

Fall 2011

Philosophy & World Religions Department Newsletter, v3, Fall 2011

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Philosophy and World Religions.

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UNI DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY & WORLD RELIGIONS

Back in the dark ages, when long-haired hippies roamed the earth, sometime after the dinosaurs became extinct, I found myself in college. As I think back on those days, I recall a lecture on “freedom and equality,” two major political ideals that emerged in the French Revolution and today are fundamental to all democratic societies. My teacher’s thesis was that there is a serious tension, even conflict, between these ideals. Unfortunately, this was not a philosophy class, and so the analysis was not very crisp. In fact, I remember leaving the class still puzzled by the thesis, but the thesis itself, quite stunning, given the commitment of the America people to both of these ideals, has stuck with me over the years. Recently, I have again been thinking about how these



Jerry Soneson
Head of the Department

ideals stand in tension. While books have been and could be written on this topic, as an introduction to this newsletter designed for our friends and alumni interested in philosophy and religion, I’d like to share, in the spirit of an editorial, a few brief ideas on this topic as a little food for thought, and invite your feedback.

Freedom, it seems, is not just a political ideal but an element essential to life itself. As Alfred North Whitehead has said, “Life is a bid for freedom.” There would be no life, no vitality in nature, without the urge to transcend the given structures or patterns within which organisms are born. Freedom in this context means the effort to grasp and integrate novelty within given patterns so that more complex patterns are developed. For Whitehead, this element of life is what makes evolution in nature possible. It appears on the human level, he argues, as the urge to transform cultural patterns so that persons can achieve richer and more meaningful experiences. The developments of the arts and sciences are examples of this process. If this makes sense, I would propose that in the political sphere, freedom is an ideal that proposes to eliminate political and economic barriers which restrict opportunities for persons to transform cultural patterns, allowing each to pursue that way of living which most promises to bring meaning and fulfillment to them.

But as soon as I say that, I remember John Stewart Mill’s qualification: as long as that action does not harm others! Mill’s book *On Liberty* in fact is an analysis of those points where government ought to restrict freedom, cutting off particular kinds of opportunities to transform culture. This is the context within which the political ideal of equality begins to make sense. Whatever else we might mean by this word, in the political context, at the very least, it means “justice” as equal treatment before the law, and equal opportunities, I would add, to renew and transform culture. And this entails putting restrictions on the freedom of those who would deny equal treatment and equal opportunities – limiting freedom, that is to say, for the sake of equality.

It is right here that we see the tension and conflict between the ideals of freedom and equality. The unlimited freedom of some seems inevitably to lead to a lack of equality of most – those who now have little freedom to follow their own hopes and dreams. Having taught our Humanities courses for several decades, I have increasingly come to see that Western history, right down to today, with some shocking exceptions, is the history of the powerful taking advantage of the weak – unrestricted, unregulated freedom of the few undercutting the political equality and justice of the many. It would seem, then, that, if folks in a polity are to have equal access to freedom, if equality is to appear in any meaningful way, then the freedom of all has to be significantly restricted. This conflict between our own political ideals, freedom and equality, is where and why the development of law in the West is so crucial. The extraordinary promise of law is that it limits the freedom of the powerful to use and abuse the weak by promoting and respecting human equality. But since even law can be used to promote the unrestricted freedom of the few in a way that conflicts with the equality of the many, it would seem we all ought to be as vigilant as possible in protecting the fragile ideal of equality in law if we want our public life to embody our twin ideals – freedom and equality – in an appropriate and mutually qualifying balance.

In our next issue, Professor Clohesy will write a critical response to this editorial. We also welcome comments from our alumni.

Jerry Soneson
Head of the Department

JOHN

BURNIGHT

John Burnight joined the Department of Philosophy & World Religion faculty this semester as a visiting assistant professor in the study of religion. His background and interests in Hebrew language and literature and inner-biblical exegesis have been a true benefit for the study of religion major in the Department of Philosophy and World Religions, since he started at UNI this fall.

Reflecting on his time in the graduate program at the University of Chicago, Burnight feels very fortunate to have attended a university where several “rare” languages related to Hebrew, such as Phoenician and Ugaritic, are taught. This allowed him to use this knowledge in his Hebrew research. In addition, living for a year in Jerusalem, learning specifically about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam was invaluable to his experience at graduate school. His dissertation focused

on the biblical Book of Job as an early form of protest literature, proposing that the author used a series of rhetorical “reversals” of traditional biblical themes to argue that the Israelite theology of the time did not adequately address the problem of innocent suffering.

