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Philosophy News

Number 6 | Summer 2009

The Philosophy Department 2009 Homecoming Event

Friday, October 2, 2009, 3:30-5 p.m.
Philosophy Department, 12th floor, Library Tower

Join other philosophy alumni for a reception celebrating philosophical creativity and imagination. Leaf through faculty publications; network with other alumni, current undergraduate and graduate students, and the faculty.

Hosted by the Philosophy Department and with an introduction by the department's incoming chair, Professor Max Pensky. The reunion is a space for exploring what kind of department the Philosophy Department has become, and how it is changing and growing while building on its past.

Philosophy Reunion at Homecoming 2008



The Philosophy Department held its first alumni reunion as part of Homecoming 2008. Current undergraduate students enjoyed meeting and talking with alumni like Eric Lobenfeld '71 (at center in photo). See Eric's alumni profile at www2.binghamton.edu/features/alumni/lobenfeld.html.

Please join the BU philosophy alumni group.

We are organizing a Facebook page for our graduates:
www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=75596407145&ref=mf.

From the Chair



Professor Bat-Ami Bar On

The 2008-09 academic year is my last as department chair as I will be stepping down the end of August and Professor Max Pensky will begin a three-year term as department chair in September. It has been a privilege to serve the Philosophy Department these past six years.

We have an additional change of officers, and this one has already taken place. Christopher Knapp completed his two-year term as director of the honors program (DHP) at the end of fall 2008. Anna Gotlib began her two-year term as DHP starting spring 2009.

The budgetary constraints felt throughout academe have been filtering down to the department level in a variety of ways this year and, as a result, it has become more and more challenging to mount the right kind of curriculum, invite outside speakers, and support research by students and faculty alike. I think that we have been successful again in meeting the challenge thanks to everyone in the department's creativity and resourcefulness.

The quality of the Philosophy Department faculty has been recognized with the promotion of Professor Tony Preus to the rank of Distinguished Teaching Professor effective May 2009; and several faculty will be on leave in the upcoming academic year (2009-10). This fall Professor Randy Friedman will be on a junior faculty dean's research leave. Professor Anna Gotlib will be on a junior faculty dean's research leave in spring 2010. I will be on sabbatical in fall 2009 and on dean's chair's research leave in spring 2010.

For fall 2009 we are planning our second Homecoming event and hope that many of our alumni will come and visit with us. We will have a reception at the Philosophy Department and an opportunity to network with all present.

For more information about the department, please look at our website at www2.binghamton.edu/philosophy. The website has been revamped to fit the University's unified new look.

The newsletter has a dedicated space for news from philosophy alumni. We are all looking forward to hearing from you.

Bat-Ami Bar On
Department Chair

Congratulations to...

Professor Anthony Preus for his promotion to **Distinguished Teaching Professor**, which was approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees in their May 2009 meeting. Professor Preus, who is also Master of College-in-the-Woods, received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 1968. He has been at Binghamton since 1964. His areas of research and teaching include ancient Greek philosophy and medical ethics. Professor Preus, who was a Rhodes Scholar and has been described by professional colleagues as an exemplary scholar, says of himself that he never had any doubt that he would be a teacher. "Education has been the preferred profession of my family for generations; the only question was *what* I would teach." He has chosen to teach philosophy and the Philosophy Department at Binghamton University is proud to have him on its faculty.



Professor Anthony Preus

Professor Bat-Ami Bar On for receiving the **Award for Faculty Excellence in Graduate Student Mentoring**. This award recognizes extraordinary performance and achievement in mentoring graduate students. Criteria include clear evidence beyond formal classroom teaching of helping graduate students become established as independent scholars and professionals.

Professor Randy Friedman for being awarded a dean's research leave for fall 2009; **Professor Anna Gotlib** for being awarded a dean's research leave for spring 2010.

Philosophy Major Ms. Julietta Rose for being awarded the Dillon Award and Highest Honors. Ms. Rose will be beginning a PhD program in philosophy at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She is a participant in the Pell Honors Program.

Philosophy Major Mr. Randy Benjenk for being awarded High Honors. He will be attending Harvard Law School and is a participant in the Pell Honors Program.

Philosophy Major Mr. Chris Brown for being awarded Honors.

