



THE GEORGE  
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# Department of PHILOSOPHY Newsletter

## Letter from the Chair

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

This has been a busy past few months for the Dept. of Philosophy and we are pleased to share some of the highlights since our last newsletter with all of you. One of our most noteworthy accomplishments occurred this past December, when the full-time faculty in the department spent several hours together on a curriculum retreat where we reviewed our existing course requirements for the two tracks of our philosophy major (the traditional track and the public affairs track). The retreat was extremely productive (indeed, one member of the dept. said it was the best dept. meeting he had attended since arriving at GW!) and resulted in significant revisions of our major requirements for both tracks. Our goal was to provide our students with more flexibility in choosing courses to fulfill their major requirements and our current students seem quite excited about the outcome. While we have expanded the number of electives for each track of the major, we have also replaced our senior proseminar with two junior/senior seminars. The latter courses will focus on a major author and text (or texts) or on a very specific theme. Students who choose to write an honors thesis will also have the option of doing one junior/senior seminar and a Readings and Research course under the supervision of their Honors Thesis faculty advisor.

A major impetus for revising the requirements for the two tracks of our Philosophy major was the new general curriculum (G-PAC) requirements that are being implemented at GW this coming fall. Please be sure to read **Jeff Brand-Ballard's** description of the G-PAC in this newsletter to learn more about this new CCAS curriculum and to learn what the acronym G-PAC means! As chair of the subcommittee that approved new G-PAC courses in the Humanities, Jeff provided invaluable assistance to the rest of the full-time dept. faculty, helping us generate eight successful proposals for philosophy courses that will fulfill the Critical Thinking requirement. Having such strong representation of our discipline in the G-PAC ensures that our department will continue to play a central role in the liberal arts education of our undergraduates whether or not they end up majoring or minoring in philosophy.

In addition to our annual lectures: the Elton Lecture by **Edward Casey** (SUNY Stony Brook) in October, the Thacher Lecture by **Shaun Nichols** (University of Arizona) in February, and the Goutman Lecture by **Frances Kamm** (Harvard University) in April, we have had a very active brown bag seminar running all year. The brown bag seminars meet twice a month and are led by full as well as part-time faculty, visiting scholars, and colleagues at other universities in the U.S. and abroad. Each scholar presents original research at the seminar, followed by a lively discussion of their work with the other brown bag participants. We also have several faculty/student philosophy reading groups meeting regularly throughout the year on a variety of topics. A few of our part-time faculty have served as the main coordinators of these groups and we wanted to highlight this important "unofficial" contribution they are making to enhance the intellectual life of our department outside of the classroom. Please read



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## Letter from the Chair (cont'd)

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**Tatiana Romanovskaya's** description of the study group she has been convening this year to learn more about this exciting extra-curricular activity.

It has now been almost a year since our current Philosophy dept. Executive Aide, **Lindsey Petersen**, took up the reins to run our main office and supervise our office staff and we don't know how we managed without her. Lindsey has been an invaluable member of the department since her arrival and is responsible for prodding all of us recalcitrant faculty to submit the various items that make up our fall and spring newsletters, not to mention keeping us all on track so that we meet important GW deadlines! She has been a terrific, unfailingly cheerful resource for our faculty, students, and alumni and we hope you have an opportunity to interact with her if you visit campus. Lindsey wears two hats at GW since she is also a graduate student in the School of Education and Human Development, pursuing a master's degree in International Education.

We hope you enjoy this spring's newsletter and would love to have more news from Alumni in the next one so please respond to Lindsey's call for updates when you receive her email reminder in the early fall. We appreciate your continued interest in the life of our department and urge you to keep in touch!

All the best,  
Gail Weiss

## Department News

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### GPAC

In 2009, the CCAS faculty voted to update the general education requirements of the College. The new general education curriculum is known as G-PAC (Perspective, Analysis, and Communication). CCAS reduced general education course requirements to twenty-four credits, and the courses of the new curriculum will address critical and creative thinking; quantitative and scientific reasoning; written, oral, and visual communication; global and cross-cultural perspectives; and local/civic engagement. Each department submitted courses to faculty review committees for rigorous assessment. The Department of Philosophy submitted eight courses, all of which were ultimately approved in the G-PAC Critical Thinking category. Those courses are: Introduction to Philosophy; Philosophy of Race and Gender; Ethics: Theory and Application; Social and Political Philosophy; Philosophy of Law; Philosophy and Science; and Mind, Brain, and Artificial Intelligence. The Department is excited about this new initiative, and was honored to have **Professor Jeff Brand-Ballard** serve on the G-PAC committee. You can read more about the curricular reform efforts of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences in a *Wall Street Journal* story (September 12, 2010) about universities renewing their efforts to teach critical thinking.

