Welcome to the fifth issue of the GW Department of Philosophy Newsletter!

I am excited to report that we will be offering several new courses in the coming semesters that will significantly enhance our current departmental curriculum. This spring, Eric Saidel will be teaching a new course in the Philosophy of Biology that will also count towards the very popular interdisciplinary Mind/Brain Studies minor that was originated last spring, co-founded by our own Tad Zawidzki. Next fall we will be offering two sections of an Introduction to Existentialism course (to be taught by two of our most popular part-time faculty, Michael Sigrist and Cameron Bassiri), that is intended to be a gateway to the major for freshmen and sophomores. Another new introductory philosophy offering for next fall is The Meaning of Mind, a course that Tad Zawidzki has developed based on the intense interest in this topic expressed by many of our incoming freshmen at GW’s summer Colonial Inaugurations. A fourth new course for the fall 2012 semester will be Megan Davis’ Philosophies of Disability, a writing-intensive (WID) course in an exciting new field that will be cross-listed with Women’s Studies. Last, but not least, Paul Churchill is planning to teach a new course in the spring of 2013 in his primary area of research, the Philosophy of Human Rights. We anticipate that these new offerings will quickly become indispensable to our curriculum, attracting more students to major and minor in philosophy.

With the recent conclusion of registration for the Spring 2012 semester, and with the first official waitlist system in place for our closed courses, I’m proud to announce that our philosophy courses (and professors!) are increasingly in demand. Many of our course sections are closed and have long waitlists. Quite a few of these sections are taught by our excellent part-time faculty. We hope that by expanding our curriculum over the next few semesters, we can tap into what is clearly a growing enthusiasm on the part of both old and new GW students for the discipline of philosophy. We are also working on developing some new courses for the M.A. program in Philosophy and Social Policy and I will be reporting on these latter in a future newsletter.

Enjoy reading about the many activities that our faculty, students, and alumni are engaged in this year and please remember to stay in touch.

Happy holidays!

Gail Weiss
Elton Lecture
On Friday, November 18th, 2011, Graham Priest presented the annual Elton Lecture to a large and enthusiastic crowd. The talk, entitled “Between the Horns of Realism and Idealism: the Philosophy of Madhyamaka Buddhism,” looked at the Madhyamaka Buddhist school, one of the two major schools of Indian Buddhism that had a significant impact on all subsequent Buddhist philosophy. In his talk Dr. Priest examined the relevant parts of the Madhyamaka view, and their implications for the realist/idealist debate. Dr. Priest is currently Boyce Gibson Professor of Philosophy at the University of Melbourne and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He is also Arché Professorial Fellow in the Department of Philosophy, University of St Andrews. He has written widely on philosophy and its history, but is best known for his work in non-classical logic, especially paraconsistent logic and its metaphysical applications. His main books include: In Contradiction, Beyond the Limits of Thought, Towards Non-Being, Doubt Truth to be a Liar, and Introduction to Non-Classical Logic.

Goutman Lecture
The annual Goutman Lecture will take place Friday, February 3rd at 5:00 p.m. in Duques Hall, room 151. David Cole, Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, will present “Accountability for Torture in the War on Terror: On the Necessity of Looking Back.” Professor Cole teaches constitutional law, national security, and criminal justice at the Georgetown Law Center, contributes regularly to the New York Review of Books, and is a frequent commentator on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered”. Please join us in February for what we are sure will be a fascinating talk!

Darwinian Populations and Natural Selection (Oxford, 2009). Please stay tuned for the abstract and location of the talk.

GW Undergraduate Conference
The GW Undergraduate Conference will take place March 23rd at GW. Undergraduate students interested in submitting a paper need to send their paper to gwphilosophyclub@gmail.com no later than January 16th, 2011. Peter Caws will be the plenary speaker at this year’s conference.

