

Spring 2012

## Philosophy & World Religions Department Newsletter, v4, Spring 2012

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

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©2012 Department of Philosophy & World Religions, University of Northern Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pwrnews>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

University of Northern Iowa. Department of Philosophy and World Religions., "Philosophy & World Religions Department Newsletter, v4, Spring 2012" (2012). *Philosophy & World Religions Department Newsletter*. 3.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pwrnews/3>

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Newsletters at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy & World Religions Department Newsletter by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.



## DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY & WORLD RELIGIONS

In the last issue of the Newsletter, Jerry Soneson wrote a thoughtful piece relating freedom to equality. Specifically, he noted that the freedom to undertake initiatives can affect others so that their freedom is curtailed. One purpose of the law is to provide justice or equity to those affected by others' assertions of freedom. I agree that the balance between freedom and equality is essential for a good life not diminished by others. I propose to examine the balance of freedom and equality here by examining the two major forms freedom takes in our society: political and economic.

Political freedom in the American tradition begins with the power generated by citizens expressing themselves so as



William Cloehsy  
Professor of Philosophy

to influence others to act with them for some common good. Acting so as to establish justice has been among the most notable achievements of public speech and action. Our history tells of many persistent critics speaking tirelessly to hostile audiences; writing letters, articles, and books; marching past angry crowds; picketing before factories, city halls, schools, and stores until eventually their fellow citizens realize that these pests are prophets and their demands a call for justice. These actions have realized justice for many—slaves, workers, women, blacks, gays—who had been treated as less than equal. These movements have been high points in our history when we have realized our freedom in the effort of bringing justice as equality to others long denied it.

These periods remind us that the freedom of some has been held in opposition to the freedom of others, an injustice toward them, a refusal to acknowledge fellow citizens and human beings. These were, in fact, failures of freedom for all in that those unjustly denying freedom to others made their own freedom a form of oppression. Freedom for some is a failure of freedom for all. These failures reoccur because the composition of our citizenry changes. America is an unusual state in that we promise to receive the oppressed, the impoverished, and the ambitious from around the world and to allow them to make a life among us. Nevertheless, it takes time and empathy

for us to accept the stranger. We must repeatedly rethink who we are so as to include the stranger as a fellow citizen welcome to join in our discourse on matters of public concern and to benefit from our solutions.

The market offers us another kind of freedom: the use of our talents to provide a living, sometimes lavishly. The modern market enables people to engage their ingenuity, skill, and effort to provide a good life for themselves and multiply both the kinds of goods and services available and their number so as to improve the lives of all. The market is not dependent upon the beneficence of business people: in helping others we provide for ourselves. The self-interest of those with whom we deal we find a more constant and trustworthy incentive. Some even argue the market should be the basis of all we do to provide the necessities of life for one another. Other methods, such as government initiatives, they argue, are inefficient and lead to dependency rather than independence. The market's power to unleash freedom as creativity and initiative is beyond question. Nonetheless, allegiance to the market as the most efficient or sole method for unleashing creativity and engaging people in productive efforts is excessive. There are many problems created by the market that require solutions that the market cannot itself provide. Markets do some things well, such as shifting production toward needed products. Markets do other things badly such as preventing pollution. Often the best solution to problems is governmental regulation. Despite dreams of an unfettered market, markets work best within the compass of government and other social institutions that address market failures and provide supports such as infrastructure. Markets tend to cluster wealth toward the top, impoverishing an ever larger portion of society unless some redistribution is mandated as a form of justice. Programs securing less disparity in result and greater equality of opportunity not only improve the majority's prospects, they improve market functions by increasing customers and decreasing the fear and reality of poverty. Finally, there are goods, actions, and practices that do not fit into market mechanisms, such as the moral worth of persons, the beauty of art, learning for its own sake, community and political action—including our obligation to provide for one another's welfare. When people define themselves and their world strictly in market terms, they ignore, deny, and then forget the freedom to pursue those goods that will not be found there.

By William Cloehsy

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

As many of you have heard, this Spring our majors in both Philosophy and the Study of Religion were slated for "restructuring." Suffering radical reductions in our university budget over the past years, the state appropriations for UNI are currently equivalent to what we received sixteen years ago, 1996-97, and obviously UNI can no longer move forward with business as usual. As a result, a number of programs with low graduation numbers have been closed down, and some have been asked to be restructured. Our two majors are among the latter.

In asking us to "restructure" our two majors, the administration means two things. First, we are to reduce the number of our tenured faculty by four – very likely two in each program. Secondly, we will have to modify our programs to be able to staff the courses in our majors.



The criterion used for closing or restructuring programs was an average of 10 graduates a year over the past 5 years. While our enrollments have been healthy from an historical perspective, as we now have 65 majors in the department, our graduation numbers have fallen short. In Philosophy, we have graduated an average of 6.6 students a year, and in the Study of Religion, 8.2. Interestingly, the average number of graduates in all the programs affected by closures and restructuring this Spring was 2.0.

The request to restructure our programs came as a complete surprise for several reasons. First, we not only play a key role in the Liberal Arts Core, but courses in our majors have robust enrollments and serve not only our majors but numerous other students in majors such as history, psychology, and political science. Altogether, we teach over 3,000 students a year. Second, in the last 4 years, we have been, on the average, the 6th least expensive department on campus (out of 33 departments). This figure is calculated by dividing the cost of instruction (salaries) by number of student credit hours taught. Third, the subject matter of our

courses is central to the core mission of higher education. Not only is philosophy the guardian of critical thinking, but as Socrates said, "There is nothing more important than to discuss virtue every day...for the unexamined life is not worth living." Apart of such examination, our human nature so easily leads us to rationalize injustice and abuse. Philosophy helps students learn how to see this when it happens, exposing the emperor who all too often has no clothes. And in today's global culture, it seems irresponsible to think we can educate our students without teaching them about the religions of world, since religion has been and continues to be the deepest motivating factor in human life. The fact that our disciplines are so central to a university education is what put our major programs in the restructure category rather than closure.