Besides UNI, Burnight has taught at several universities and colleges, including a small private college near Detroit, large public universities in Connecticut and North Carolina, and a small private college near Chicago. The range of his



GRANT

GOODRICH

This is Grant Goodrich’s first year teaching as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy within the Department of Philosophy & World Religions. Goodrich is specifically interested in the philosophy of science and has done significant research focusing on the intersection of philosophy of biology, philosophy of psychology, and philosophy of mind, especially as these sub-disciplines are relevant to the study of animal minds. This experience and interest has allowed him to pioneer two new classes here this year at UNI: Philosophy of Science and Sex, Death, and Continuity: The Philosophy of Biology. Besides these classes, Goodrich also teaches Humanities II classes.

Goodrich began studying philosophy in high school, and during college he spent as much time on philosophy as anything else. As an undergrad at St. John’s he became interested in philosophy of science when he had to write a paper “explaining why an intelligent person familiar with the arguments of Lavoisier, Dalton, Avogadro, Cannizzaro, and others, either would or would not believe in the existence of atoms.” His experience in humanities also comes from his education

at St. John’s, where he studied the Great Books, and was exposed to many of the books commonly encountered in the humanities courses. This allowed him to be comfortable “discussing the great works of literature and philosophy that are taught in the humanities.”

Goodrich completed his graduate work in the history and philosophy of science at Indiana University. As a graduate student, he was required to study both the history of science and the philosophy of science; these requirements complimented one another and gave a broader perspective of the sciences than if either would be studied alone. Not only was that combination of studies an important aspect of Goodrich’s grad program, another important aspect was the strong interaction between the HPS department, the philosophy department, and all of the science departments on campus. In addition, Goodrich benefited from Indiana University’s Center for the Integrated Study of Animal Behavior, which organizes conferences and study groups dedicated to the study of animal behavior and minds.

classes has included Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, introductory and upper level courses in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and World Religions, and he currently teaches three sections of Religions of the World and one section of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. Next semester he will continue teaching Religions of the World, but will also teach New Testament. Through all his classes, Burnight says that he attempts to use the historical-critical, literary, and linguistic methodologies emphasized in his graduate program.

When considering how his graduate school experience prepared him for teaching Religions of the World, Burnight wonders if anything could truly prepare someone to teach a course like Religions of the World. He feels it is difficult—if not impossible—to cover just one of the world’s great religions thoroughly within a semester’s time, let alone five or more, but Burnight

hopes that he can give his students “an outline of how some of the major religious traditions are similar, how (and why) they differ, and how they may have influenced each other.” By doing this, he hopes that students will be inspired to study religion further.

Burnight has been impressed with UNI students so far and is excited to continue in classes with them over the next semesters. He has enjoyed his classes this far and is looking forward not only to teaching Judaism and Islam next year, but also working with and providing assistance to the new Explorers of Religion student group (Check out their new Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Explorers-of-Religion/188763841209161>).

Reflecting on how his graduate school experience prepared him for this job, Goodrich says, “it provided me with many opportunities for teaching, and, in particular, teaching my own courses. It also gave me a broad background in history and philosophy of science, which helps me in teaching both philosophy of science courses as well as the Humanities courses.”



Even though it is his first year teaching at UNI, Goodrich has taught several other places. After graduating from college, he taught science and logic courses, including high school Physics, Chemistry and Biology and middle school science courses, at Ridgeview Classical Schools in Ft. Collins, Colorado. During graduate school, Goodrich taught courses in the history of science, introduction to philosophy,

the Philosophical Foundations of Cognitive Science, Constructing Dogs (a course on the study of dogs in science and philosophy of science), and Rational Decision Making. In addition, Goodrich spent two years at Gettysburg College teaching a course called Reading Darwin and an Introduction to Physics Lab.

As Goodrich looks ahead to the rest of the semester and year, he hopes that his philosophy of science students come away with a greater appreciation of both the sciences and philosophy. For his humanities students, he hopes that the world becomes a little more interesting to them. As for his new classes, he hopes that philosophy students become more interested in philosophy of science and science majors become more interested in philosophy. During the rest of his time here, Goodrich hopes that his interests and time can be successfully shared with students and colleagues, and that greater connection is formed between the philosophy major and the science departments on campus.

REZA



This is Reza Lahroodi's 11th year teaching at UNI, and during those years he has appreciated his work and the experiences he has had with UNI students and other UNI faculty. He enjoys how UNI students deeply care about education and value the faculty who are dedicated to their education. He also appreciates that the faculty generally put a higher value on educating their students than merely advancing their own careers.

Lahroodi, or Reza, as students often refer to him, completed his MA in philosophy at Tehran University in Tehran, Iran, and later earned his Ph.D. at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2001, with a graduate minor in psychology. Reflecting on his time at the University of Illinois, he realizes that his

advisor, Fred Schmitt, made a great impact on him. Reza says that Schmitt was not only kind, helpful, encouraging, and demanding, but "in his teaching and research, he exemplified to me the highest standards of analysis and argumentation in analytic philosophy. I was also greatly affected by his personal demeanor; unlike most philosophers I know, he did not take himself or his philosophical views too seriously."