GW Philosophy Alumni Conference
Hold the date! The first ever GW Philosophy Alumni Conference will take place on Friday, September 28th, 2012, and will help to kick off GW’s fall 2012 Alumni Weekend. The conference will honor University Professor of Philosophy Peter Caws who will be retiring after the fall 2012 semester. The program will consist of several panels that highlight the professional accomplishments of our distinguished undergraduate and graduate alumni. Planned panels include presentations by alumni who are members of the academy, the legal profession, and public policy-related fields. The conference will also offer presentations by more recent alumni who are currently attending graduate school in philosophy (two of whom are currently teaching in our department as adjunct faculty!) as well as a panel of alumni who are presently enrolled in or who have recently graduated from law school. If you would like to participate in the Alumni Conference, please let us know! We will be in touch with more details regarding our inaugural conference in the coming months.

Thacher Lecture
On April 20, 2012, Peter Godfrey-Smith, Distinguished Professor for the Philosophy Program, at the Graduate Center, CUNY, will be delivering the annual Thacher Lecture. Professor Godfrey-Smith has written three books, Complexity and the Function of Mind in Nature (Cambridge, 1996), Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science (Chicago, 2003), and Darwinian Populations and Natural Selection (Oxford, 2009). Please stay tuned for the abstract and location of the talk.
This semester, Cameron Bassiri (Lecturer) has started a reading group with student Christian Geoghegan, devoted to reading Volumes I and II of Jean-Paul Sartre’s work on Gustave Flaubert, The Family Idiot. The group meets once a week for two hours to discuss the text. Among the many themes of the reading group are Sartre’s analyses and accounts of the life and work of Flaubert, the relation between philosophy and literature, as well as the way in which this text incorporates and develops ideas found in Sartre’s earlier work on phenomenology and existentialism. The group will continue over the winter break by reading Volume III, and will then complete the year-long project of reading this five-volume work in the spring of 2012 in a readings and research course which will cover the remaining two volumes.

Jeffrey Brand-Ballard (Associate Professor) began his term as a member of the Faculty Senate of the University this year. He also chairs the Admission Policy Committee. A published paper of Dr. Brand-Ballard’s was recently highlighted in Jotwell, a journal that recognizes excellence in legal scholarship by publishing reviews of notable articles. The featured paper, “Innocents Lost: Proportional Sentencing and the Paradox of Collateral Damage,” appeared in Legal Theory in 2009. His 2010 book, Limits of Legality: The Ethics of Lawless Judging, has been the subject of several reviews and commentaries this year.

Peter Caws (University Professor) gave two papers in October 2011. At Dublin City University in Dublin, Ireland, he presented “What Is Human Nature, and What Would Transforming It Amount To?” at a conference on “Transforming Human Nature in Science, Technology, and the Arts.” In Prague, he talked on “Suicide as Allowing a Process of Killing for Rational Ends” at a conference sponsored by Inter-Disciplinary.net of Oxford on “Making Sense of Suicide.” He made an international splash of a different kind when his son Matthew’s band announced its forthcoming album. Nada Surf drew the album’s title—with permission—from a tag line in Professor Caws’s teaching: “The Stars Are Indifferent to Astronomy.” Since NPR featured one of the album’s tracks as its “Song of the Day,” it’s been picked up by enthusiastic fans and commentators.

Note: We are sad to announce that Professor Caws will retire in December 2012. He concludes a 30-year tenure as University Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Human Sciences. We will be honoring Professor Caws at our September 2012 Philosophy Alumni conference, during his last semester teaching at GW. We hope that many of you can be there to share our appreciation for his outstanding contributions to our department, the university, and the profession of philosophy.

Faculty News

Senior ed. Deen Chatterjee. Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer Science, 2011. The encyclopedia entries were on altruism, crimes against humanity, indigenous peoples, violence, and four prominent American philosophers: Charles Beitz, Michael Boylan, James Nickel, and Henry Shue.