Among the letters of support we have received from members of the community and alums, I'd like to include two comments from our national organizations. In a recent letter of support, David E. Schrader, Executive Director of the American Philosophical Association, writes on behalf of the philosophy major, stating "The United States is unique in being perhaps the only nation in the world that was founded based on philosophy rather than ethnicity. An education without philosophy is an education that would be unrecognizable to people like Jefferson and Franklin. UNI students both need and deserve the opportunity to engage with the ideas that animated our nation's founding." And in a joint letter of support, Otto Maduro (President of the American Academy of Religion), John Esposito (President Elect), and Laurie Zoloth (Vice President) assert of our program in religion that "it is recognized as a center of excellence and has served as a model to the larger guild." In affirming the quality of our department, these noted scholars state that our program in religion "has brought a significant amount of national attention to your university and greatly enhanced its scholarly reputation." For example, Martie Reineke, as featured elsewhere in this issue, has just won the American Academy of Religion national Excellence in Teaching Award, the only person to have received this award this year out of over 11,000 members.

We have been proud to proclaim that our majors help students adjust to the profound changes and problems life throws our way, and so we are taking our "reconstruction" as a challenge for modeling how our disciplines provide for flexibility and adjustment. By rising to this challenge, we can demonstrate one way that the examined life is, in fact, worth living.



# FRESHMAN CORNERSTONE

## PREPARING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

Beginning college can be a monumental change in a student's life. To assist with this, members of the University of Northern Iowa faculty have come up with the first-year cornerstone. This yearlong course combines Oral Communication and College Writing and Research classes.

The idea for this class came from the Foundations of Excellence study done as a part of the university accreditation in 2009. The idea was previously piloted, and then the faculty came up with the idea to combine the courses, while infusing discussion of civil discourse and strategies for success in college.

The hope was that they could cover all of the information in an integrated way. "Often students learn speaking without producing a document in Oral Communication, and write papers without speaking in College Writing and Research. In this course, students write a paper and then give a speech, so the oral and written aspects are integrated," says Department of Philosophy and World Religions professor Susan Hill, who teaches a section of the course.

The faculty appointed to teach this class, including Hill, met for four weeks during the summer. During this time, experts explained how to teach communication and writing, and a common syllabus for all sections of the course was established. Although this has been a challenging process, Hill says, "It has gotten me even more excited about teaching." She enjoys getting to talk about teaching in a way that she has not done in a long time.

Since this is the first year of the course, it is unknown at this point whether it teaches skills more effectively than the separate courses. However, Hill feels that thinking about how the skills work together, while infusing student success strategies, makes the course incredibly effective.

Students in the course agree. "Instead of doing just papers and then just speeches, we get to

mix it up a little bit," says freshman Angela Hayes. "I really like that it's intertwined," agrees Jenna Tschetter.

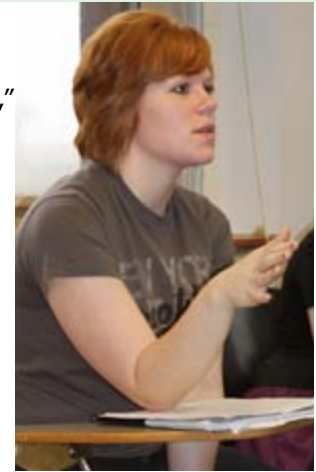
For students, this course offers many unique benefits not found in other classes. Students are together with one faculty member and the same group of people for an entire year, so this creates a cohesive learning community.

It also provides a relationship with a faculty member. In addition, there is exposure to different services on campus, which gives students access to what they need for success.

According to Hill, this class prepares students for the rest of their college experience and life beyond college, because "there is a lot of time spent talking about skills employers want from students, which include time management, studying, and working effectively in a group." The faculty's hope is that the students will be better prepared for what's coming next and have all the knowledge they need to be successful in college.

This class has certainly done what it was intended to do in the students' perspectives. In addition to time management, there have been many lessons learned in the writing process and public speaking. "I'm not afraid to talk in front of other people now!" says Tschetter.

Hayes has seen the effects of this as well. "I can see how this connects to other classes in the Liberal Arts Core. This class has made it so much easier to write papers for other classes," she says.



NEW COURSES



# MARGARET



Margaret Holland's favorite part of the University of Northern Iowa is getting to know the students she teaches. Holland, who has been teaching at the UNI since 1991, enjoys "the enthusiasm the philosophy students have for the philosophy major." Getting to share her knowledge with students who are truly passionate and interested in learning makes Holland's job pleasant.

Prior to coming to UNI, Holland spent most of her time on the east coast of the country. She received her B.A. in English from Boston College, where she got a solid liberal arts education. After this, she stayed at Boston College and obtained her M.A. in Philosophy. She found this choice of institution to be beneficial because of its focus on the history of philosophy. After completing her M.A., the State University of New York in Buffalo was her next destination. There, Holland completed her PhD in Philosophy. Her experience at this school was largely enriched due to the number of women on the faculty in the philosophy department. At this point in time, 20% or fewer of the philosophy professors in the country were women, so this was somewhat of a rarity. Their influence impacted Holland in particular because she wrote her dissertation

on two women philosophers. She believes that this would not have been possible had her advisor not been a woman.

While in college, Holland learned the importance of social responsibility. This influences her as an educator now, as she works to "teach students critical thinking and the need for justification of beliefs".

Holland's specialty within the department of Philosophy and World Religions is ethical theory. Some of her favorite courses to teach include moral philosophy, history of ancient philosophy, and philosophy of art. She enjoys teaching these classes because she likes "introducing students to how philosophy began, as well as talking about what's unique to philosophy."