Reza's teaching experience prior to coming to UNI includes teaching for a couple years as an adjunct in several universities in Tehran, Iran. In addition, he was a junior research fellow in the Iranian Academy of Philosophy. In the process of finishing his Ph.D. Reza was hired by UNI. Looking back, Reza finds it interesting to note how a week after defending his dissertation in June of 2001, he was enjoying a bike ride on Cedar Fall's nature trails.

Within the Department of Philosophy and World Religions, Reza specializes in epistemology. He currently teaches Knowledge and Reality, Human Person, History of Philosophy: Medieval, Philosophy: The Art of Thinking, and Humanities. Out of the classes that he teaches, Reza says his favorite class to teach is Philosophy: The Art of Thinking (previously Philosophy: Basic Questions) because he feels that "nothing compares to the pleasure and the privilege of introducing a young mind to philosophy for the first time!" Looking ahead to

LAHROODI

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

the rest of the school year, Reza is anticipating teaching Medieval Philosophy this spring, a course he has always enjoyed teaching in the past.

In addition to teaching his classes, Reza continues to do research, focusing on virtue epistemology, which is the branch of epistemology that studies the nature of intellectual virtues and their role in our cognitive lives. He is currently working on developing “a new analysis of open mindedness as an intellectual virtue that is sensitive to recent psychological research.” He has found interesting connections between closed-mindedness and what psychologists call need for closure.” Reza feels

that a more refined analysis of open-mindedness is called for, because the psychological findings about need for closure show that open-mindedness is not an unqualified virtue.

Of all the things that Reza does in his life, he feels that teaching has the best chance to make the world a better place. He thinks this is especially true in his teaching Philosophy: The Art of Thinking, where he helps students realize how much their understanding of citizenship, justice and freedom can be enriched and transformed by studying philosophy. “Reza fondly remembers that last spring six of his students decided to become philosophy majors.



JAMES



James Robinson has been teaching at UNI for 40 years, and has enjoyed seeing so many of his students over the years willing to work hard. He feels they are very polite in comparison to so many other places where they are instead pushy or arrogant. This has made UNI feel like a place that is truly almost like home.

Robinson completed his graduate work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He found that his interest in Asian studies and their positive reputation made that school a perfect fit for him. While studying in the Buddhist Studies program in the South Asians

Studies department, Robinson reflects how his graduate study took him further and deeper in the subject matter he was interested in. “I acquired a few good friends, and I was privileged to have a Tibetan lama direct my dissertation. I learned about the ancient Vedic religion, which still continues to fascinate me. It reinforced my love of learning. It enhanced my ability in library research.” Robinson enjoys the opportunity to teach Asian religions here at UNI after his work with Asian Studies in grad school. He also has expanded to teach in other areas within the Department of Philosophy and World Religions. Robinson first taught Religions of the World, Heritage of the Bible, and Religions of the Near East, and since 1984 has been teaching the Humanities sequence. In fact, Robinson is one of the few teachers who teach all three of the humanities courses, and he is proud of that. This semester, he is teaching Religions of the World, Humanities II, Great Living Religions: Confucianism, Daoism and Zen.

Although he enjoys teaching advanced Asian courses, Robinson is looking forward to teaching Angels in World Culture next semester. He enjoys studying angels and angel-like beings because “it is rather unconventional, and most scholars of religion tend to focus on ultimate gods or study religious practices.” Robinson, however, finds the idea of angels, saints, and mythological beings fascinating, because for a long time in religious studies they were not taken seriously. He has found that many students share in this interest. In addition, he enjoys

ROBINSON

PROFESSOR OF RELIGION

studying history. He says that the more he studies history, the more he realizes that if characters and their personalities in history would have been different, history itself would be completely different. This is truly fascinating to him.

Robinson's aim is to have his students know more as they leave the room than when they came in. He has found that to do this, he relies heavily on lectures, but is always willing to have students share in discussions. "If students don't have anything to say, I do." Robinson says, "The people of Iowa hired me to tell them things they don't know," and he does that conscientiously in his teaching.

Just as Robinson makes it a goal for his students to discover something new everyday, he is also learning everyday. He truly enjoys teaching and is always eager to get involved in something new and exciting, just as he is continually eager to teach others about it.

