussion, Bo felt that his intellectual ambitions hadn't been appropriately nurtured in high school, but the GW Philosophy Department provided just the environment he'd been looking for, to his and his parents' delight. The Donoghues

singled out a number of faculty as particularly important in Bo's philosophical journey at GW: department chair Tad Zawidzki, and part-time faculty, **Michael Sigrist**, **Dimiter Kirilov**, and **Cameron Bassiri**.

According to Daniel and Margaret, Bo's discussions with these faculty regularly formed the basis for table-talk at home, to the point that they came to refer to these instructors they'd never met by their first-names and nicknames! This is a great testament to the intellectual culture that every single faculty member in the philosophy department seeks to cultivate on a daily basis. We have long received similar sorts of verbal accolades from other students and their families, and it is gratifying to see our efforts rewarded in more concrete ways as well! Above all, we seek to foster an inclusive intellectual community, that encourages active participation not just from full-time faculty, graduate students, and majors, but from every student and every part-time faculty member as well. In today's unforgiving academic job market, there are, unfortunately, many extremely talented philosophers who cannot secure tenure-track positions. Often, the difference between scoring one of these positions and teaching part-time amounts to pure luck. As a department, we have benefited tremendously from this unfortunate situation, hiring extremely talented part-time instructors who help provide GW undergrads with a first-rate philosophical education. The Donoghues' singling out three of these part-time instructors when making their extremely generous contribution highlights the value of this under-appreciated constituency in our community. As a department, we are committed to using a significant portion of this donation to express our appreciation to our part-time faculty.

Support the Department

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, 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. Please consider making a gift before June 30th.

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

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