Philosophy is a crucial subject of study in order to be an informed citizen, in Holland's view. The subject is important for students because "it helps them to become more skillful thinkers and prepares them to question conventional beliefs. If they're able to think more clearly, they won't be so easily persuaded to believe things they should question." In addition to these benefits, Holland says that philosophy assists students after graduation because it helps them learn how to think more clearly and express themselves both in writing and verbally. This allows them to become more independent thinkers and competent human beings.

Over the years, the most evident change Holland has seen in the students is that there are more of them, as the philosophy program has grown significantly since she has been on the faculty at UNI. Her teaching has also changed slightly over the years. She has slowed down quite a bit because she "recognized the need to explain basics more clearly." Students all come in with different background

# HOLLAND

## PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

levels, and Holland now caters to that, making sure all students understand the foundations before going into more complex topics.

Reading is a vital part of becoming an educated citizen that is often neglected, in Holland's perspective. Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics are two philosophy books that Holland would recommend. The first lays out the branches of philosophy and sets the foundation for later exploration of the discipline. The second "talks about the difference between having a good character and a good life." Holland also enjoys reading novels, and would advise all students to read as much as they can. She believes that the problems that she sees in regards to the writing quality of students could be improved if the students spent more time reading. One novel that Holland recommends is Olive Kitteridge by Elizabeth Strout.

In addition to teaching, Holland is also involved in research and publication. She recently contributed a chapter entitled 'Social Convention and Neurosis as Obstacles to Moral Freedom' to Iris Murdoch: Philosopher, published in January 2012 by Oxford University Press. Holland is particularly pleased by this work because Oxford

University Press is the "top press in the English-speaking world." Other contributors to this book were from Harvard, Brown, Oxford, and the University of Chicago, so Holland is proud to be included in a culmination of such well-regarded professionals in philosophy. Holland has also published a chapter on the value of moral perception in a book on inherent and instrumental value that will come out soon.

In her free time, Holland does yoga for relaxation, and is also an enthusiastic traveller. The places she has visited that she finds most interesting are Paris and Prague. Seeing other cultures has shown Holland the importance of realizing that "other people have different ways of life, and the atmosphere of the place where you live isn't the only possibility." She encourages students to take advantage of study abroad, and travel outside of Iowa as much as possible to get a more global perspective.



# BETTY



Throughout life, we often interact with people of other religions without understanding their customs and way of life. Betty DeBerg is setting out to change this. DeBerg, who has been at the University of Northern Iowa for fifteen years, is “convinced that theory for theory’s sake is not as important... as practical knowledge.” This translates into how she runs her Religions of the World classes, which she says is currently her favorite to teach. In this class, students use the textbook *How to Be a Perfect Stranger*, which informs them how to behave in situations of other religions.

Before coming to UNI, DeBerg received a BA in English, and in Speech Communication & Theatre Arts from Concordia College (Moorhead, MN). She then

attended the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, where she got a Masters of Divinity degree. Remaining at Vanderbilt University, DeBerg also completed a Master of Arts and a PhD in Religion from the graduate school. DeBerg worked at Vanderbilt’s Divinity School for seven years as Associate Director of Development, and then as Director of Admissions and Financial Aid while getting her PhD. Her time at Vanderbilt was enjoyable, as she got to live in a different part of the country, while simultaneously figuring out exactly what she wanted to study. Upon graduation in 1988, she became an Assistant Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University. While there, she became the first woman to receive tenure in Theology at Valparaiso.

When arriving at UNI, DeBerg first served as the department head. This meant that she only taught one course per semester for about ten years. In the last two years, however, she has gone back to teaching full-time. She is happy to have more opportunities to teach, and feels that her teaching has improved greatly from when she began. She says, “As a senior scholar now...I think I’m much better at really boiling things down to what I think are most essential, and making those clear and concise.”

DeBerg finds that most all of the students she teaches are really interested in the academic study of religion, even if it is not necessary for their major. This makes teaching much more enjoyable for her, as she loves sharing what she thinks is important with these students.

# DEBERG

## PROFESSOR OF RELIGION

A specific topic that DeBerg finds satisfaction in teaching is the “guarantees provided U.S. citizens in the religion clauses of the First Amendment.” The fact that we, as United States citizens, have a right to freedom of religion makes DeBerg proud to be an American. She enjoys teaching this to students so that they realize the freedoms they have been given. Her specialty within the department is religion in the U.S., so this topic is something on which she is an expert.

In addition, DeBerg is fascinated by the historical career of Protestant fundamentalism, which she considers to be one of the most successful religious movements in American history. Her research in this area led her to write her first book, as well work on a half-completed book about women’s activities in Protestant congregations that broke away from mainstream denominations to become aligned with fundamentalist groups.

In her free time, DeBerg likes reading, especially mysteries and science books for non-specialists. She also enjoys hiking, kayaking, canoeing, walking her dog, traveling, knitting and sewing. In addition, having dinner parties and laughing with her friends and sisters are things she loves to do.

According to DeBerg, there are many benefits to a major in the study of religion. These include tolerance, critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. DeBerg says, “I think that students will be better employees and citizens if they have broader and deeper cross-cultural knowledge, and attitudes of curiosity about and tolerance for diverse religious beliefs and practices.”

The power of educating society on religion is something about which DeBerg feels strongly. “I believe that by raising standards of religious literacy, and perhaps reducing fear and suspicion of other people’s religions, I am making our society better,” she says.

“Be brave and adventurous”



## LIBERAL ARTS MAJORS ARE VERY HIRABLE

*By Margaret Holland and Martie Reineke*

In his March 25 column, *Courier Business* Editor Jim Offner acknowledges traditional goals of a “well-grounded college education:” to expose students to great thinkers and to develop skills needed to answer perennial questions about human life. Nevertheless, Offner claims that employers’ demand for “highly specialized workers” makes the liberal arts degree impractical in today’s business environment. Students should pursue degrees in business management rather than in areas such as philosophy or German.