During his 40 years at UNI, Robinson has seen many students go through his classes, but he would say they haven't necessarily changed much. Instead, he has seen a change in culture and how the culture then affects students. He is surprised though, that students have become more disengaged and do not keep track of the news like they had in previous time periods. "Students don't think its going to matter to them," he says, "and they think everything will be honky dory." This is a concern for Robinson, and he hopes students do not settle on this sort of political and cultural complacency, but instead be informed and realize how what is going on in the world affects them directly. Teaching students in the subject of religion is so important because "religion surrounds us in many ways." Robinson feels that students need to be sensitized to religion because they have a narrow view of it. He says, "the U.S. does not have much religious conflict, but instead it has conflict out of religious intolerance." By teaching students about religion, it is Robinson's goal to make them more tolerant.



HARRY
BROD'S

WORK WITH

The Center for Violence Prevention

Harry Brod has been working in men's studies for several years and is currently working with the Center for Violence Prevention at UNI. This Campus Violence Prevention Program began and grew from a series of grants from the Violence Against Women office of the US Department of Justice. The program was initiated by UNI's Women's and Gender Studies program but now makes UNI the flagship institution for Iowa and is a Regents project. The UNI Center for Violence Prevention serves as a statewide training center that offers annual conferences for community and campus victim services providers, police and educators, and it supports the best practices for responding to and preventing interpersonal violence at Iowa's three state universities.

Brod has found that collaborating between Iowa's three state universities and getting expertise from the faculty of all campuses has been helpful in establishing a common core of ideas and developing unified policies. This collaboration has put UNI into national leadership on campus violence prevention. This role in leadership is part of the way that CVP can contribute to the climate of the state and the safety of its citizens.

Brod's involvement in the CVP comes from his background in social and political philosophy and applied ethics, along with his synthesis of academic work and political work in the pro-feminist men's movement. Brod specifically feels that this program is important for students and their education because students need a safe environment so they can succeed academically. He says, "If you are not safe, you're not free to pursue anything else." For that reason, he continues to educate people for responsible citizenship.

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with department news and upcoming events.



DISCUSSION & LECTURES BY Dr. Russ Shafer-Landau

This semester, the UNI Philosophy Student Club invited Dr. Russ Shafer-Landau, Chair of the Philosophy Department at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, to campus.

On the evening of November 1st, he spoke on the topic, "In the Defense of Marriage Equality." He started his talk by giving a master argument for his thesis.

Premise 1: The government is morally required to provide all of its citizens with equal rights, unless there is compelling reason for the government not to do so.

Premise 2: There are no compelling reasons for the government to withhold equal marital rights to homosexuals and heterosexuals.

Conclusion: Therefore, the government is morally required to provide heterosexuals and homosexuals with equal marital rights.

Professor Shafer-Landau notes that the first premise isn't controversial, so the focus of discussion should be placed on whether or not the second premise is accurate. He does this by anticipating counter-arguments against his second premise. Those include arguments which claim that homosexuality is immoral, offensive, goes against the definition of marriage, would lead to legalized polygamy, or constitutes a threat to the institution of marriage itself. One by one he laid out the logic behind these counter-arguments and dismissed them based on their faulty premises.

He started with the common claim that "gay marriage is immoral"

and argued that immorality is not a notion which should lead us to make decisions about law. For example, many people think it is immoral to lie, or to say the Lord's name in vein, but we don't have laws against this.

He moved on to the claim that gay marriage is offensive to many. But he pointed out that, since many things are offensive in society, and we don't legally ban them, this objection provides very little justification for outlawing it. For example, desegregation probably offended a large number of southerners who saw it as an attack on their social system but most would agree today that desegregation, in spite of the offence it provoked, was a step in the right direction for improving society.

"Marriage is defined as the union between a man and a woman" is another argument which Dr. Russ Shafer-Landau addressed. He noted that some claim the Bible defines marriage as the union between one man and one woman, often arguing this definition is in fact God's will and so should be written into our laws. But Professor Shafer-Landau pointed out that the Bible has many laws, some of which we find not only morally problematic but legally wrong, such as the rule that parents should stone (to death) their children if they should insult the parents; he concluded that the Bible is therefore not a good guide for the formulation of our laws.

The idea that "allowing gay marriage would lead to polygamy" is one which has been argued for a while, but Dr.



Russ Shafer-Landau argued that polygamy is historically tied up with the oppression of women, allowing men symbolically to display their status and keep women under their command. Gay marriage has none of these connotations, he argued, and thus shouldn't be attached to polygamy. Lastly he looked at the idea that gay marriage is a threat to the institution of marriage as it stands. Dr. Russ Shafer-Landau argued that the institution of marriage is based around the family unit, which operates on family values. These values are love, honesty, and devotion. He believed that a gay marriage can embody these same values and is thus not harming the family unit or the institution of marriage.

Dr. Russ Shafer-Landau gave a great systematic overview of the entire debate and thoughtfully addressed all of the popular criticism by those who argue against gay marriage.