Megan Davis (Professorial Lecturer) received a course development grant from the Online Learning Initiative to develop an online writing intensive (WID) version of Philosophy of Race and Gender for Summer 2012.

Since the last newsletter, David DeGrazia (Professor) completed his book Creation Ethics, which will be published by Oxford UP next spring, and returned to the classroom, where he is teaching “Ethics: Theory and Applications” and “Advanced Ethical Theory.” His coedited textbook, Social Ethics, came out last summer and an article, “Genetic Enhancement, Post-persons, and Moral Status,” was recently published in The Journal of Medical Humanities. This fall he has presented several papers including “Disabilities and Disadvantage through the Lens of Value Theory” for the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities and “Moral Improvement through Biomedical Means and What We (Should) Value in Morality” for a conference sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation, Oxford University and the Uehiro Foundation (Japan). He is looking forward to a less hectic schedule next semester.

Michele Friend (Assistant Professor) returned from a year’s sabbatical in early fall. About her sabbatical year she says “During the sabbatical I did a lot of writing, including a good part of a book manuscript. The book works out the details of a new position in the philosophy of mathematics, which I am calling “Pluralism”. Its closest philosophical cousins are: relativism, fictionalism and formalism. But Pluralism differs from each of these in different respects. While the position is “new” in the sense of no one having written up a fully worked-out version of the position, it is “in the air” in the sense that the word “pluralism” is used far more frequently than before by: mathematicians, logicians, computer scientists and a very few philosophers of logic, mathematics and computer science. But they each use the word in a different way. That is why the book is timely. While on sabbatical, I had the chance to try out the position at several rather prestigious international conferences. In general, the papers were greeted with enthusiasm. However, I did cause some alarm. Such is to be expected, nay hoped for, in a philosophy presentation. The papers I wrote all bore on Pluralism. One was co-written with Norma Goethe, and published in Studia Logica. Others are under review.”

William Griffith (Professor) was invited to attend the lunch for faculty on Nov. 16, 2011, opening the discussion of a new strategic plan for the University.


Gail Weiss’s (Professor) and Debra Bergoffen’s co-edited Special Issue of Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy, Vol. 26.3, “Ethics of Embodiment,” was published this summer. They are also co-editing “Contesting the Norms of Embodiment,” a Hypatia cluster that will appear in the Winter 2012 issue, Vol. 27.2. In October, Gail presented a paper at the 50th Anniversary Conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP) on Gayle Salamon’s recent book, Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality. Gail was also elected to the Advocacy Committee for SPEP and will serve in this position for the next three years. This fall she published a chapter on Simone de Beauvoir in The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology, edited by Sebastian Luft and Søren Overgaard (Routledge 2012). She has forthcoming essays as well as a book project on Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Since the last newsletter, Tadeusz Zawidzki (Associate Professor) has been finishing up the final draft of his
Faculty News

book, *Mindshaping: Linchpin of the Human Socio-Cognitive Syndrome*, which will be published by MIT Press next year. He presented material from this work at the College of Charleston this past September. He has also been invited to present a paper on adaptive, false beliefs about the mind at the annual meeting of the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology in Savannah, GA, this coming March. This past fall, he published two papers: “How to Interpret Infant Socio-Cognitive Competence,” in *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 2:483–497, and “Unlikely allies: embodied social cognition and the intentional stance,” in *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, in press, already published online. He currently has two papers under review: (1) “The Evolution of the Human Imitation Faculty,” a paper co-authored with Francys Subiaul of the Speech and Hearing Department, and Alison Brooks and Chet Sherwood of the Anthropology Department, submitted to a special issue of the *Journal of Comparative Primatology*; (2) “Phenomenology and the Extended Mind,” submitted for a special issue of the *International Journal of Machine Consciousness*. In the fall semester of 2011, he taught, for the first time, a Dean’s Seminar on the evolutionary origins of religion. He continues engagement with undergraduate students as a Faculty Guide for the third year in a row, this time for Potomac Residence Hall.

