



Department of Philosophy Newsletter Spring 2018, No. 51

THE CHAIR'S YEAR IN REVIEW

Writing in this fiftieth anniversary month of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, and on the day of Bill Cosby's conviction on three felony counts of aggravated indecent assault, I am tempted to say that the arc of the academic year has bent toward justice.

It began, as you must all know, in media coverage of an EEOC complaint detailing a history of horrifying failures of professionalism and sexual misconduct in the BCS department. The distress experienced by students and faculty was immediate, acute, and prolonged. Students demonstrated, took President Seligman to task, and chalked their sense of betrayal across Eastman Quad: "UR NOT SAFE." For those of us in Philosophy, this distress was amplified by the collegial ties between the young women directly harmed and members of our own department.

As a year of investigations, resolutions, and response played out, we lost a president and put a capital campaign and strategic planning on hold. Students and faculty largely returned to their academic work, if less happily than before, and an interim president with an impeccable record of commitment to students and the university was recruited.

Having served as Dean of the College for a dozen years, Rich Feldman was half way through a year of sabbatical leave that was to culminate in his return to Philosophy in July of this year. When he appeared at my office door in January *in a suit*, I grasped immediately that our long wait would continue. Our loss has been the university's gain.

Rich could speak in far more detail than I can of the progress that has been made toward identifying and implementing reforms in the institutional culture and procedures of the university. Suffice it to say that revisions have been made to the faculty handbook regarding professionalism and relationships with graduate students. The Faculty Senate has adopted some carefully considered resolutions censuring the acts at the root of the EEOC complaint and aspects of the initial university response. The university has borne great expense in funding an independent investigation that yielded recommendations for preventive reforms, and Rich's first priority has been to implement and in some cases strengthen those reforms. Restorative justice interventions have been undertaken to address the problems in BCS. A process is underway to define a vision and values statement for the UR community and to ensure that the values embraced are reflected in every aspect of what we do.

Individual departments have meanwhile engaged in self-evaluations. Some have adopted their own statements of departmental goals and values while others, such as Philosophy, have formed climate committees and are enlisting College support to ensure every student an equal opportunity to flourish in their academic pursuits and membership in the UR community.

For all of you graduating now, we hope the year is ending better than it began, and that we have succeeded in making our department a welcoming and supportive place for you to pursue the education you need and can be proud of.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

GOINGS:

As much as it has pained us to see them go, we are very happy for departing faculty Brett Sherman and Gabriel Citron. Brett joined his fiancé Elaine at the University of South Carolina, as an Assistant Professor in January. Gabriel will begin an Assistant Professorship in Religion at Princeton University in July. Our part-time instructor, Evan Westra, has accepted a two-year research position at the University of Toronto. Happily, he will remain a Rochesterian.

COMINGS:

We are absolutely delighted to welcome Assistant Professors Zeynep Soysal and Jens Kipper, who will join us July 1. Zeynep has AOSs in epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mathematics. Jens has AOSs in epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language. We are also delighted to welcome Ty Goldschmidt as our two-year Visiting Assistant Professor in philosophy of religion.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

COMINGS AND GOINGS	2
FACULTY NEWS	3
EMERITUS FACULTY NEWS	5
GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS	5
GRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS	6
UNDERGRAD ALUMNI NEWS	7
BIBLIOGRAPHY	7

2017-2018 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Elliott Sober

(University of Wisconsin-Madison)
“Darwin’s Phylogenetic Reasoning”

Philip Kitcher

(Columbia University in the City of New York)
“Progress in the Sciences – and the Arts”

Richard Kimberly Heck

(Brown University)
“What’s Wrong with Pornography (?)”

Alexandra Plakias

(Hamilton College)
“Relativism: The most ecumenical metaethics?”

Congratulations and Thank You once again this year to all faculty and staff in the Philosophy Department for their 100% participation in the 2018 United Way Campaign!





*“Dedicated to the
Truth,
the Half-Truth
and the Occasional
Bald-Faced Lie”*

FACULTY NEWS

Paul Audi

It has been an eventful year on both the research and teaching fronts. I’ve given talks at Colgate, the Central APA, and will be giving one at Ohio State right after classes end. These talks concern two of my ongoing projects.