EMILY O'LOUGHLIN



Year:
Senior, graduating in 2013

Major:
• Philosophy, History

Favorite Class:
• History of Philosophy because it ties both of her majors together

Favorite Philosopher:
• Montaigne because she enjoys his writing

Emily O'Loughlin is in her fourth year at UNI, and is majoring in philosophy and history. Emily's decision to study these majors was influenced by previous class experience, interest in, and scholarships she was awarded. With these majors, Emily hopes to eventually work in a museum, teaching people about history. This would be the perfect job for her because it allows her the opportunity to teach people, without needing the patience to teach in a classroom. Emily also is considering the possibility of graduate school, but those plans are not finalized yet.

During her time at UNI studying philosophy, Emily has enjoyed spending time with the other philosophy students, as well as her professors. She enjoys the conversations she partakes in because even if they do not end in agreements, "they are always fun and instructive!" Some of the classes in which Emily has enjoyed these conversations this semester include Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, and Perspectives on Death & Dying. She is also taking US History to 1877 and Pre-Modern Japan for her history major.

Emily says that one of the most important things that she has learned about philosophy is that it helps question beliefs and assumptions and teaches and encourages critical thinking. By having beliefs questioned, true beliefs are strengthened as false beliefs are revealed. Also, thinking helps in all areas of life, because making the best choices is easier after thinking through one's decisions.

The importance of getting involved in the community you are living in is something that Emily has realized in her four years at UNI. Her involvement has allowed her to meet many people who eventually become some of her closest friends. She has also realized the importance of reaching out to others. In doing so, Emily found that her connections are needed for the future.

KAYLEIGH MASSMAN

Kayleigh Massman is a senior working towards a major in the study of religion and a leisure youth and human services minor at UNI. Her positive experience as a high school student involved in youth ministry, along with her hope of going into the field of youth ministry influenced her decision to choose this major during her sophomore year at UNI.

As Kayleigh has progressed through the major in the study of religion, she has learned the basics of different religions, but has also become more open-minded toward each religion. "It doesn't matter the line of work, you will always run into someone with a different faith than you, and it is important to be open minded."

The ability to think critically has been another important skill that Kayleigh has developed during her time at UNI. She feels that she can now be given a piece of information and not only accept it, but understand it and develop an opinion about it. "High school doesn't teach you that. They frown on it," she says.

Taking courses in the Study of Religion program, Kayleigh has enjoyed the opportunity to get to know all the professors. She says that the small program has made her more comfortable in sharing her true thoughts or opinions. "I won't get slammed right away when saying something. There is an open environment for discussions, and there is no taboo subject."

Besides her interests in religion and youth ministry, Kayleigh has an interest in sign language and has enjoyed her involvement in the American Sign Language Club during her time at UNI.



Year:
Senior

Major:
Study of Religion

Favorite Classes:

- **Religion & Sexuality** because she got a chance to look at different religions "family habits" and see what was acceptable within a marriage family and extended family
- **Leadership** because it was interesting to learn techniques of a leader



PHILOSOPHY CLUB

I think, therefore

UNI *I am.*

This is the Philosophy Students Club's fourth year, and they continue to both evolve and grow in size since the club started. A couple of newly declared philosophy majors have joined Philosophy Students Club this semester, as well as a few non-majors. This continual growth in club size as well as the encouragement from new members to reach out to students both inside and outside of the Philosophy department has been positive for the club.

During this semester, the Philosophy Students Club has sponsored several events and activities. On October 24th and 25th, the club put on a book sale where they sold books that were donated by professors of the Department of Philosophy & World Religions, as well as baked goods made by club members and Philosophy Club buttons with TC in the Thinker pose. During this book sale they also provided students and professors the opportunity

to sign up to get the new Philosophy shirts (shirt design on left.) The other event that the Philosophy Club sponsored was a discussion and lecture by Professor Russ Schafer-Landau, professor of meta-ethics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The lecture was on “A Defense of Marriage Equality” and took place on November 1st. On the following Wednesday morning, November 2nd, the Philosophy Students Club officers, along with Prof. Schafer-Landau, held a discussion workshop with high school students taking a philosophy course in Charles City.

The Philosophy Students Club’s constitution states that a faculty advisor can only serve for three years, so this semester Reza Lahroodi became the new advisor for the club. Professor Lahroodi has taught Philosophy: the Art of Thinking, Knowledge & Reality, History of Philosophy: Ancient, and Human Person. The club has appreciated his help over the past years as he has suggested discussion topics, and his new role has greatly benefited members.


Along with a new faculty advisor, the club also elected new officers for the year. Jordan Bancroft-Smithe was elected president and is a senior Music and Philosophy double major. Jordan has been a club member for the past couple years and served as the vice president last year. John Preston was elected vice president and is a super senior philosophy major with a minor in History. He has been involved with

the Philosophy Students Club since its formation in Fall 2008 and has also served as the club treasurer. The secretary this year is Kelsey Ihde, a senior Philosophy major. Kelsey has been a part of the club for the past year. Emily O’Loughlin is the treasurer and is a senior philosophy and history major and studio art minor. Emily has been involved with the club since Fall 2009 and served as secretary last year.