Newsbriefs

Professor Max Pensky's article "Amnesty on trial: impunity, accountability, and the norms of international law," which was published in 2008 in *Ethics and Global Politics*, a free-access online journal, was downloaded more than 2,500 times. You can find a PDF version at journals.sfu.ca/coaction/index.php/egp/issue/view/2.

SPEL Graduate Students Achievements



Shay Welch

Shay Welch, PhD student, won one of two **Gaius Charles Bolin Dissertation and Post-MFA Fellowships** at Williams College for which there were 200 applications. The Gaius Charles Bolin Fellowships (named after Gaius Charles Bolin, the first black graduate of Williams, and funded in 1985, on the centennial of his admission to the College) are designed to promote diversity on college faculties by encouraging students from underrepresented groups to complete a terminal graduate degree and to pursue careers in college teaching. The Bolin Fellowships are two-year residencies at Williams. Welch will begin her fellowship in fall 2009. She will be devoting the bulk of the first year (2009-10) to the completion of dissertation work while also teaching one course as a faculty member in the Philosophy Department. In her second year of residency (2010-11), and ideally with her PhD in hand, she will spend her time on academic career development while again teaching just one course.



Selin Gürsözlü

Selin Gürsözlü, PhD student, won recognition for the excellence of her teaching. She received her **Graduate Student Excellence in Teaching Award** at a ceremony in March 2009. Gürsözlü focuses on developing teaching strategies that encourage students to think—along with her and on their own as well. She describes herself cognizant of some (maybe most) students' experiences of social and psychological pressure in a classroom and is committed to helping students develop the courage to share their thoughts.



Monica Mueller

Monica Mueller (dissertation title: *An Inquiry into the Relation between Thought and Action: Interpreting Phronesis*) was chosen to receive the **Distinguished Dissertation Award**. Given at graduation, this award recognizes superior work by a doctoral student. A graduate program can recommend only one dissertation for this award, which is evaluated against other dissertation in its category (in Dr. Mueller's case, the Humanities and Fine Arts category). A minimal qualification is that at least part of the dissertation is of publishable quality (which was no problem in Dr. Mueller's case since part of her dissertation is forthcoming as a journal article).

Alejandro Arango Vargas and **Lewis Trelawny-Cassity** were awarded the **Best Graduate Student Paper Prize** from the Eastern International Region of the American Academy of Religion.

Josh Wretzel received an **American Philosophical Association (APA) Graduate Travel Stipend**, which is issued to assist

graduate students whose papers have been accepted for APA divisional meetings.

Other Achievements

Jason Mallory and **Monica Mueller** defended their dissertations this academic year. In addition, Dr. Mallory started as tenure-track faculty at Raritan Valley Community College in fall 2008. Dr. Mueller will start as tenure-track faculty at Capital University in fall 2009.

Brandon Davis-Shannon, Jess Kyle, Jessie Payson, Regan Rule and **Richard Saucedo** were awarded their MAs on their way to PhDs.

Francine Foote and **Andrea Passantino** (from the BA/SPEL MA combined 5-year program) completed their MAs and will be starting law school in fall 2009.

Fuat Gürsözlü accepted a visiting assistant professor position in the Department of Philosophy at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Selin Gürsözlü will be a graduate assistant for the Philosophy in an Inclusive Key Summer Institute (PIKSI) program, Rock Ethics Institute, Pennsylvania State University. Gürsözlü has also accepted an appointment as visiting instructor in the Department of Philosophy at Grand Valley State University in Michigan.

Publications

Fuat Gürsözlü — Forthcoming. “Agonism and Deliberation: Recognizing the Difference” (*The Journal of Political Philosophy*).

Jack Marsh — 2008. “Toward a Return to Plurality in Arendtian Judgment,” *Kritike* 2 (2). 2008. Review of “Discovering Levinas” by Michael Morgan (in *Le Mal: Cahiers d’Etudes Lévinassiennes*, no. 7., ed. Carine Brenner: 369-373). 2009. “Of Violence: The Force and Significance of Violence in the Early Derrida” (*Philosophy and Social Criticism* 35 (3): 269-286).

Monica Mueller — Forthcoming. “Calculative Deliberation is Insufficient for Practical Wisdom” (*The Journal of Value Inquiry*).