[Brief interruption while Hayley drops by my office and we consider whether we inhabit a universe devoid of meaning—laughing the whole time, of course.]

One project argues that, despite extensive similarities, we should eliminate dispositional properties but embrace normative ones. The other makes the case that tropes can undergo qualitative change. I’ll be working on the corresponding papers over the summer, as well as one about truth making and another about the identity conditions for properties.

This Spring I taught a graduate seminar on the metaphysics of time and change. We considered different versions of endurantism and the coherence of time travel, among other things. I also taught Mathematical Logic for the first time, which has been very interesting, even though I sometimes wake up thinking about the beta-function lemma.

Gabriel Citron

It has been a real pleasure to have been welcomed into the wonderful philosophical community that is the UofR Philosophy Department, and I’m very sad that I’ll be leaving so soon. Of the courses I taught this year the highlight for me has been Topics in Medieval Philosophy. We undertook close readings of three great medieval thinkers – Boethius, Santideva, and Maimonides – focusing on their use of philosophy as a therapy for life’s ills (and trying to put some of those therapies into practice as we went along, with some remarkable results...). Research-wise, I finished-up a paper on Wittgenstein and the philosophical virtues, wrote a paper on ‘theopathy’ (that is, on not caring about God), presented a paper at the Pacific APA on the nature of philosophical revolutions, and engaged in a protracted and involuntary study of the phenomenology of lake-effect climates... I’m looking forward to finding an excuse to come back to visit before long!

Hayley Clatterbuck

I managed to survive another year, some days powered only by candy bars scavenged from Cheryl’s bountiful candy bowl. I continued to be astonished by my students and had a great time supervising independent studies on topics including machine learning, autonomous vehicles, and machine consciousness (clearly, the next generation is busy preparing for our new robot overlords). In my research, I largely returned to my first love, philosophy of biology, writing papers about contingent Darwinian explanations and on the possibility of de-extinction. I also bought a house! So far, the experience of homeownership has been approximately 10% scary, 10% comforting, and 80% shoveling.

Earl Conee

This academic year I engaged in the usual combination of teaching, research, and service. As usual I am reporting that in my newsletter entry. As usual I note that the entry differs from my previous very similar entries. This time there are two main differences: the entry is about this particular academic year and it contains this sentence.

Randall Curren

My year was dominated by cycles of disbelief and relief. This consisted mostly of disbelief that I could possibly fulfill another writing commitment I had foolishly undertaken and relief when I succeeded.

The highlight of my summer vacation was similarly the relief that accompanied my success in reaching the *bottom* of Mount Washington. The horror of disbelief took hold on the ascent, when I saw there was no way to save face but to continue on around every harrowing, cliff-hanging turn without guardrails, as monstrous SUVs scraped by in the other direction, their wheels clinging to the edge of crumbling pavement that all too often dropped straight into the abyss.

I played it safe through the ensuing months, and had an especially wonderful trip to Oxford, London, and Birmingham in October, where I spoke on “Aristotle’s Eudaimonic Supposition” in the Oxford Moral Philosophy Seminar series, faced three commentators in a launch debate for *Why Character Education?*, and consulted with Team Phronesis.

Richard Dees

The Bioethics major, which I direct, is very small, but continues to show modest growth: we have had about 4 majors a year for the past few years, but 8 majors should graduate in 2019 and a similar number in 2020. The larger program in Public Health-Related majors of which it is a part and for which I chair the steering committee, now graduates over 70 students each year.

On the scholarship front, I just published a small work about the nature of public health as a discipline and the kinds of goods with which it is concerned in “Public Health and Normative Public Goods,” published in *Public Health Ethics*. In addition, my article on harming the dead, “Primum Non Nocere Mortuis: Bioethics and the Lives of the Dead,” has been accepted for publication at the *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*. My ongoing projects continue to explore the ethical implications of mass screening programs like newborn screening.