The philosophy club meets on Fridays at 5pm and discusses a variety of topics that usually relate to the things that members are learning about in classes. Members often provide topics for future meetings based on ideas from classes they are having difficulty with. Professors also come when students are specifically interested in a topic in one of their courses.

The Philosophy Students Club encourages members to think critically about the opinions and presuppositions they have, whether they be opinions on politics, education, religion, being, or any other subject. The club offers the opportunity to explore ideas in an open and welcoming environment, and it encourages members to explore concepts in depth with others and to meet them outside of the club for further conversation and fellowship.

For more information about the Philosophy Students Club, you can:

- check out their webpage (www.uni.edu/philrel/PhilosophyStudentsClub.shtml)
- find their  group

PETE MASTELLER,**PHILOSOPHY AND THE STUDY OF RELIGION, '98**

I graduated from UNI in 1998 with a double major in Philosophy and the Study of Religion, along with a minor in Ethics. Afterwards, I earned my M.T.S. at Harvard Divinity School, where my studies focused on American religious history, especially nineteenth century new religious movements, such as Mormonism. In 2001, I joined the faculty of Northfield Mount Hermon, a 9-12 boarding school in western Massachusetts. As a member of the Religious Studies department, I taught courses such as Ethics, Religion in America, and Introduction to Philosophy. I also coached track and cross country. In 2006, I moved to Miami to teach in the Religious Studies department at Palmer Trinity, an Episcopal day school. In 2007, I became the chair of the department and overhauled the curriculum. At this point the most popular courses we offer are Buddhism, Islam and 9/11, and Religion and Sexuality.

LINDA IRELAND,**PHILOSOPHY, '81**

Currently, I'm self-employed as Freelance Editor/Writer/Artist. I edit textbooks, journals, and newsletters for a variety of clients worldwide; in 2010 I published a book. I teach classes periodically (writing and art classes through Hawkeye Tech community ed.; art classes at the Waterloo Art Center and Art Store & More in Cedar Falls); and I display artwork at various art shows. My hobbies include painting, reading, sewing, scrapbooking, and gardening.

JIM SVAJGL,**STUDY OF RELIGION '01**

I received the newsletter this week, and it was fantastic to see and read about the department. It's great to get a glimpse of what is going on in Baker Hall. My wife Kamilla and I are still in Chicago. I graduated from law school in 2006 and have been a practicing trial lawyer since then, with an expertise in asbestos and medical malpractice litigation. Though it is a far cry from what I ever thought I would be doing, I'm very happy with my career. We have a 2 1/2 year-old daughter, Audrey, who is just the greatest kid.

THANKS to all who sent in updates. If you wish to contribute to the next issue, please refer to the back cover of the newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you.

SARA GOETZINGER**PHILOSOPHY '11**

Brent (Goetzinger, Philosophy '11) and I are really happy here in Midtown Omaha, which is beautiful, littered with old brick buildings and ivy, parks and fun restaurants and shops on what seems like every corner. It's where most of the ethnic groups in the city live, so it's an eclectic adventure every time we go for a walk or try somewhere new. We have a lovely 1920's style apartment in one of those old brick buildings. We visit the farmers' market every weekend and cook together almost every night. I find myself on a regular basis filled with gratitude for having gone through the philosophy program. I love the life I have been able to lead since taking those classes and meeting Brent. I have learned so much, and very often feel what seems to me to be a "waking up" that took place somewhere along the course of completing my major. I really am very lucky- I look back sometimes to the day I walked into the Philosophy Department office saying I wanted to join the major, and I am in awe as to how easily one different situation or decision, made in one instance, would have caused me ultimately to have been a different person leading a different life.

KAY JORDAN**STUDY OF RELIGION, '97**

Crazy as it seems, I'm still Director of Kingdom Regiment Drill Team, Color Guard, and Drumline. I've been working with young people, in faith-based drill teams, for 43 years. I just hit my 76th birthday!

KYLE DIGMANN**STUDY OF RELIGION '08**

I just finished my second year of minor seminary at Loras College in Dubuque. I graduated Magna Cum Laude and now have a degree in philosophy from Loras to match my degree in Religion from UNI. I finished the year in May and began my transition to Major seminar in July when I headed to Rome to study Catholic theology. I have not started my theology classes yet because I spent the last month learning Italian in Assisi. Currently, I am in Rome continuing my study of Italian for the next month and I will begin Theology in October. The major seminary program is a 4 year program so my anticipated ordination year is not until 2014.