### Student Spotlight

**Landon Elkind** works as the logic tutor for the Philosophy Department, drawing on his previous coursework to answer more basic questions about formal and informal philosophical logic. He holds regular office hours three times weekly for any logic students who have questions about their class content. He enjoys the work, loves teaching, and wishes only that he could have more students – if only the faculty were not quite so stellar!

Landon was recently accepted into the Carnegie Mellon Summer School in Formal Logic and Epistemology. The school lasts three weeks, beginning with an intensive introduction to Ramsey Theory and its connections to graph theory and logic, continuing with a course in mathematical modeling of social behavior with its philosophical implications, and ending on the topology of inquiry, an application of topological concepts to epistemology. Mr. Elkind would like to show his gratitude to **Professor Peter Caws** in the Philosophy Department, who wrote the faculty recommendation letter without which acceptance may not have been possible.



## Department News

### Philosophy Not Moving to the Mount Vernon Campus

As some of you may have heard the dept. of Philosophy was informed this spring that we would be relocated to a new academic building on GW's Mount Vernon campus (located between Georgetown U. and American U.) next December/January. Though the promised new furniture, new philosophy conference room, and new office suite offered to us at Mount Vernon was certainly a physical upgrade from our longterm and admittedly somewhat shabby quarters on the 5th floor of the Academic Center on the main Foggy Bottom campus, the department vigorously and publicly protested the move because of the deleterious impact it would have on our dept.'s as well as the University's academic mission, including our ability to continue intensive mentoring of current and prospective philosophy students and to maintain active interdisciplinary research relationships with our colleagues in other departments. We are pleased to report that we were successful in presenting our case to Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Dean **Peg Barratt**, as well as the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, **Steven Lerman**, that it would be a mistake to separate our department from the other traditional Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences departments on the main campus. We are therefore going to remain on Foggy Bottom and are very grateful to the numerous GW colleagues, alumni, and current students who signed a petition opposing the move. The department attributes the success of our collective opposition to the move not only to the principled arguments we presented, but also to the widespread support we received from the entire GW community (two Hatchet articles this spring on this issue also helped to publicize the cause). We thank those of you reading this newsletter who signed the petition, contributing your names and comments to the effort to keep us on Foggy Bottom where we belong!

## Student News

### Philosophy and Social Policy Graduate Students

**Robert Luke** successfully defended his thesis proposal on Feb. 23, 2011, and is now preparing his thesis.

**Robert Goodman** also successfully defended his thesis proposal on April 1, 2011, and has received approval for his thesis.

**Greg Dolin** has been approved to submit a thesis proposal but has not yet scheduled a defense.

## Events

### High School Philosophy Seminar

**Clay Fritz** and **Landon Elkind** have organized a High School Philosophy Seminar at School Without Walls, a D.C. public high school conveniently located on the campus of George Washington University. They have been giving guest-lectures to the high school's Introduction to Philosophy class under the supervision of the instructor there,

**Kiehl Christie**. The discussions have included, among other topics, philosophy of mind, empiricism, animal rights, and the Hanging Judge problem. Clay and Landon report that the kids have an unmatched enthusiasm for philosophy, and that they wish they could have borrowed some of it for final exams and term papers.



### Thacher Lecture

This year's annual Thacher Lecture was presented by **Professor Shaun Nichols**, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Arizona. Professor Nichols gave a lecture "On the psychological origins of dualism: Dual-process cognition and the explanatory gap." Professor Nichols describes his topic as follows: "Consciousness often presents itself as a problem for materialists because no matter which physical explanation we consider, there seems to remain something about conscious experience that hasn't been fully explained. This gives rise to an apparent explanatory gap. The explanatory gulf between the physical and the conscious is reflected in the broader population, in which dualistic intuitions abound. Drawing on recent empirical evidence, this essay presents a dual-process cognitive model of consciousness attribution. This dual-process model, we suggest, provides an important part of the explanation for why dualism is so attractive and the explanatory gap so vexing."