Faculty Profile

**Professor of Philosophy Thanassis Samaras**

The GW Philosophy Club students have chosen Professor Thanassis Samaras as the subject for of the fall 2011 Faculty Profile section of this newsletter. Below, Professor Samaras responds to questions posed by the Philosophy Club.

Where are you from originally? Where did you grow up?

In Thessaloniki, Greece. I had a comfortable, sheltered, middle-class childhood.

Did you always want to do philosophy? When did you start ‘philosophizing’?

When I was about 15. The other kids would not play with me, and there was no internet, so all I could do was read books.

Where did you attend graduate school? Do you have a best or worst memory (or teacher) from that time?

I did my M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Warwick in Britain. My worst memory is taking my first, hand-written (I am that old) draft to my supervisor after officially becoming a doctoral candidate. She tore it to pieces, threw it out of the window and told me that if I ever submitted something like that again I would be next. This was, of course, the best thing that could possibly happen to me. I completed my thesis in two years and 11 months, which was a department record.

How did you end up at GW?

Contrary to the rumors that my ship sailed and left me behind, I was a fellow at the Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, DC and I had a friend, Mark Nowacki, who was in the department. He arranged for me to have an interview with Paul Churchill and Paul, being the incredibly kind person he is, hired me.

What are you working on currently? Why are you working on this?

Greek political and constitutional theory. I work on it because this is how one leads the theoretical life, by wondering about things like that.

Who is your least favorite philosopher(s) and why?

The ones you cannot make any jokes about.

Did any particular philosopher have a significant influence on your intellectual development?

I am not sure I have developed yet.

If you were in charge of the world for one day, then what would you do first, and why?

Explain to the author of this question that you cannot ask this after Hegel.

What class do you enjoy teaching the most?

Advanced classes are always more interesting, especially if they are full of philosophy majors, who tend to be amazingly motivated, hard-working and, above all, modest students.

Do you have any advice for the aspiring philosophers at GWU or elsewhere?

Philosophy can be a lot of fun!

Alumni News

Christopher Ezold (BA ’92) recently passed the bar exam for the State of Delaware. He has been licensed to practice law in Pennsylvania and New Jersey since 1995. Chris is a partner in The Ezold Law Firm, P.C.

Thomas Gennaro (BA ’08) Thomas is currently finishing his M.A. in History and Philosophy of Science at Indiana
Alumni Spotlight

Michael Bower (BA '11) Being a member of the Buff N’ Blue was something that I always appreciated. GW was, in many ways, a home away from home for me. Although I was always happy to be back in NYC, to see family and friends, relax, and to travel (when I could,) I always felt like GW was my second home.

Being a philosophy major, however, I was also able to see an entirely different side of GW that (I think) many Colonials never get to see. After all, GW is famous for its P.R., political studies, SMPA, business and finance majors. As a philosophy major, however, I got to experience a much smaller, more tightly knit community of GW students and professors.

Despite the fact that all of the philosophy majors had different schedules, I could always count on the fact that I would know a great deal of the friendly faces in my upcoming courses. Despite the fact that most GW classes are quite large and can at times feel overwhelming, my philosophy courses were always quite small; and despite being one of 9,500 undergraduate students, I was always able to have a personal, 1-to-1 relationship with all of my professors.

Now, as a Teach for America corps member teaching Spanish out in San Jose, CA, (which was my second major at GW,) I often reflect on my experience at GW with only the fondest of memories. I feel that, at the end of the day, I have GW, the philosophy and the Spanish department, and all of Foggy Bottom to thank for that.

To my fellow philosophy majors: I encourage you to think outside of the box as you come closer to graduation. Many of my fellow PHIL majors often thought that their options after college were more limited than those of the business and finance majors – but I assure you, they’re really not! The attention to detail and analytical thinking skills that a philosophy major can afford you will be the future keystones to your academic résumé.