Jessie Payson — 2009. “Moral Dilemmas and Collective Responsibilities” (*Essays in Philosophy*).

Newsbriefs

You can find **Professor Eric Dietrich**’s discussion of 21st-century science in the 2009 edition of *Binghamton Research* at research.binghamton.edu/BinghamtonResearch/2009/A_new_dream.php.

Featured Faculty

Anna Gotlib



Anna Gotlib

Anna Gotlib joined the department in 2007 after completing her PhD at Michigan State University. She is now in her second year at Binghamton and can, like a pro, locate both her office *and* the classrooms in which she is teaching. Previous to her budding academic career, she endured the travails of Cornell Law School and a short stint as a lawyer, practicing international and labor law in New York, Denver and Almaty, Kazakhstan. She works primarily in the fields of ethics (especially moral psychology and narrative ethics) and medical ethics, but also ventures into the murky waters of the philosophy of law, social and political philosophy, and feminist theory. She currently has several articles in progress; several others are awaiting print, on topics that range from the definition of “bad motherhood,” to the social manipulation of maternal bodies, to the ethical dilemmas involved in the development of techniques of medical memory manipulation. She is also very happy to have been appointed as the director of the Pell Honors Program and eagerly awaits the opportunity to work with some very bright and motivated philosophy and PPL students. When not in the grip of all things philosophical, Professor Gotlib likes to spend time with her husband and their bunny, Clover, and, among other things, building and launching model rockets. Professor Gotlib is happy to report that, so far, no injuries have resulted to either the launchers or anyone unfortunate enough to be standing in the vicinity.

Randy Friedman



Randy Friedman

Randy Friedman joined the departments of Philosophy and Judaic Studies in 2005. His research includes continental philosophy, American pragmatism and modern Jewish thought. His work explores the construction of subjectivity and intersubjectivity and the conceptualization of the metaphysical in several figures, including Edmund Husserl, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Mordecai Kaplan and Emmanuel Levinas. He is particularly interested in the tensions between natural and naturalizing philosophy and metaphysics. In other words, how modern Jewish philosophy reconstructs the central theological categories of creation, revelation and redemption. He was awarded a Dean’s Research Semester Award for Junior Faculty for fall 2009. He is planning on completing three articles that ground a book on the tensions between immanence and transcendence in modern Jewish philosophy. The articles examine the debates between Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas and Mordecai Kaplan on the nature and function of the divine, the status of revelation and the

tasks of redemption, and trace the philosophical inheritances of these figures in order to better shape an interpretive framework for their religious thought, which revolves around a shift from recognition of a transcendental God to an ethics in which the Other's needs shape our own subjectivity.

Work at home has involved exploring the construction of play tents, cribs, tricycles and other objects involving the use of Allen wrenches. In December, Randy and Brenda welcomed Ellie Tamar's little sister, Mika Hadas, to life in Binghamton. She is currently out-sleeping Ellie, but is not yet allowed to eat chocolate donuts like her big sister.

Faculty Publications

Professor Jeffner Allen

- 2009. "Philosophy and Porous Imagination: Between Coral Reefs." *South African Journal of Philosophy Special Issue on African Philosophy*.
- 2008. "Diving Planetarity." *This Watery World: Humans and the Sea*, 2nd ed. Eds. Vartan Messier and Nandita Batra. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.
- 2008. "Dans les rouages étincelants du mythe toujours en mouvement: Dé-composer Beauvoir." ["Among Glowing Wheels of Myth Rarely Settling: De-Composing 'Beauvoir.'"] *Simone de Beauvoir cent ans après sa naissance: Contributions interdisciplinaires de cinq continents*. Ed. Thomas Stauder. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Professor Eric Dietrich

- 2008. "The Bishop and Priest: Toward a point-of-view based epistemology of true contradictions." *Logos Architekton* 2/2.
- 2008. "Some Strangeness in the Proportion, or How to Stop Worrying and Learn to Love the Mechanistic Forces of Darkness. Commentary on E. Selinger and T. Engström's "A Moratorium on Cyborgs: Computation, Cognition, and Commerce." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 7.
- * 2008. "Pluralism, Radical Pluralism, and the Politics of the Big Bang." *J. of Exper. and Theor. Artificial Intelligence*.
- 2008. "Toward Extending the Relational Priming Model: Six Questions. Commentary on Robert Leech, Denis Mareschal,

Richard Cooper's "Analogy as Relational Priming: A developmental and computational perspective on the origins of a complex cognitive skill." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 31/4.