Unconvinced by Offner, we believe that higher education’s purpose is to further the development of persons by enhancing understanding of human intellectual and cultural accomplishments and by developing skills in the areas of critical thinking and writing. There is a profound difference, even an ethical difference, between viewing persons as recipients of education and as the subjects of training. As Martha Nussbaum argues in “Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities,” the value of the humanities and arts to a nation is not their profit-making potential; rather, “they make a world that is worth living in, people who are able to see other human beings as people with thoughts and feelings of their own that deserve respect and empathy.”

Liberal arts majors in foreign languages and the study of religion well illustrate Nussbaum’s point: These majors build intercultural competence that is formative of individuals and is the necessary foundation of a robust democracy and strong economy. For example, in the absence of knowledge of the world religions and cultures, which furthers understanding and empathy while supporting cross-cultural communication, individuals risk jeopardizing economic and political partnerships that depend on cultural awareness and sensitivity.

As we affirm a long-established vision of higher education, we claim also that liberal arts majors are at a distinct advantage in today’s workplace. The philosophy major aptly illustrates our case. Scores on tests required for admission to the advanced study of law, management, medicine, and other graduate studies show:

Philosophy majors are No. 1 on the LSAT; business

majors are No. 24 on the LSAT.

Philosophy majors outperform business majors by a margin of 15 percent on the GMAT.

Philosophy majors, on average, do better than all other majors on the GRE, LSAT, GMAT, and MCAT.

Moreover, a philosophy degree maintains its value over time. The president of Babson College (a business school in Massachusetts), has argued that, due to the pace of change, business skills acquired in the classroom expire in about five years. By contrast, he claims skills learned in liberal arts disciplines such as history and philosophy are long lasting and indispensable to business. Empirical data from PayScale’s annual survey of starting and mid-career salaries of college graduates by major underscore his point. At mid-career, philosophy majors have higher annual salaries than business management majors.

According to a recent article on the humanities published by the University of Colorado, liberal arts graduates are preferred by major companies. Marissa Mayer, a vice president at Google who studied philosophy and psychology at Stanford, reports that, of the 6,000 people Google hires each year, around 4,500 of them are liberal arts or humanities majors. Edward Rust, CEO of State Farm Insurance, shares Ms. Mayer’s preference for liberal arts majors. Rather than ask prospective applicants to demonstrate financial acumen in the hiring process, he hones in on their skills in critical thinking and oral and written communication.

Why do employers prefer to hire students with liberal arts majors? In a national research study of 2,300 college students, summarized in the groundbreaking book *Academically Adrift*, students majoring in business, education, social work and communications show the smallest gains over four years in critical thinking and analytic reasoning. The big winners in college are liberal arts majors who, over four years, show “significantly higher gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills.”

Yes, our views on higher education are traditional; however, they also are founded on empirical research. On both counts, we demonstrate that now, as in the past, the liberal arts have an essential role to play in American higher education.

# HARRY BROD

Harry Brod, Philosophy and World Religions, is extending his work on diversity further into the campus and community. As part of a week of programming organized by UNI students he speaks on "How To Be An Effective Ally" at UNI's Center for Multicultural Education on February 15 (3:00), and as part of events in conjunction with the UNI Museum's exhibit "RACE: Are We So Different?" he speaks there on April 10 on "Witness to Whiteness: Shades of White Anti-Racism" (7:00). He delivers the Keynote Address to the American Men's Studies Association in Minneapolis on March 29 for the Association's 20th Anniversary Conference, in which he analyzes the international development of scholarship on men and masculinities, where he has played a leading role.

He will also lead a Pre-Conference Workshop on "The ABC's of Effective Alliance Work: How and Why Allies Build Connections." He is part of UNI's Campus Coalition Builders, in which along with other UNI faculty, staff and administrators he received training resulting in certification as a diversity trainer from the National Coalition Building Institute. The team is now offering an extensive series of "Welcoming Diversity" workshops to the UNI community.

This summer he will again offer his popular Capstone course "Money, Sex and Power: Theories of Race, Class and Gender" and he hopes to participate in a Summer Research Workshop for Scholars at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC to pursue research on gender and the Holocaust, furthering his work in conjunction with UNI's recently established Center for Holocaust and Genocide Education.

He continues to receive word that his DVD Asking For It: The Ethics and Erotics of Sexual Consent is being used as part of campus gender violence prevention programs across the nation, including at all three Iowa Regents universities supported by UNI's recently established Center for Violence Prevention, which establishes UNI as Iowa's Flagship Institution for this initiative, funded by major US Department of Justice grants. Brod's work and insights on diversity were featured in the Winter 2011 issue of University of Northern Iowa Today, UNI's Alumni magazine.

## Lectures Presented By

### Dr. Douglas Hofstadter

During the second week of March, Professor Doug Hofstadter visited the University of Northern Iowa to give two lectures. On March 6, he presented on Godel's Theorem, which focused on mathematical understandings. Then, on March 7, he took a philosophical approach to present on the Turing Centennial.

A large number of people were in attendance for the lectures. Audiences included students, professors, and community members. Freshman Kara Poppe was one student who attended the lecture. "Prior to Dr. Hofstadter's lecture, I had very little prior knowledge on the topics discussed," she says. Yet, she found the presentation very informative.