### Goutman Lecture

This year's Goutman Lecture was presented by **Professor Frances Kamm**, the Littauer Professor of Philosophy and Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School and Professor of Philosophy, FAS, Harvard University. Professor Kamm is the author of *Creation and Abortion, Morality, Mortality*, vols. 1 and 2, *Intricate Ethics* and numerous articles on normative ethical theory and practical ethics. The title of the lecture was "Justice After War: Proportionality and Compensation."

In the lecture, Professor Kamm considered several proposals for duties that victors may have after war, including duties to punish those responsible for starting an unjust war and for unjust conduct in war, and duties not to cause further harm to civilians after war.



### Undergraduate Conference

The George Washington University's Philosophy Club organized our annual Undergraduate Philosophy Conference on April 1st this past spring. We had three presenters, including GW's very own **Samantha Newman-O'Gara**, who applied Foucault's Juridico-Discursive model to the U.S. military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. **Alex Henderson** from Georgetown University defended Stoicism as a philosophy from Cicero's criticisms in the Pro Murena, and **Christopher Lucibella** from American University discussed Derridean and Buddhist metaphysics in light of Nietzsche's critiques of the same. **Professor Michael Williams** of Johns Hopkins University delivered the keynote presentation. Tune in again next year for the next Undergraduate Conference!

### Evening Philosophy Logic Seminar

By **Tatiana Romanovskaya**

If you are to choose between two games that your friend offers you to play, never take the decision that seems evident. The games are the following ones: 1) In game A there are two outcomes: if you say something that is true, you will get exactly \$10 and if you say something that is false then you will get either less than \$10 or more than \$10, but never \$10.

2) In game B there is only one outcome: whether

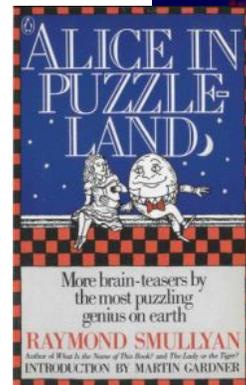
you say something that is true or false you will get more than \$10. Seemingly less profitable game A may bring you as much money as you want to name, but only if you know what magic statement you should make. (What is the statement?)

This game is connected to the methods of proving Gödel's theorem. He proved in 1931 that for any axiomatic system at least as complicated as arithmetic, the consistency of the system may be proved only using more complicated meta-theory. The proof of consistency is unachievable inside the system itself. This theorem has modified not only the approach to the foundations of mathematics, changing previously formulated programs, but also attracted attention to recursive methods thus directly contributing through Turing's work to the emergence of computers and computer science.

Gödel's theorem may be formulated through puzzles about living at the same island with knights telling only the truth and knaves always lying, or about honest female inhabitants of Venus and lying females from Mars, as well as other quite nonmathematical characters. The well-known logician, R. Smullyan, who is the author of highly acclaimed works on logic for professionals and many other books, also introduces logic through puzzles and stories about magic characters and mystical islands. It does not hurt that many years ago the author began his professional life on stage performing as a professional magician.

Smullyan's book was studied at a seminar that met twice a month on Friday evenings this spring semester in the Philosophy department. This seminar is not taken for credit so people come as long as they are interested. The seminar usually consists of seven people: five participants from GW (students connected to the Department of Philosophy), as well as a professor and graduate student coming from Georgetown University and Baltimore.

This Logic seminar is the continuation of a tradition originated several years ago by **Michèle Friend**. She has organized and led these seminars since she first came to GW, and each is devoted to working through a chosen book in logic. We have been keeping Michèle's tradition alive until her return from sabbatical this fall when we will select a new book to discuss.



GÖDEL'S INCOMPLETENESS THEOREMS

## Faculty News

**Jeff Brand-Ballard's (Associate Professor)** entry, "Civil Disobedience," will appear in the *International Encyclopedia of Ethics* (Wiley-Blackwell, in press), edited by Hugh LaFollette. Prof. Brand-Ballard's book, *Limits of Legality*, recently received a positive review in the *Law & Politics Book Review*, published by the Law and Courts Section of the American Political Science Association. Jeff Brand-Ballard also served on the GPAC committee this past academic year. In this role he helped departments design designated courses to meet the new GPAC requirements.