RIPD SEMINAR

REFLECTION, INTEGRATION, AND PROFESSIONAL/CAREER DISCERNMENT

THE SENIOR SEMINAR IN RELIGION

Last year, Martie Reineke, professor of Religion pioneered a new course for majors in the study of religion nearing graduation. This course, Sr. Seminar in Religion, focused on helping majors in the study of religion to “bring their work in the major to critical integration, clarifying what they had done in the major and linking their achievements with life goals while they also explored how deep learning outcomes in the major offered preparation for a career, graduate, or professional school.”

During her experience teaching this class, one of Reineke’s favorite parts were the visits of her colleagues during the first half of the semester. She genuinely enjoyed hearing them talk about their research and watching them interact with students. As each of her colleagues visited, their teaching styles came through, allowing the opportunity for Reineke to celebrate with the students the exposure they had to outstanding teaching. In addition, the visits from other professors were also a highlight for students, and according to Katie Berge, a study of religion alumna, this experience “allowed us to get to know our professors on another level.”

A surprising thing for Reineke as she taught this class was that many students had not thought about their lives after UNI. As she puts it, “they had been heading up that exit ramp without a bus ticket, a map, or an itinerary. And students who came into the course with a game plan tended to change or modify that plan once they were exposed to the plethora of options that emerged in the course.” Overall, by the end of the course, students were able to “intentionally and systematically prepare for the exit ramp,” allowing for future steps towards these goals to be taken.

As Katie looks back on her experience in the course, she felt it was “an excellent opportunity to survey career paths in the study of religions field as well as prepare for a variety of options outside of it.” For Elizabeth, another study of religion alumna, even though she was reluctant to sign up for the senior seminar, she says it was one of the better decisions she made in her undergraduate career. Other students suggested similar ideas saying that “I’m now able to specifically identify my passions within the field of religion and specific subfields I’d like to pursue further in the future,” and “this class has helped me to figure out what I have done in the last couple of years. I have not only learned what skills I have been taught here but how to promote my skills in the world.”

Even though much positive feedback was received about the Sr. Seminar in Religion course, Reineke will make a few changes based on feedback she received from both students who took the course and study of religion alumni. One change she will make is that instead of having the course offered in the spring, it will be offered in the fall. This change will allow the course to fit more readily with seniors planning for careers or graduate and professional studies. In addition, more material will be available and presented about careers in the non-profit sector, and Reineke is already working with UNI librarians to increase resources to do so. Another change that will be made is an increase in informational interviews that would give students practice in articulating the outcomes and value of their major to prospective employers.



NEW COURSES

IMPACT OF SCHOLARSHIPS



“This scholarship allows me to devote myself to my studies that would be impossible if I had to compensate by working more often. It gives me the opportunity to read texts more thoroughly as well as meet frequently with all of the great professors in the Philosophy Department. I think all recipients would agree that a small amount of money can improve the quality of a student’s semester in many different ways.”

-Greg H. Greubel, philosophy major

“My scholarship has had multiple impacts on my educational experience at UNI. One benefit is that I don’t have to work very many hours a week to cover my expenses, so I have more time to volunteer and attend on-campus events like guest lectures and theatrical performances. I also have more time to be involved in student organizations like the Philosophy Club and UNI Freethinkers and Inquirers, as well as represent my dorm Noehren in the Northern Iowa Student Government Senate.”

-Corey Cooling, philosophy major

The scholarships I have received through the Department of Philosophy and World Religions have helped by allowing me to focus more on my studies and less on my student loans. As a first generation University student, college funds were never set up for me, so I had to rely on student loans and any possible scholarships to help me pay for my schooling. It really helps a students’ stress level to worry even a little less about how much debt they are going to be in when they graduate. I really appreciate all the help I have received through the Department of Philosophy and World Religions, and I am very proud to claim Religious Studies as my major!

-Kayleigh Massman, Study of Religion major

If you would like to start your own scholarship or lecture series, contact Debra Umbdenstock at debra.umbdenstock@uni.edu or (319) 273-7727.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OR DEPARTMENT

Would you like to support a philosophy or study of religion student and/or the Department of Philosophy and World Religions? If so, please fill out the form below and return it to

UNI FOUNDATION FINANCIAL SERVICES
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Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0239

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I/we would like to support the following fund(s)

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\$ _____ Mabel Haywood Memorial Quasi-Endowed Scholarship (20-210165)

\$ _____ Other _____ (100418)

ONLINE-----Go to the online pledge form at www.uni-foundation.org and click on "Make an online gift." You will need to enter the specific name(s) of the Philosophy and World Religions projects in the "Other" box near the bottom of the web form.