One of the points discussed during the lecture was machines. Hofstadter divided machines into two categories. Dedicated machines are specialized and only do one task,



while universal machines are

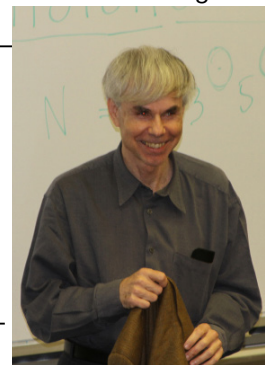
able to solve problems and interpret instructions. In the past, machines were more dedicated and simplistic, while today they are becoming incredibly universal as they have a plethora of purposes.

He also addressed the complexities of computers and computer programming, pointing out that not all is black and white, but instead composed of crucial shades of gray.

Another main point made was the complexity of human understanding. He used the example of the word 'hub' and the immediate connotations that come to mind when thinking of this term. He stated that there are no other organisms on earth that understand this concept.

An additional topic covered was the degree to which we are all interconnected, and give something of ourselves to every person we meet. Conversely, we have a bit of all the people we have met inside of us. Our perception of reality and our self-image are essentially dictated by these interactions. "Dr. Hofstadter has me thinking about how I am directly or

indirectly connected to others throughout my family, church, community, previous schools, and college," says Poppe.



Dr. Hofstadter is currently a professor at Indiana University. He has also published numerous nonfiction books, including a Pulitzer Prize winner, Godel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid. His interests include conceptual fluidity and creative analogy-making in carefully designed micro-worlds, as well as the functioning of the human mind, language, physics, and mathematics.

Spectators found the lecture interesting and were glad for the opportunity to hear the perspectives of a world-class scholar.

# KELSEY IHDE



**Year:**  
Senior, graduating May 2012

**Major:**  
Philosophy  
Minors in Ethics and the Study of Religion

**Favorite Class:**  
Existentialism; Society, Politics, and the Person; Nietzsche and Nihilism

“Philosophy is the highest art form because it is a way to teach new ways of thinking and being creative.”

Cedar Falls native Kelsey Ihde is a senior this year at UNI, majoring in Philosophy and minoring in ethics and the study of religion. The realization that she wanted to be a Philosophy major came to her as a senior in high school. Her mother was in the doctoral program at UNI at the time, and brought home books from her “Philosophy of Education” course, which Kelsey then looked through. Kelsey was intrigued by this topic, on which she had little experience. She later chose the combination of minors because all of these areas “have a direct and paramount effect on human life.”

In Kelsey’s perspective, the best thing about the Philosophy Program is the faculty. Largely because of this faculty, Kelsey has become an advocate for the application of philosophy to problems in society. “Philosophy is a wonderful possible solution for some failures to communicate and understand each other,” she says.

The lessons that Kelsey has learned from her philosophy classes are applicable to many situations. She says, “It has given me discretion to respect that all humans are different in the way we see ourselves and the world.”

Kelsey believes it is inevitable that her philosophy major will assist her after graduation. Some of the skills learned that will transfer to qualities desired in the workplace include critical thinking and writing skills, reasoning and logic, communication, and respect for others.

Outside of her time focusing on classes, Kelsey is captain of the cheer squad and secretary of the UNI Philosophy Club. She enjoys these opportunities to form and expand relationships.

Taking courses in philosophy is something Kelsey would strongly recommend to all students on campus. She says this is “the best academic choice they could make because philosophy not only supplements personal life but also academic life.” She also recommends that students take chances and go outside of their comfort zone to try new things. “Being dogmatic or close-minded about anything is not a virtue at all,” she says.

# KELSEY DELAP

Kelsey Delap is a senior pursuing a double major in the study of religion and biomedical biology, as well as a minor in chemistry. When not busy with classes, she enjoys volunteering, especially at Aspire, which is a horseback riding program for children with disabilities. She also enjoys going to events put on by student organizations, including the biology and religion groups.

Throughout her time at UNI, Kelsey's degree plans have changed quite a bit. When she started her college career, she was planning to become an optometrist and had no idea that she would end up becoming a study of religion major. However, her experiences taking Religions of the World changed her mind. She fell in love with the subject and decided to add a major in the study of religion.

The reading materials chosen by professors are Kelsey's favorite things about the study of religion. She says that reading for these classes is a nice break from science textbooks, and "doesn't even seem like homework." One of her favorite books that she is reading right now is Abraham's Curse, which is about violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The study of religion has been something that Kelsey has thoroughly enjoyed, and she would recommend that other students take classes in this area if they can. These classes "tend to draw people from all over campus, and it is good to have a different point of view," says Kelsey.

During her time as a study of religion major, Kelsey has learned many valuable lessons. One of these is "how little so many people know about their own religion." She enjoys the opportunity to look further into these topics from a scholastic point of view. In addition, she says that her major has taught her to be open-minded and to be a critical thinker, with the ability to question ideas. She thinks these skills will help set her apart in her future endeavors.

After graduation, Kelsey would like to go to graduate school. At this time, her plans are not definite, but she hopes to stay in Iowa and study public health. Her ideal career would be to become a mental health advocate in the community "I have lots of dreams, but it will depend on what is most practical," she says.



**Year:**  
Senior, graduating December 2012

**Major:**  
Study of Religion,  
Biology: Biomedical Emphasis  
Minor in Chemistry

**Favorite Classes:**  
Christianity; Old Testament and Other  
Hebrew Scriptures; New Testament and  
Early Christian Writings

"It's important to spend your life doing something that you love"



# Martie Reineke

## Receives American Academy of Religion Excellence in Teaching Award

Martie Reineke, University of Northern Iowa Study of Religions professor, is the 2012 recipient of the American Academy of Religion Excellence in Teaching Award. This prestigious honor is given to only one member of the AAR, out of the 11,000 members of the organization throughout the country. The criteria for this award are described by the AAR as "outstanding performance as a classroom teacher, development of effective teaching methods, courses and/or teaching materials that generate student learning, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and/or community based research, and commitment to professional identity as a teacher of religion and raising student interest in the field."