Professor Charles Goodman

- 2009. *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*. Oxford University. To many Westerners, the most appealing teachings of the Buddhist tradition pertain to ethics. Many readers have drawn on Buddhism's emphasis on compassion, nonviolence and tolerance, its concern for animals, and its models of virtue and self-cultivation. There has been, however, controversy and confusion about which Western ethical theories resemble Buddhist views and in what respects. In this book, Charles Goodman illuminates the relations between Buddhist concepts and Western ethical theories. Every version of Buddhist ethics, says Goodman, takes the welfare of sentient beings to be the only source of moral obligations. Buddhist ethics can thus be said to be based on compassion in the sense of a motivation to pursue the welfare of others. On this interpretation, the fundamental basis of the various forms of Buddhist ethics is the same as that of the welfarist members of the family of ethical theories that analytic philosophers call consequentialism. Goodman uses this hypothesis to illuminate a variety of questions. He examines the three types of compassion practiced in Buddhism and argues for their implications for important issues in applied ethics, especially the justification of punishment and the question of equality.



Professor Robert Guay

- 2009. Review of Robert Wicks, Schopenhauer in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*.

Professor Christopher Knapp

- 2009. "Species Inegalitarianism as a Matter of Principle." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 26/2.

Professor Max Pensky

- 2009. "Transition, Amnesty, and Social Trust: Lessons from South Africa," in Joseph Lewandowski, editor, *Trust and Transitions: Social Capital in a Changing World*, Cambridge Scholars Press.

- 2009. “Pragmatism and Solidarity with the Past: Mead, Benjamin, and the Ends of Memory,” in Chad Kautzer and Eduardo Mendieta, editors, *Pragmatism, Nation and Race: Community in the Age of Empire*, University of Indiana Press.

Professor Steve Scalet

- 2009. Ninth edition of a leading introductory moral and political philosophy textbook in the country. *Morality and Moral Controversies*. Co-edited with the late John Arthur, Prentice Hall.
- 2008. Student essays from the PPL and philosophy Pell Honors Program. *Justice and Law and Social Philosophy: Our Changing Points of View*. Global Academic Publishing.

Professor Lisa Tessman

- 2009. “Expecting Bad Luck.” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. 24/1.
- 2008. “Reply to Critics.” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. 23/3. This article is part of the “Tessman Symposium” on *Burdened Virtues*, including the work of three critics (Cheshire Calhoun, Marilyn Friedman and Christine Koggel) and Tessman’s response.

The Alumni Career Network

The **Alumni Career Network** is a searchable database of Binghamton alumni who have volunteered to be contacted by current students and alumni regarding career information. There are currently 47 philosophy majors and 48 PPL (or Law and Society, which is what PPL used to be called) majors who are part of this network. If you are a current philosophy or PPL major, consider using the network to identify alumni who have volunteered to be there to give you information. They can be identified by profession, employer, location, major or graduate institution. If you are a philosophy or PPL graduate, consider becoming part of the Alumni Career Network. To use the network go to www.bconnectalumni.binghamton.edu.

If you want to contact the alumni office directly, send e-mail to alumni@binghamton.edu or call 607-777-2431.

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Alumni Spotlight



Stacey Daniel

“At Binghamton, I enjoyed myself, studied as hard as I could, and the Philosophy Department was interested in me and what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wasn’t a nameless face. Binghamton is a great school and the education I received there was amazing.”

Stacey Daniel completed two degrees in four years at Binghamton University, then went straight through Fordham Law School. Immediately upon graduating, she began work as a real estate associate with Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP, the firm she clerked with during the summer.

At a crossroads of sorts as she wrapped up her bachelor’s degree, Daniel sought guidance from the late Professor John Arthur about whether to continue on for a master’s degree or head directly to law school. “He really influenced me,” she says. “Basically, he said that when I’m on my deathbed, I would remember my last year of college, but not the extra year of practicing law, so I decided not to graduate early and to go on for my master’s.”