Keeping that in mind, I beseech you: wear your PHIL major with pride, get those A’s, and go out and be your dream!

Heather Fink (BA ’03) is finishing her 3rd and final year in NYU’s Grad Film Program as Writer/Director. The comedian is focusing on comedy films, with a feature and TV show in development, as well as commercial projects. All of her projects are shot/will be shot in NYC or New Jersey, as both are places that Heather considers home. Her last short film starred GW alum Ann Carr, and was edited by GW alum, Adam Weiss. She’s also working with GW alum Christina Savage who will produce a new project with her. Heather says “I credit the incredible Philosophy classes I took at GW with mind expansion that will forever impact my creativity and writing.”

Heather Higginbottom (MA ’99) has been confirmed by the US Senate as Deputy Director of the Federal Office of Management and Budget.

Fahad Juneja (BA ’10) is a Litigation Paralegal at Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP where he’s worked since June 2010. Fahad says about the position “I have greatly enjoyed my experience here thus far.” Fahad plans to attend law school in the fall.

Rachel Lyons (MA ’07) After graduating from GW, Rachel went to work on the Hillary Clinton campaign in New Hampshire. She says, “It was an amazing and exhausting nine months. I did my part, we won NH.” After the campaign, Rachel obtained a policy position with Business and Professional Women (BPW), an organization that works on women’s issues. She says, “I can say I got that position directly because of my graduate work. They are leaders on pay equity and I had done so many papers on pay equity that I could claim some expertise.” Now Rachel is the Work-Family Government Affairs Manager at the National Partnership for Women & Families where she is working on paid sick days, paid family leave, workplace flexibility and Social Security and just about anything else that impacts women in the workplace. Rachel says, “It is a great organization with a long history (a staff attorney here wrote the FMLA) and I am really enjoying myself.”

Nicholas Read (MA ’06) is a Juvenile Justice Research Analyst at the American Institutes for Research. Nicholas says about the organization, “AIR is one of the largest behavioral and social science research organizations in the world. Our overriding goal is to use the best science available to bring the most effective ideas and approaches to enhancing everyday life. For us, making the world a better place is not wishful
thinking. It is the goal that drives us. Specifically in the areas of human and social development, AIR works within and fosters collaboration across systems—mental health/substance abuse, juvenile justice, child welfare, health, and education—strengthening their capacity to use evidence-based strategies. Using research and data, we plan, transform, and evaluate policies and practices and design new studies to measure impact and generate new knowledge. We engage stakeholders and consumers, enabling their voices to shape the policies and services that affect them.”

Ian Tully (BA ’09) is currently doing an M.A. in philosophy at the University of Colorado at Boulder and is planning on pursuing a PhD in Philosophy.

Jenny Werwa (MA ’05) is the Associate Director of Communications for The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), the bar association for attorneys who practice immigration law. The Association is committed to serving its members and to advocating for fair and just immigration laws and policies. Jenny says, “As the Associate Director of Communications, I work to promote AILA’s positions and spokespeople to the media and to raise awareness about issues that affect our attorneys and their clients.”

Daniel Susser (BA ’07) was the Thacher-Reynolds fellow for the 2006-07 academic year. After graduating from GW, Daniel managed a small, independent bookstore in Santorini, Greece, and then worked as a web designer for the US Office of Personnel Management in Washington. Daniel is now in his third year in the doctoral program in philosophy at Stony Brook University in New York, and is also a Graduate Certificate Student in Women’s and Gender Studies. He works primarily in social and political philosophy and the philosophy of technology, and dabbles in feminist and queer theory. He is currently the president of the Philosophy Graduate Students.

Niels von Deuten (BA ’06) was the Thacher-Reynolds fellow for the 2005-06 academic year. Niels recently received his J.D. from the George Washington Law School where he finished second in his class. Niels has also taken, and passed, the New York Bar Exam and is currently working as a judicial law clerk in Buffalo, New York, for Chief Judge William Skretny of the United States District Court for the Western District of New York. He looks forward to clerking for Judge Carolyn King of the United States Appellate Court for the 5th Circuit in Houston, Texas next year.