Fred Glennon, chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Lemoyne College, nominated Reineke for the award. They met previously when he had attended a conference at which she was speaking.

In order to complete the application for the award, Reineke was asked to submit a file with her teaching philosophy and samples of work. This had a limit of 1,000 words, which was one of the most challenging parts of the application for Reineke. "It's hard to fit 28 years of teaching into 1,000 words. Every word had to count," she says.

When she received the news that she had received the award, Reineke was away on a trip. Her first emotion upon hearing was astonishment. She says, "It's a totally unexpected gift, and you have to pinch yourself to see if it's really true!"

Reineke is one of an esteemed few to have been selected for this award. In the history of the award, only one other winner has been from a public university. Some of the past winners are very well known and highly respected within their field,

and Reineke is honored to be placed in their company. The award will be presented at a reception in November, at the AAR annual meeting in Chicago. Many benefits are included in the award, including

a monetary award and a certificate. In addition, she will be recognized in the program for the annual meeting and in Religious Studies News. She will also be the focus of a Special Topics Forum, and have teaching materials posted on the AAR website.

Reineke is excited to share what she does with others. She is particularly enthused about giving young faculty teaching tips, encouraging them, and boosting their confidence. She thoroughly enjoys helping others in the study of religion expand themselves and improve. "When we stretch ourselves is when we learn," she says.

The recognition from this award is something Reineke hopes will bring positive attention to the University of Northern Iowa and the Department of Philosophy and World Religions. "For a national organization to do this should remind the University that they have a rich resource here," Reineke says. "It is also particularly nice to get attention for something academically that will enhance our standing nationally."

As Reineke prepares for the next opportunities the award provides, she is thankful, ecstatic, and still somewhat in shock. "I'm as amazed as I could be. It's like winning an academy award in our field," says Reineke.



# FRED HALLBERG

## EMERITUS PROFESSOR



Recently, I have moved from my home of 43 years in Janesville, Iowa, to a retirement condominium in Waverly, Iowa.

This condo development is called "Eisenach Village" after the German "sister city" of Waverly, where Luther translated the Bible in Wartburg Castle. There is a strongly German Lutheran flavor to this place, due to the association with Wartburg College. There are lots of opportunities for attending artistic performances there, for participating in classes and discussion groups, and for many other kinds of civic activities. Since I identify myself as a communitarian pragmatist, I find this sort of social involvement rewarding. We were drawn into such Waverly community activities even before we moved. I have presented five (quasi) scholarly papers to a Wartburg faculty discussion group, and have conducted two non-credit, month-long classes for seniors. One was on the alleged decline of the West, and the other was on the evolution of certain ethical concepts from Biblical times to the present.

I said I spent 43 years in Janesville before moving here. As a convinced communitarian I tried to become an integral part of the local Janesville community. However, my efforts largely failed. I supported a project for affordable housing on the southwest side of town, which was resisted by those who did not want to bring in people who were "not our kind." That stance ended my career on the Janesville City Council. I then had a run-in with a couple of Methodist ministers. (It was probably my fault. I did not realize how threatening my status as an academic could be to them.) But over time persons who had apparently been interested in the modern historical/critical view of the Bible came to be much less interested. That deprived me of much of the religious material I had wanted to share with my fellow parishioners. I am still a member of the Janesville United Methodist Church, but barely. Three or four decades of shared life is not nothing. But it has not proved to be as much as I hoped it might be.

I am still a member of the Janesville Lions Club and Legion. The Lions Club performs many services for the community, from building park shelter houses to repairing broken tombstones. The Legion mainly performs military funerals for veterans. My main contribution there has been to convince the Legionnaires of the importance of cleaning their semi-automatic rifles immediately after each funeral. That is the only way to ensure the gas-ports remain clear and the weapons will reciprocate freely and allow each of the successive deceased to get their full 21-shot salute. That is surprisingly similar to what I had to teach my basic trainees when I was an ROTC Infantry Lieutenant at Ft. Leonard Wood 52 years ago.

While we resided in Janesville between my retirement in 1998 and the general economic collapse in 2008, Lorraine and I traveled to Europe every summer. She conducted tours for a large area bank, and I could tag along. We were in effect getting two tickets for the price of one. I was able to see first hand most of the cultural land marks I had taught about in my Humanities courses. Having finally seen these places in the flesh, rather than just in books, my appreciation of them was significantly enhanced. Chartres Cathedral, for example, was much more impressive in the flesh than it was in all the films or slides I showed about it in my Humanities classes. I am convinced a properly conducted semester abroad would do more to enhance our students' appreciation of the Humanities than a full year of class work here at UNI. Get them on a jet plane to somewhere overseas! I believe their education depends on it.

I expect Eisenach Village will be my final abode. It is a short ride down hill and across the railway tracks to the nursing care or Alzheimer's units at the Bartels Retirement Community. From there it is a brief drive East along Bremer Avenue across the Cedar River to the Kaiser-Corson Funeral Home. I have a nice shady lot designated and paid for at that same Janesville Cemetery I used to help keep up while I was more active in the Janesville Lions Club. Now if the world economy and the American stock market can recover from the shocks it received in 2008, I appear to be fixed for life.

## MICHELLE NIELSEN OTT

## STUDY OF RELIGION '04

After I graduated from UNI with my major in the study of Religion and Minors in Philosophy and Ethics, I attended Vanderbilt Divinity School and graduated from their Master in Theological Studies program in 2007. IN 2009, I earned another masters degree, this time in Library and Information Science, from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. Currently, I am an "Outreach and Reference Librarian" at Illinois Central College in Peoria, Illinois. On the personal front, after graduating from UNI, I married Adam Ott, also a UNI alum, and in April, 2008, our daughter, Delaina Jean, was born.