CHECK----- Check enclosed, payable to the UNI Foundation

CREDIT CARD--- Credit Card: Please charge my card \$ _____ beginning (mo/yr) ____ / ____

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IMPACT

TOM HESSE

Tom Hesse is a UNI alumnus from the Department of Philosophy & World Religions. As a student, Tom majored in philosophy, and decided on this major based on reading Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* as well as his decision to take Mike Prah's class at UNI, *Philosophy: Basic Questions*. In addition to philosophy, Tom also majored in history, and graduated with a double major in 1999. During his time at UNI, Tom valued his experience working as an undergraduate TA for the old four-credit Humanities I and II courses under Robert Schnucker and Mike Prah. He felt it was a very eye-opening experience seeing a course and classroom from an instructor's perspective.

Following graduation from UNI in 1999, Tom attended graduate school at the University of Montana to study philosophy, and he earned his master's degree in 2001. In Tom's experience, he found getting into graduate school was more difficult than graduate school itself. He said that in graduate school "you just have to manage your time and jump through the hoops." Tom's master's thesis was titled, *The Theme of the Rest in the Works of Saint Augustine*, and it explored the various ways the concept of rest relates to Augustine's life and writings. Its inspiration came from the famous line from the start of his *Confessions*: "Our hearts are restless until they come to rest in Thee."

After graduate school in 2001, Tom taught as an adjunct instructor at Kirkwood Community College until 2011, and he also taught at Mount Mercy College from 2002-2004. During that time, Tom taught close to 1500 students in his around 50 philosophy, ethics, logic, and interdisciplinary courses. Several of his students also eventually majored in philosophy, and some even transferred to UNI to do so.

Tom is currently taking a year off from teaching while he lives in Cedar Falls and provides care for an elderly relative. He hopes to begin teaching again in the Fall 2012 semester, but does not have any concrete plans at this time. Tom is also writing a book right now dealing with human progress, environmental deterioration, and how to balance the two.



Hometown:
Cedar Falls

Favorite Professors or Classes while at UNI:

- Jerry Sonesson's philosophy classes
- Fred Halberg's philosophy classes
- David McKibbin's history classes
- Thomas Lindsay's political science classes

Involvement at UNI:

- Cross Country (2 seasons)
- Track (1 season)

PEG O'ROURKE



Hometown:
Fredericksburg

Favorite Professors or Classes while at UNI:

- Martie Reineke's classes; Reineke had a way of seeing the world that Peg found refreshing and revealing, and her classes were innovative and filled with discussion
- James Robinson's classes; here she was taught how to meditate, which she still does twice a day.

Most Important Things Learned at UNI:

- Research and writing skills
- Meditation
- Understanding of human behavior

Peg O'Rourke is a UNI alumna who studied religion in the Department of Philosophy and World Religions. When she came to UNI at the age of 32, she planned on studying psychology, but after taking a world religions class with Dr. Martie Reineke, Peg changed her mind. She decided to switch majors, knowing that "the study of religions would give [her] insight into human behavior." Already planning to go to graduate school in order to become a therapist, Peg knew her undergraduate degree in the study of religion would be able to prepare her for that.

Following graduation from UNI in December of 1988, Peg began grad school for counseling psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. Peg felt that this program would give her everything she needed to return to Iowa and license as a Marriage and Family Therapist, which she did in 1991. Later, in 2001, Peg completed her PhD through Northcentral University. Throughout grad school, Peg felt that her study of religion helped her to understand more history of how cultures and religions were formed. Peg says, "in the process of learning this, [she] understand[s] more about the human spirit and what propels us."

Peg currently is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and owns a private practice in Burlington, Iowa, where she has four therapists who work for her. She has found that her ability to understand more religions helps her to relate to her patients. The study of religion gave Peg insights into the way human beings think and understand the world. She also is currently, and has been in the past, an adjunct faculty at Kirkwood Community College, where she teaches psychology. Looking ahead, Peg plans to join her husband in retirement soon and continue living in their condo in Marion. They also hope to continue to travel together as well as play golf.

"Let the study of religion open your mind. It can do that if you let it."



DEPARTMENT OF
PHILOSOPHY & WORLD RELIGIONS
CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50614-0501

ALUMNI RESPONSE FORM

In order to keep us and your UNI colleagues informed of your activities, please complete the form below and return to "Department of Philosophy & World Religions," UNI, Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0501, or send an e-mail to helen.harrington@uni.edu. We are particularly interested in the current career paths of our alumni.

Last name First name Middle/Maiden name

UNI degree(s)-years

Address

City State Zip-code

Is this a new address? Yes No

E-mail address

Spouse's name Is spouse a UNI alum? Yes No

Your position and employer

New items of interest: _____

This update can be printed in the next newsletter!

Please do not print this update.

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Leah DeVries, executive editor
Jerry Soneson, director

The Department of Philosophy &
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Joel Haack, Dean

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employer with a comprehensive plan
for affirmative action.