William FitzPatrick

I am still serving as an associate editor for *Ethics* and as the undergraduate adviser for the department, along with the usual teaching and advising of undergraduate and graduate students at all stages, from first philosophy class to the final stages of a dissertation. In the past year I gave talks at a metaethics conference in Vancouver (which culminated in a new article developing and defending a worldly, non-naturalist ethical realism in the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*), at the University of Arizona, and at the Pacific APA in San Diego, where I did an author-meets-critics session on Matti Eklund’s new book, *Choosing Normative Concepts*, and also organized a special memorial session and reception for one of my favorite graduate school professors, Marilyn McCord Adams, who died last year. Other work (published over the past year or forthcoming) explored such issues as how we should think of the value of human life and the dignity of human persons, the ways in which open question arguments can be used in contemporary metaethical debates while avoiding Moore’s well-known mistakes (for an OUP volume), and issues at the intersection of evolution, human altruism and moral philosophy (this was a paper published for a broader audience in *Royal Society Open Science*). I am also serving on the Restorative Practices Steering Committee as the university continues its healing process.

Alison Peterman

In the fall, was delighted to co-teach a class with Hayley about abstraction, in which I learned a lot. I also taught Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, after which I had to take a semester off from teaching. Luckily the University's Humanities Center gave me a fellowship. I was a resident at the center for the semester, participating in its many events and working on a new project about Mary Shepherd's account of cognition. She was a 19th century Scottish philosopher who is not as cool as Margaret Cavendish (who is?) but still pretty cool. Research highlights include having a paper about Cavendish accepted into the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* and a paper on Spinoza translated into French.

Brett Sherman

Hey Rochester, what's happening? So, pimento cheese is a thing down here. It's like the garbage plate of Columbia, South Carolina. Also, I think the drivers in Rochester are better than the drivers in Columbia, which is both impressive and terrifying. I used to worry about getting hit by a car when walking by or through the East Ave Wegmans parking lot. Now I worry about getting hit by a car when walking.

This Spring, a paper of mine on open questions and epistemic necessity (aptly titled "Open Questions and Epistemic Necessity") was accepted to *The Philosophical Quarterly*. I had been working on this paper for just about my entire time at U of R, and it was the one paper of mine that I really, really wanted to publish. Although my affiliation will be listed as the University of South Carolina, I did almost all of the work on this paper at the University of Rochester and couldn't have written it without the help and support of my colleagues, whom I miss greatly.

Edward Wierenga

On July 1, 2017, I retired after 40 years at the University of Rochester. The best part of retirement so far is that we have been able to travel for fun during the academic year, having already spent extended time in Greece and in Mexico and with a trip to France coming up. I continue to referee for the journals on which I am on the board, and I am glad to have occasional contact with our graduate students and to see colleagues at colloquia and meetings of the Analysis Reading Group.

EMERITUS FACULTY NEWS

Robert Holmes

Spoke at the UN in October at a celebration of the anniversary of Gandhi's death and at a symposium on Pacifism at the Central Division APA in February. I'll give a talk, "Toward a Nonviolent World Order," at the Highlands in May. Also gave a mini piano recital at the Gandhi Institute.

GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

Ph.D. Graduate Admission for 2018/19

Matthew Maxwell (Simon Fraser University)

2017 Heidi M. Payne First-Year Outstanding

Essay Award

Zachary Barber and Rafael Perez

2017 Outstanding Essay Award

Matthew Lamb

2017 Teaching Assistant of the Year Award

Yanssel Garcia

Master of Arts Degrees Awarded 2017-18

Kolja Keller
John Komdat
Donald Vispi

Ph.D. Degrees Awarded 2017-18

Matthew Baddorf

“The Bank Isn’t Like a Man;” Collective Moral Responsibility and Virtue”
(Brett Sherman, advisor)

Dustin Olson

“Reflective Equilibrium and Reasonable Disagreement”
(Richard Feldman and Earl Conee, advisors)

Jannai Shields

This is my last year living in Rochester. I'm very grateful for the six years I've spent as a member of the department here. I've learned much and benefited from so many. We just sold our house and are packing. While I continue to seek full-time employment, I am excited to step into a temporary teaching role at Walsh University, in North Canton, OH. More generally, we're excited to be moving back to our home region.

GRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS

Nathan Nobis (PhD, 2005)

Two of the most interesting things I've done this year are, first, I've been managing, developing and promoting a project called *1000-Word Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology* (at www.1000wordphilosophy.com/) that involves reviewing, editing and promoting radically concise, content-packed introductory essays on a variety of topics. The essays are great for students (and general readers) new to philosophy. *Essay submissions from Rochester philosophers would be much appreciated!!* Second, I was one of 18 or so philosopher authors who co-wrote an amicus brief

concerning personhood and chimpanzees for a court case concerning two chimpanzees; we then turned this brief into a book *Chimpanzee Rights: The Philosophers' Brief* that will be published by Routledge and available in August. I have done a lot of other things, but these are some of the more interesting things I've been up to.

James Lewis Van Cleve (PhD, 1974)

My book *Problems from Reid* has been the subject of book symposia in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* for 2016, at the Central APA in 2017, and in a forthcoming number of *Analytic Philosophy*. My largest piece of current work is “Brute Necessity,” soon to appear on my USC website and in *Philosophy Compass*.

I had the pleasure of seeing Tom Paxson (in addition to Keith, of course) at a conference bringing together Keith Lehrer students at the University of Arizona.

Charles Cardwell (PhD, 1972)

An existential crisis arising from my disappearance from the UR PHLNEWSLETTER listserv now resolved, I can report that during my period of non-existence I started a thirteenth term of service as Secretary of the Tennessee Philosophical Association (tpaweb.org), managed to comment on one paper, shed my administrative duties, prepared to retire from Faculty Senate, and somehow also managed to teach my classes. I look forward to using the time salvaged from administration and college politics to engage in more worthwhile activities such as doing philosophy (again).

I do not remember whether my disappearance came before or after my most recent books came out. I have been happy with the good reception that [HORNBOOK ETHICS](#) has received, and wish that [GROWING WISDOM](#), a collection of primary texts that is worth a look if for nothing more than experiencing its awesome cover, were better promoted by the publisher.

Finally, I hope not to disappear again.

Matthew Frise (PhD, 2015)

This year I have been a lecturer at Santa Clara University. It's been quite a change of pace from my two years of full-time research at Baylor, but terrific fun! I squeezed in time to present on memory at conferences in Germany and Australia. Happily, I am likely to remain at Santa Clara next year.

James Hunter Leshner (PhD, 1967)

Jim Leshner will present a paper on "The Locality Problem: Knowledge and Distance in Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy" at a joint Princeton-University College London conference to be held in London on June 22-23.

Raymond Martin (PhD, 1968)

For the last several years, in Bradenton, Florida during winters and in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia during summers, I have been working on a quasi-philosophical book on the philosophy of aging. Anyone interested in this project should feel free to write to me at martinr@union.edu.

UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS

Yuchen Li (BA, 2014)

I have wonderful news which I would like to share with everyone who has worked or studied in the Department of Philosophy at the U of R. I have received a graduate school offer in Politics (concentrating on the study of political philosophy) from University of Oxford! Yeah!!! I would like to thank U of R for creating this free and enjoyable academic environment when I was an undergraduate student here. My study of political philosophy here has been greatly enriched, benefited, and influenced by the interdisciplinary study of three major fields; economics, mathematics, and philosophy.

I would also like to thank Professors Brett Sherman, Earl Conee, William FitzPatrick, Ralf Meerbote, Deborah Modrak, Alison Peterman, John Bennett, and Randall Curren. Their great lectures, academic support, and personal encouragement both in and after the class undoubtedly are one of the most important reasons why I have become fascinated and confident with studying philosophy. I'd like to thank particularly my mentor, Professor Randall Curren. His continuous academic and spiritual support in the past seven years (I met him as a sophomore student in his PHL 223 political philosophy class) is definitely a reason for my strong commitment to the study of normative political problems. It was so lucky for me to have had an opportunity to be a student of his political philosophy class. It is the first lecture of that class introducing Ancient Greek political philosophy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle that has opened for me the gate of political philosophy. So, I thank this wonderful academic campus and nice, encouraging, and thoughtful department! All these are necessary conditions for my current little achievement. I hope that one day, I can contribute to the research and teaching of philosophy, like all professors working here!

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