**Peter Caws (University Professor)** gave a talk, "Many Worlds with Peter Caws," on November 11, 2010 as a part of the "Food for Thought" series sponsored by the Honors Program. On December 3, 2010, Professor Caws presented a paper, "What Is Humanity, That We Should Be Worried about Transforming It?" at a conference at the University of Pennsylvania on "Transforming Humanity: Fantasy? Dream? Nightmare?," co-sponsored by the Center for Inquiry, the Penn Center for Bioethics, and the Penn Center for Neuroscience and Society. He also gave a talk entitled "The Paradox of the Universe" in the Philosophy Department's Friday Brown Bag Series on April 1, 2011.

### **Robert Paul Churchill (Professor)**

recently published two pieces. The first is "Compassion and Reconciliation" in Rob Gildert and Dennis Rothermel, ed. *Remembrance and Reconciliation* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi Press, 2011). The second piece is "Global Human Rights" in Michael Boylan, ed. *The Morality and Justice Reader* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2011). Professor Churchill also recently presented at the Graduate Student Colloquium in Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University on April 29, 2011. The talk was titled "How Not to Think About Human Rights."

Since the last newsletter, **David DeGrazia (Professor)** has been working on his sabbatical project, *Creation Ethics: Reproduction, Genetics, and Quality of Life*, which will be published by Oxford University Press next year. He has presented draft chapters in talks at Georgetown University and the National Institutes of Health. Meanwhile, a textbook he co-edited, *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, 8th edition (McGraw-Hill), is in production and will appear in early summer. Professor DeGrazia is looking forward to returning to teaching in the fall.

**Lloyd Eby (Professorial Lecturer)** had a letter to the editor printed in the Washington Post on Saturday, March 19. It was published as a "Taking Exception" piece. Here's the text that was printed: In his March 16 op-ed, "Our Lisbon moment?," Harold Meyerson wrote: "What

[recent failures and catastrophes] should teach us is that the need for active, disinterested governmental regulation is rooted not in any radical impulse, as the American right continually contends, but in a sober, conservative assessment of the human capacity for mistake and self-delusion, not to mention avarice and chicanery." He went on to mention "our own sense of infallibility." Mr. Meyerson seemed, however, not to recognize certain ineradicable and (for pro-regulation partisans) inconvenient facts. (1) There is no such thing as disinterested governmental regulation. Every regulation is set up for and in support of some interest, and every regulator has an interest in whatever he or she is doing. (2) Governmental regulation cannot exist or be carried out without the existence of governmental bureaus and the activity of governmental bureaucrats. Mr. Meyerson was right to note that humans tend to have a sense of infallibility. But this applies to all people, including governmental regulators and bureaucrats. There is no reason to think they are any less mistake-prone, self-deluded, deceitful, self-interested, avaricious and lacking a sense of their own fallibility than anyone else.

**Jason Fissette (Lecturer)** has been preparing two articles for publication. The first article offers a reappraisal of Foucault's analysis of the author-function. In it Jason takes issue with the secondary literature's emphasis on Foucault's supposed critique of authorial intent, and instead argues that Foucault's real interest lies in the possibility of an experience of freedom in reading. Entitled "Deference and Indeterminacy in Foucault's 'What is an Author?'" this essay was first presented at the 2009 meeting of the Foucault Circle in Chicago.

The second article is an invited contribution to a special issue of *The International Journal for the Study of Skepticism* devoted to ethical skepticism. Jason says "my article grows out of my dissertation research on Hume. Hume is widely read as a metaethical skeptic. I argue, however, that on this point Hume scholarship suffers from a mistaken reading of his conception of naturalism; specifically, Hume is often read as the sort of naturalist for whom nature is non-normative. This reading has, in turn, corrupted readings of his moral psychology and so obscured the metaethical commitments in that moral psychology." The tentative title of this piece is "Ethical Naturalism and Skepticism in Hume's Moral Psychology."

**Bill Griffith (Professor)** published a review of two books in the on-line *Journal of Philosophy, Science & Law*, posted Feb. 21, 2011: "A Review of James A. Gross's Shameful Business: The Case of Human Rights in the American Workplace, and R.P. McIntyre's Are Worker Rights Human Rights?"