Daniel calls herself lucky that she came to Binghamton knowing what she wanted to do. “I did a kind of mini-debate in middle school and my teacher said, ‘You could [be a lawyer],’ and it stuck,” she says. Her decision to become a lawyer was confirmed as soon as she started taking PPL courses. “This is the right fit for me,” she says. “Listening to John Arthur talking about the law, arguing about why the laws are on the books . . . why some laws work and some don’t . . .” made her choice easy.

“Since my older brother went to Binghamton, I visited and he told me about the PPL program. I came in knowing I wanted to do PPL. The professors are so focused on getting you to think about the social world and how your life can influence politics and the world — how we structure ourselves the way we do,” says Daniel.

She credits Lisa Tessman, associate professor of philosophy, and her MA thesis adviser, Professor Bat-Ami Bar On, for influencing her. “They were so open and welcoming and interested in me, and how and what I was doing,” she says. They reinforced that “everyone is allowed to express their opinions and we’re allowed to change our minds and think about what we want to pursue in our lives.”

“At Binghamton, I enjoyed myself, studied as hard as I could, and the Philosophy Department was interested in me and what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wasn’t a nameless face,” she says. “Binghamton is a great school and the education I received there was amazing. I even have a cousin there now.”

The Course That Changed My Life

From Kayleigh George, Binghamton University Library Marketing Coordinator

A college course that changed my life was Introduction to Philosophy. I was a freshman at Binghamton University, and was looking for something interesting — a real challenge. Luckily enough, my professor was **Martin Dillon**. One of the most popular professors at the University, Professor Dillon was largely responsible for inspiring undergraduates to major in philosophy. If anyone was truly meant to teach, it was him. His intellect matched his ability to convey ideas, which is a rare find in a professor. He was magnetic — a truly charismatic teacher, and a pleasure to listen to. His course books sit on my bookcase to this day, including works by Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jeremy Bentham and Lao Tzu. Shortly before his death in 2005, I was fortunate to take another course with Professor Dillon: Existentialism and Modern Thought. I will always credit him with opening my mind and inspiring me to think independently.



Martin Dillon

Money Matters

I would like to begin by thanking those of you who have sent us donations both for the Philosophy General Fund and for the Martin Dillon Memorial Fund. This and last year, Dr. Martin Ringle has been our special donor to the Philosophy General Fund.

The Martin Dillon Memorial Fund has been growing steadily and passed \$16,500. It produces enough income in interest for prizes that were given to the best honor students. Since we can also use some money from the fund to support philosophy undergraduate student travel to undergraduate philosophy conferences, it is important for the fund to continue growing.

What we need to build, in addition to the Martin Dillon Memorial Fund, are other dedicated funds and/or the Philosophy General Fund, which is about \$8,500 short of becoming a \$15,000 endowment. It will be wonderful to turn the General Fund into an endowment that will pay for a Philosophy Departmental Speakers Series, for example. If you're interested in learning more about donating to the department, please contact me or, beginning September 1, incoming department chair Max Pensky by calling 607-777-3616.

I am aware that I tend to provide a wish list. The department depends on your generosity more and more. *Your contributions really matter.* Please continue to help our wish list come true. *All donations small and large are welcome.*

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Philosophy Department
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Money Matters *continued from page 11*

You can make your gift on line by going to www.bconnectalumni.binghamton.edu/Giving/index.asp. In the section for “Gift Information,” first choose Harpur College as the school or unit. Then select “other account,” complete the amount and type either Philosophy General Fund, Account # 10794; the Martin Dillon Memorial Fund, Account # 20232; or the Leon Goldstein Scholarship Fund in Philosophy, Account # 20361. Harpur College and Binghamton University also would greatly appreciate your generosity. If you prefer sending a check, please make it payable to the Binghamton University Foundation using the printable form at www.bconnectalumni.binghamton.edu/Giving/PrintableGiftPage.pdf.

You can also contact the Harpur College development officer, Lisa Court, at 607-777-4277 or send e-mail to lcourt@binghamton.edu. She will be happy to discuss gift opportunities with you.

Bat-Ami Bar On

The department depends on your generosity more and more. Your contributions really matter. Please continue to help our wish list come true. All donations small and large are welcome.