Ernest Wolf-Gazo (BA ’69) is a Professor of Philosophy at The American University in Cairo, Egypt. After graduating from GW, Dr. Wolf-Gazo went on to complete his PhD at Bonn University in Germany. He says “My favorite professor at GW was Thelma Levine. With her I took most of the courses that got me started, especially dealing with the German exiles in the US (Hanna Arendt, ALfred Schutz etc.)” Dr. Wolf-Gazo is currently working on a memoir of Habermas coming to Cairo in 1998. Dr. Wolf-Gazo says, “Please, send my best wishes for the holidays and the New Years to all the members of the GWU philosophy department, from near Tahrir Square, where I actually live, with the hope that all will be well in Egypt, in the long run.”

Keep Us Posted!
Have news that you would like to share with GW Philosophy faculty, students and alumni? Have it published in our Fall 2012 newsletter! Just send your submission via email to Lindsey Petersen at philosop@gwu.edu
Fall Party
This year the annual fall party was hosted by Professor Gail Weiss and her husband Sam Brooke at the Overlee Clubhouse in Arlington. The fall party is an opportunity for new and returning department faculty to meet new and returning grad students. Following are some photos from the event!
Student News

Philosophy and Social Policy Graduate Students

Grant Babcock recently accepted a part-time job with the Ron Paul Presidential Campaign, joined the Board of Directors of Alumni for Liberty, and gave a talk about rhetorical strategy at the Students for Liberty Pittsburgh Regional Conference in early November.

Greg Dolin, who finished his course work last spring and intends to finish his thesis next summer, has accepted a position as an Associate Professor of Law at University of Baltimore Law School. He is also serving as an Adjunct Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

Robert Luke’s thesis has been cleared and he will receive his M.A. in Philosophy and Social Policy in December 2011.

Raj Patel (BA ’11) a recent graduate of GW, started the Philosophy and Social Policy MA program in September 2011. Raj recently had an article, “Crisis: Capitalism, Economics and the Environment,” published in the Undergraduate Economic Review (an undergraduate economics journal at Illinois Wesleyan University). It is one of the most downloaded papers of all time on the Illinois Wesleyan University digital commons website (which has over 7,000 papers). Raj recently began a STEP position at the US Department of Homeland Security, in the Special Projects Division of the Office of Inspector General.

Elliot Schreur has spent this semester as a Research Intern at The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Congratulations to Department Assistant Nicole Longo who graduates this December!

Donations

December 15, 2010 - December 15, 2011

The department gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who have made donations during the past year:

Ms. Caitlin L. Bearce, CCAS BA ’07
Mr. Thomas M. Goutman, CCAS BA ’76
Ms. Maryanna L. Kieffer, CCAS MA ’73
Ms. Charlotte A. Kuenen, CCAS BA ’69
Dr. Walter Tsong Lee, M.D., CCAS BA ’96
Ms. Harriett J. Lemley, GWSB BBA ’63
Ms. Elizabeth St. J. Loker, CCAS BA ’69
Mr. Robert W. Luke, GSPM MS ’08, and Mrs. Erica H. Luke, CCAS MA ’08
Mr. Randall K. Packer, CCAS BA ’90
Dr. and Mrs. Carl G. Sceusa
Mr. Michael Thacher, CCAS BA ’70

Recent Graduates

The department would like to congratulate the following individuals who graduated in Fall of 2011:

Rebecca Groom
Sean Peerenboom

Credits

This issue of the GW Department of Philosophy Newsletter was edited by Lindsey Petersen, with assistance from Professor Weiss, Garrison Spencer, Nicole Longo, and Lizzie O’Boyle. The design of the newsletter was created by Julia Louie.