## Faculty News

Professor Griffith also presented a paper on March 11, 2011 at the 14th annual conference of the Association for the Study of Law, Culture, and the Humanities, at the Univ. of Nevada/Las Vegas School of Law: “Should the US establish an independent commission to investigate the high-level authorization of coercive interrogation techniques?”

### Faculty Spotlight

**Michèle Friend (Assistant Professor)** is still abroad on her sabbatical year, and is still writing a draft manuscript for a book on pluralism in mathematics. She spent November and December at the University of St. Andrews with one of the Arché groups, the one working on the foundations of logical consequence. She presented a paper, jointly written with Andrea Pedferri on the notion of rigor in mathematics. Andrea presented another joint paper (also co-written with Michèle), this time on formalism and pluralism in mathematics. The papers were presented at the SiLFS (Society for Logic and the Philosophy of Science (translated from the Italian)) conference in Milano in December. In April, she enjoyed the hospitality of the Renyi Institute of Mathematics in Budapest. In July, she will present a paper introducing pluralism in the philosophy of mathematics. The paper will be presented in two different versions, one at the Joint Session at the University of Sussex, the other at the Conference for Logic and the Methodology of Science in Nancy (France).

One of the attractive features about philosophy is that writing it can be done (almost) anywhere. One needs shelter, silence, nourishment, clothing, and electricity for light after dark and for the computer. Occasionally, one needs an internet connection. As a corollary, one can also write in several places; although due to physical limitations, not in more than one place at once. In an attempt to take advantage of the possibilities, Michèle has been writing, and meeting with logicians, mathematicians and philosophers in: Scotland, England, Italy, France, Portugal and Hungary. In the summer, she will also go to Turkey to attend a conference on ecological economics. This year she is a nomadic philosopher. Her linguistic, culinary and equestrian skills have all improved.



**Tom Morris (Professorial Lecturer)** recently had “Competing Principles in Determining the Content of Stories in Plato’s Republic” published in *Existentialia*. Additionally, *History of Political Thought* has accepted for publication “Plato on True Simplicity: Republic 408c5-410b4.” Professor Morris will present “Socrates and Wu Wei,” to an International Conference at Davis and Elkins College, WV on Rationality, Spirituality and Morality: East and West.

**Eric Sidel (Assistant Professor)** presented a paper called, “What Can the Red Sox Teach Us About Studying Animal Minds?” as part of a seminar *Animal Minds: Methodological Issues in Cognitive Ethology* for the 51st Annual Boston Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science. Other members of the panel were Colin Allen, Dale Jamieson, Mark Bekoff, Irene Peperberg, and Diana Reiss.

**Wes Van Camp (Professorial Lecturer)** presented a paper, “On Kinematic vs. Dynamic Approaches to Special Relativity,” at The Philosophy of Science Association (PSA) biennial meeting in Montreal, November 4, 2010. That paper will also be published in a special edition of *Philosophy of Science*. Wes also published an article, “Principle Theories, Constructive Theories, and Explanation in Modern Physics,” in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics*, 42 (February 2011). Wes is currently finalizing a manuscript on the role of scientific understanding in explanation.

**Gail Weiss (Professor)** organized a panel that was included on the main program for the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division conference in Boston in December 2010 on the “Ethics of Embodiment,” the subject of the *Hypatia* Special Issue (Vol. 26 #3) she co-edited with Debra Bergoffen which will be out in print this summer. She presented a new paper, “What does it Mean to Assume a Body?” at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division conference in San Diego in April 2011 for a panel sponsored by the Society for Women in Philosophy (SWIP). This past month (May), she presented another new paper, “Uncosmetic Surgeries in an Age of Normativity” at the *Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine* conference at Uppsala University in Sweden. The day before the conference she led a discussion of her chapter “The Body as a Narrative Horizon” from her recent book, *Refiguring the Ordinary*, with members of The Body/Embodiment group at the Centre for Gender Research at Uppsala University. Her most recent publication, “Sharing Time across Unshared Horizons,” appeared this spring in a volume entitled, *Time in Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. By Christina Schuëß, Dorothea E. Olkowski, and Helen A. Fielding (Indiana U. Press, 171-188).

## Faculty Profile

### Professor of Philosophy

#### Tad Zawidzki

The GW Philosophy Club students have chosen **Professor Tad Zawidzki** as the subject for of the spring 2011 Faculty Profile section of this newsletter. Below, Professor Zawidzki responds to questions posed by the Philosophy Club.