## SADIE LUNDRY

## STUDY OF RELIGION '10

I have read that the department of world religions is being threatened in these budget cuts. I cannot stress enough how the education that this department and you, Professor Hill, have given me, are VERY important. I now work for yellow book as Client Service Consultant. The reason I have this great job is because my résumé did NOT say marketing/management or any other business related major. I was an original that brought something new to the table. My education gave me a new perspective on people's lives all across the world and even locally. My ability to relate to people (which was taught to me) has created an ease for me and my clients I work with. Those people who would like to cut this program don't understand that religion, in its basic form, creates who we are and in turn creates the relationships we create and, on a larger level, creates societies' reason for existence. My success in work and home has come from a greater knowledge of religion. This is not a major for the weak hearted. The time and dedication I put into my school work taught me life lessons that I still use every day: self motivation, patience, determination, and pure self-sufficiency. If there is anything that I can do to help the cause please let me know and just know that if you ever doubt you made a difference in someone's life, you made a huge difference in mine. I am 23 I have a full time job, I just bought a house and I am very happy, and you and the religion department are the reason for this!

## WEI-ERH CHEN

## STUDY OF RELIGION '07

During my four wonderful years at UNI, I was a participant in the honors program, an RA at ROTH, and a work-study student for both the GBPAC and the Office of Compliance and Equity Management. I write you today, however, as a proud graduate of the Philosophy and World Religions Department. I have followed the recent budget controversy and—as an alumna of the department —I wanted to send a



reminder that even though these are moments of professional and academic uncertainty, the department's professors and instructors have unequivocally succeeded as educators. My classes with the department were foundational in developing my critical reasoning, analytical thinking, and my writing abilities. These skills that you have instilled in me have served me well as I pursued additional education at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and The University of Iowa College of Law. Furthermore, the content of my classes exposed me to subject areas, perspectives, and inquiries that have fundamentally shaped who I have become as a person. These are deep, abiding, and lasting effects that will transcend both career and institution. P.S. After receiving my initial letter and seeking permission to publish it in this newsletter, Professor Sonesson hinted, as he's able to do, that I might mention my recent

marriage to Kassidy Lyons, a 2009 graduate of UNI's biology department. As he put it, "it would be super to have a picture of you and your special friend." How could I say "no" to that?

**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.

## GRANT ROZEBOOM

### PHILOSOPHY '08

I am finishing my third year in the Philosophy PhD program at Stanford University. I am beginning work on a dissertation in ethics, one which aims to show that a rich conception of respect-for-persons, drawn from both sentimentalist and Kantian lines of thought, can explain a great deal about what it is to act worthily and rightly. Highlights of my graduate career so far include teaching a tutorial about forgiveness to a small group of undergraduates and spending a semester as a visiting graduate student at Harvard University. I am more grateful each year for the broad education in philosophy that I received at UNI, which in large part is due to the individualized attention that UNI's philosophy and religion professors pay to their students. I was thus very disappointed to learn about the drastic and unwarranted cuts being made to the Department of Philosophy and Religion. The teaching of philosophy is a basic element of any liberal arts education, and it is irreplaceable for the task of teaching students how to think and write clearly, thoughtfully, and with due regard for the reasonable views of others. It is a real loss, not just for UNI, but for the State of Iowa, to have the role played by UNI's Department of Philosophy and Religion so greatly diminished. On a happier note, I live with my spouse, Leah (also a graduate of UNI) in Palo Alto, CA, near the Stanford campus. Leah works as an academic adviser for Stanford's MBA program. While we miss the cost of housing in Iowa and all of our family and friends (UNI folks included!), we do not miss the (brutally cold) Iowan winter or (brutally humid) Iowan summer. We have really enjoyed exploring the California coast, and look forward to at least a couple of more years in the Bay Area.



## KYLE DIGMANN

### STUDY OF RELIGION '08

I was able to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land over Christmas break. My education at UNI proved to be very helpful for understanding the religious dynamics, especially in Jerusalem. I have included pictures of me at Qumran, the western wall, and the Dome of the Rock. I particularly remember taking a Dead Sea Scrolls class. Seminary in Rome goes very well and I anxiously await the opportunity to return to the states and serve in a parish. Know that I greatly appreciate the education I received from the UNI Philosophy and Religion department and know of my prayers for you and the faculty.



## ELIZABETH WIEDENHEFT

### STUDY OF RELIGION '11

I am currently in graduate school at the University of Connecticut, studying Medieval History. Graduate school is busy but wonderful. I love being in this environment and I love what I'm learning. My current research focuses on a medieval process called the *delatio*, where monks would take the relics of their patron saint out on tours throughout the countryside (for various political and economic reasons). In the accounts, they describe the responses of the masses to the relics, including the creation of sacred spaces, which is what I'm focusing on. I'm actually hoping that it might become my dissertation topic, as there are many *delationes* that have yet to be examined, and the process as a whole has never been fully examined on its own terms. I'm very excited about it all. It also allows me to do more work in Latin and French (most of the secondary sources are in French) so that's been very helpful as well.



# IMPACT OF SCHOLARSHIPS



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

I am a very involved student, to put it plainly. I currently have three declared majors, am president of a student organization, hold a student government position, and work on-campus as a Resident Assistant. There are few hours left in my day, and I would much rather spend them rock climbing or reading a good book than working. The Department of Philosophy and World Religions Scholarship has allowed me the opportunity to do just that; I was able to spend a good deal of time participating in activities I enjoy this year rather than worrying about my grocery money. And thanks to my extra time at the rock wall this year, I placed second in the intermediate women's division at UNI's annual climbing competition, Rock Revolution. I am sincerely grateful to have had that little bit of extra time to spend enjoying myself.