**Where are you from? Where did you grow up?** I am from and grew up in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

**Did you always want to do philosophy? When did you start 'philosophizing'?** I became interested in philosophy in high school; however, my first declared major in college (University of Ottawa) was English. I took a lot of philosophy classes during my freshman year and quickly switched to philosophy in my sophomore year.

**You went to grad school at Washington University in St. Louis. Do you have a 'best' memory or a 'worst' memory from that time? A favorite professor?** Best memory: numerous nights philosophizing with fellow grad students and faculty in local bars.

**Worst memory:** In my 6th summer there, with my dissertation incomplete and in stasis, my job was to move all the Ph.D. dissertations ever defended in Washington University's 130-odd years from the main library to an off-campus, basement storage facility. This really underscored the futility that was already plaguing my dissertation project. Somehow, however, I bounced back, and completed the dissertation the following fall, landing a tenure-track job the following spring!

**Favorite professor:** Richard "Red" Watson.

**What are you currently working on?** I am completing the final draft of a book under contract with MIT Press, entitled *Mindshaping: Linchpin of the Human Socio-Cognitive Syndrome*. I am revising two papers: one on the interpretation of experiments related to early childhood social cognition, and the other, a collaborative effort with faculty from anthropology, and speech and hearing, on the evolution of distinctively human imitation capacities. I am also in the early stages of a book project with my co-author, Don Ross, an economist and philosopher at the University of Cape Town, South Africa; the book is on economics and social cognition. I am also preparing my first Dean's Seminar, on the evolutionary origins of human religions.

**Why are you working on this in particular (enjoyment, intellectual importance, historical interest, etc.)?** I'm very interested in the evolutionary origins of distinctively human social practices, like interpreting behavior in terms of beliefs and desires, and religion. I think this is an important nexus for philosophical as



well as scientific research. Much modern philosophy, since Descartes, has focused on reconciling our self-conceptions with scientific facts about human nature. Research into the origins of human social practices is particularly germane to this issue, since it might explain how we came to have our self-conceptions.

**Who is (are) your favorite philosopher (philosophers)? Why (ideas, writing style, etc.)? Did they have a big influence on your philosophical development?** Aristotle, Hume, Quine, Wilfrid Sellars, Dan Dennett. I like philosophers who take empirical constraints seriously. I think the history of western thought is the history of a growing realization that many of our most cherished and seemingly obvious assumptions about our place in nature are mere ideology with no basis in empirical fact. I have always enjoyed contemplating counterintuitive possibilities. The great thing about empiricism is that it bravely embraces the counterintuitive when the facts demand it; it requires skepticism about seemingly unshakeable foundations, humility before a reality we cannot control and into which we have no privileged, a priori insight, and a democratic commitment to free inquiry.

**You helped establish the Center for Mind, Brain, and Evolution at GW. What do you see as the goal of this Center?** It's actually not officially a center. It's the Mind-Brain-Evolution Cluster (MBEC). We're a sub-unit of GW's Mind-Brain Institute (MBI), which I also helped establish. The goal of our cluster is to promote interdisciplinary research and teaching concerning the evolutionary origins of human cognition. I am currently collaborating with my two co-founders (of MBEC) – **Chet Sherwood** in Anthropology and **Francys Subiaul** in Speech and Hearing. We are working on our second collaborative paper (see above). The first, published in the *Journal of Anatomy* in

## Faculty Profile

2008, was very well received, and we have similar hopes for this effort. We have also co-taught a 700-series course on the evolutionary origins of human cognition, and sponsored numerous talks by respected scholars working on related issues. I also run a journal club on these issues that meets fortnightly. Finally, I am academic advisor and co-founder of the new undergraduate, mind-brain minor. Ultimately, we would like to help make MBI a graduate degree-granting program, with a vibrant, research-active faculty drawing from philosophy, psychology, anthropology, speech and hearing, and other related fields.