-Hannah Wilson, philosophy major

I believe it goes without saying that education is not cheap these days. Funding tuition alone is a struggle, forcing individuals to deal with large loans and even bigger amounts of stress. Even for someone like myself who is blessed by the financial assistance of my parents, being able to attend college requires a great financial commitment. Receiving a generous scholarship award from the Department of Philosophy and World Religions was therefore of huge importance to me. More important than its mere financial value was the fact that it provided me the ability to more sharply focus on my studies. With such a generous financial award, working outside of classes was less of a necessity, allowing me to further immerse myself in my academic endeavors. It may sound trite, but receiving a scholarship from the Department of Philosophy and World Religions provided me improved opportunities for learning and bettered my academic career. Simply put, receiving this money made my education much more impactful. At a time when such values are under attack, I can't think of anything more valuable.

- Nick Krob, philosophy major

# 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  
1223 W. 22nd Street  
Cedar Falls, IA 50614-0239

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Is this a cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please check if new address, email, or phone.

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

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Philosophy & World Religions Scholarship Fund (21-222318)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Robert M. Schwyhart Memorial Endowed Scholarship (30-211825)

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

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (100418)

ONLINE-----Go to the online pledge form at [www.uni-foundation.org](http://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) \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Matching Gifts: My (or my spouse's) company, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) will match my gift. Please contact your HR office for details and the matching gift form to be submitted with your payment.

Signature (required) \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card information will **NOT** be kept on file.

Charge my: VISA MasterCard Discover American Express (circle one)

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

IMPACT

# NICHOLAS BAIMA

Nicholas Baima is a 2007 graduate of the Department of Philosophy and World Religions. While at UNI, he received majors in philosophy and humanities, and also minored in history. These subjects complement each other well, in his opinion. Says Baima, "The courses I took in humanities gave me a broader background, allowing me to perceive the debates in philosophy in a more meaningful way."

When Baima first considered being a philosophy major, he was unsure what it would entail. However, after reading Plato's *Apology* in Humanities I, he fell in love with the major and topics it covered. "I knew I wanted to learn more about philosophy and eventually it just made sense to declare it as my major," he says.

When not studying for classes, Baima was very involved in wrestling, which he thoroughly enjoyed. He even was able to make connections to what he was learning in class. Says Baima, "It's the kind of thing that you can spend your lifetime studying because there are many levels to understanding the sport. In some ways...wrestling and philosophy are very similar. A great wrestler strings together her techniques in a very systematic and logical way."

One of the aspects of UNI that Baima liked best was the professors. One of his favorite memories of his time here was when Professor Soneson and Professor Holland came to watch a wrestling match. "It seemed like they loved the experience," he says.

After graduating from UNI, Baima went to the University of Missouri-St. Louis for two years to receive his MA in philosophy. Currently, he is attending Washington University-St. Louis and is in the process of getting his PhD. As a part of this process, he is working on his dissertation. According to Baima, "My dissertation lies at the intersection of three areas: ancient philosophy, epistemology, and ethics. I'm interested in how (and in what ways) false beliefs can be prudentially beneficial."

Baima learned a lot at UNI that has helped him to grow into the life he now lives. "Before coming to UNI I had little interest in reading and studying in general," he admits. "The courses at UNI sparked an interest I never knew I had."



## **Favorite Books Read While at UNI:**

- **Plato's Republic**
- **Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics**
- **Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript**

## **Favorite Classes Taken at UNI:**

- **Humanities I**
- **Humanities II**
- **Philosophy of Religion**

"Philosophy provides analytic skills that are useful in studying any other field"

# MICHELLE WESTHOLM



## **Favorite Books Read While at UNI:**

- **Dirt, Greed and Sex by William Countryman,**
- **The Nature and Destiny of Man by Reinhold Niebuhr**
- **Mama Lola by Karen McCarthy Brown**

## **Favorite Memories from UNI:**

- **Doing anthropology on the web**
- **Doing an independent study in Anthropology and Religion.**
- **Stopping into professors' offices to chat about ideas and life in general.**

Michelle Westholm, a Study of Religion alumna who graduated in 1998, is currently teaching high school in Mexico City. There, she teaches honors-level courses in Art History and Epistemology. Her education at UNI prepared her for this career, as many of the theories and sources that she teaches are things she learned during her undergraduate studies.

When not teaching, she is a professional photographer and says that her interest in this area is largely due to her study of art history in courses taken at UNI.

The experiences she was able to have while pursuing the study of religion at UNI were certainly positive for Michelle. Some of the major lessons that she learned were the value of personal attention from professors, and the great rewards of reading a primary text instead of a summary. She also realized that everything in life connects. "There are few divisions between economics, psychology, humanities, religion, and politics," she says.

In addition to this, she loved the friendly atmosphere at UNI and the chance to take a variety of courses. She says, "I loved that I could take all the classes that interested me and not worry about collecting only 'required' credits." This allowed her to get a well-rounded education, which assisted her in her future endeavors.

After graduating, Michelle completed two masters' degrees. The first was in Theology at Vanderbilt Divinity School, and the second was in Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education. These schools were larger than UNI, and people in the Ivy League were more goal-oriented. However, the workload was not difficult, as UNI prepared her well for such challenges. Michelle's favorite course while in graduate school was an elective entitled "The Election of 2000" which "was a fascinating, in-depth look at a momentous election, as it happened!"

Michelle advises that current students choose a major that they enjoy and feel passionately about. She quotes Confucius who said, "Choose a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life."





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.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY &  
WORLD RELIGIONS NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Spring 2012

Published by the UNI Department of  
Philosophy & World Religions for its  
alumni and friends

Hayley Graham, executive editor  
Jerry Soneson, director

The Department of Philosophy &  
World Religions resides within the  
College of Humanities and Fine Arts,  
Joel Haack, Dean

The University of Northern Iowa is  
an equal opportunity educator and  
employer with a comprehensive  
plan for affirmative action.