**Your work discusses the evolution of different capacities in human beings. What sorts of these capacities do highly complex animals have? Can they ever evolve the same capacities as human beings?** There is growing consensus that intelligent animals tend to be highly social, and that this is no accident. Coping with a dynamic, complex, social environment was likely one of the key evolutionary motors of intelligence. More than any other domain, the social domain calls on sophisticated capacities to parse behavior, plan, strategize, and hold a wide variety of information in memory. For this reason, highly social animals tend to be capable of sophisticated planning, reasoning, and learning. We share many such capacities with our closest non-human relatives, the great apes, and even with more distantly related yet still highly social animals, like cetaceans (toothed whales and dolphins) and corvids (bird species like crows and scrub-jays). However, like other species, we also have distinctive capacities, like the capacity to attribute beliefs and desires, and the capacity for cumulative, cultural evolution (instead of reinventing the wheel every generation, human populations can maintain and innovate upon traditions of tool making, foraging, and other socially transmitted skills). For whatever reasons, other species do not approach human competence at tasks related to these capacities. One focus of my research is figuring out why these capacities appear to have evolved only once.

**Do you, in light of the above, think that animals have rights or moral claims on human beings?** I haven't thought much about this question. I eat meat. But I think the way animals are raised and butchered in most countries is a travesty. I'm not sure if their cognitive capacities are that relevant to their moral status. Clearly, no non-human animal has the cognitive capacities required for it to have the sorts of rights that citizens of liberal democracies have. But most human children do not either. I think their sentience is more relevant to the moral status of non-human animals. For me, cruelty and suffering are intrinsically wrong and should be avoided at all costs. This is kind of a non-negotiable starting point for me. If a non-human animal can suffer then, regardless of its cognitive capacities, it deserves moral

regard from us. However, implementing and living by this principle is very difficult.

**Do you think artificial intelligence would broaden the 'human community' to include self-aware robots? Would self-aware robots be entitled to the same privileges as human receive?** Terms like "intelligence" and "self-awareness" are vague and ambiguous. There are different kinds of intelligence and self-awareness, some of which some machines already, arguably, possess. Certainly, if we ever build machines that are self-aware and intelligent in the way that humans are then they should be entitled to such privileges. It's unclear, however, whether this will ever happen, or when it will happen, or how we will know when it happens. Perhaps, when machines start demanding the privileges humans receive, that will be sufficient proof that they deserve them.

## Graduate Student Spotlight

**Delano Lavigne:** In beginning my master's degree, I expected the process itself to imbue me with a level of expertise that would allow me to approach a wide range of ethically challenging policy issues. In some ways, I expected that simply going through the steps would make me an expert on any number of subjects that I studied. What I have come to understand of my master's degree, which I believe is an implicit objective of most graduate programs, is that it has provided me with the opportunity to become an expert on only the subjects that I chose to focus on while improving my ability to think critically of many ethically challenging policy concerns.

The fact that my experience in the program does not directly correspond to the expectations I had when I first entered are not, however, a cause for concern. In fact, one of the benefits of this experience has been to formalize the issues/topics upon which I am willing to engage in meaningful debate. I entered the program with an interest in corporate social responsibility and I am leaving confident in my ability to discuss this subject with corporate managers, academics, and policy analysts. In addition, the program has been instrumental in not only formalizing my understanding of corporate social responsibility but in allowing me to pursue my academic interests at the next level. Yes, that means I will be back in school next fall. After deliberating between the University of Colorado and the University of Washington, I have decided to give up the next 5 years of my life to pursue a PhD in Political Science at the University of Washington. All this with the hopes of making the world a better place.

## Alumni News

**Laila Khalid Ghauri (B.A. '08)** minored in philosophy at GW. She is now a graduate student in the religion department at GW, and is due to start her PhD next year in Islamic Studies.

**Rachel Singpurwalla (B.A. '93)** a GW philosophy department alumnus. She is currently an assistant professor in the philosophy department at University of Maryland, College Park. Rachel specializes in ancient Greek ethics, politics, and moral psychology.

**Jeremy Weissman (M.A. '10)** was recently accepted into two PhD programs.

**Ndidi Nwaneri (M.A. '10)** is currently studying in a PhD program at Loyola of Chicago.

### 2011 Alumni Weekend, September 15-18

All GW alumni and their families and friends are invited to Alumni Weekend 2011! Join us for the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Awards, All-Alumni Kickoff Party and Concert featuring Chuck Brown & Robert Randolph and The Family Band, Breakfast with the Deans, Faculty Lectures, Taste of GW, 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Peace Corps, and much more! Special reunions will be held for alumni in the undergraduate classes of 2006, 2001, 1996, 1991, 1986, 1981 and 1961, as well as members of this year's special affinity group reunion, former 21st Century/SJT Scholars. There will also be a special '80s Celebration. For more information, please visit [alumni.gwu.edu/aw](http://alumni.gwu.edu/aw). We look forward to seeing you on campus in September!

Congratulations to 2010-2011 Gauss Prize winners:  
**Corinne Hanson**  
and  
**Raj Patel!**

### 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](mailto:philosop@gwu.edu)

## Alumni Spotlight

**Max Utzschneider (B.A. '09)** graduated from GW with a BA in philosophy in 2009. Since then, he has been pursuing an MA in philosophy at the New School for Social Research. His focus has been on certain traditions in "continental" philosophy, stretching from Hegel, Marx, and others up through the Frankfurt School. In particular, Max is interested in the Hegelian argument that there are certain social conditions for the possibility of individual freedom, and that dominant economic and political institutions structurally undermine these conditions of possibility. This fall, Max will attend Harvard Law School, with a view towards eventually working on issues of corporate accountability and social and economic justice. Max says "I prefer to think of the shift to law school not as a termination of my philosophical studies, but as their actualization!"



## Recent Graduates

The department would like to congratulate the following individuals who graduated in Fall of 2010 or Spring and Summer of 2011:

Eleanor Aubrey  
Joshua Bailey  
Abdullah Bakhsh  
Michael Bower  
Benjamin Bruen  
Kyle Compton  
Somaera Choudhary  
Scott Curley  
Evan Dorfman  
Michael Erthal  
Samuel Fox-Hartin  
William Fraser  
Christopher Fritz  
Elizabeth Gerke

Jacob Goldsmith  
Rebecca Groom  
Corinne Hanson  
Shelby Hartman  
Seth Katsoulas  
Hee Jung Kim  
David Adam Leighton  
Michael Masucci  
Andrew McInerney  
Samuel Nussbaum  
Raj Patel  
Anjali Sharma  
Zachary Tavlin  
Andrew Zahornacky

## A Year of BrownBags

The Department hosted ten brown bags this year. All presenters are affiliated with the University unless otherwise noted. For more information, or to read the available papers please visit our [website](#).

October 8, 2010: **Tad Zawidzki** presented “The Role of Sophisticated Mindreading in Human Mindshaping.”

October 22, 2010: **Gail Weiss** presented “Pride and Prejudice: Ambiguous Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Identities of Jewish Bodies.”

December 10, 2010: **David DeGrazia** presented “Genetic Enhancement, Human Identity, and Human Nature.”

February 11, 2011: **Fred Kellogg** presented “Hobbes, Holmes, and Dewey: Pragmatism and the Problem of Order.”

March 4, 2011: **Kimberly Mutcherson**, Rutgers School of Law presented “Feel Like Making Babies? Mapping the Borders of the Right to Procreate in a Post-Coital World.”

March 11, 2011: **Ulrika Björk**, Uppsala University/ Penn State University presented “Crisis, Politics and the Common World: Arendt and Husserl.”

April 1, 2011: **Peter Caws** presented “The Paradox of the Universe.”

April 8, 2011: **Jorn Sonderholm** presented “Positive duties to minimize global poverty: where do they end?”

April 15, 2011: **Anjana Jacob** presented “Multiplicity in Experience and the Nature of Relations.”

May 13th, 2011: **David DeGrazia** presented “Bearing Children with Disadvantage.”

## Donations

November 2010 - May 2011

The department gratefully acknowledges the following individuals who have made recent donations:

Ms. Caitlin L. Bearce, BA '07

Mr. Christopher C. Fritz, BA '09

Mr. Thomas M. Goutman, BA '76

Ms. Charlotte A. Kuenen, BA '69

Ms. Elizabeth St. J. Loker, BA '69

Dr. Carl G. Sceusa and Mrs. June A. Sceusa, P '12

## Giving to the Department

All donations to the Department of Philosophy are greatly appreciated and tax-deductible. To be a part of the Department's continuing growth, please send your donation through this site:

[https://www.gwu.edu/online\\_giving](https://www.gwu.edu/online_giving)

(Don't forget to designate your gift to the Department of Philosophy!)

## Credits

This issue of the GW Department of Philosophy Newsletter was edited by **Lindsey Petersen**, with assistance from **Professor Weiss**. The design of the newsletter was created by **Julia Louie**.