

HONG KIERKEGAARD LIBRARY

Student Newsletter

Calendar of Events

Julia Watkin Lecture

Thursday, May 9th

7pm

Viking Theater

--

Casual Kierkegaard

Conversations

TBD

Kierkegaard Library Lounge

--

Honors Day

Friday, May 3rd

10:10am

Boe Chapel

--

Graduation

Sunday, May 26th

3pm

Campus Green

--

Young Scholar Program

Monday, July 8th

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In This Newsletter

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Why Football Players Need
Kierkegaard

The Grand Tour

Grant-Writing Project for
Students

A Message from the Curator

BY Gordon Marino

Soren Kierkegaard was an immortal thinker who wrote like an angel. When students come to the Library they experience a more intimate encounter with him than they would if they just picked up one of Kierkegaard's texts. That said, there is nothing like finding a quiet spot and plush chair in the Library and browsing through one of his umpteen penetrating books. More than a visit, I love it when students come to feel at home at the Library, home enough to knock on my door and ask me questions about my 200 year old mentor.

I also love it when Oles interact with the scholars who come from all over the world to study Kierkegaard here on the Hill. Many of these same researchers confide that St. Olaf students don't appreciate the treasure they have in this Library. I hope that you will come by soon and prove them wrong. You never know, you might end up taking the class on Kierkegaard (Philosophy 233) or even earning a spot in our summer Young Scholars Program. Either/or, I hope to see you soon.

Why Football Players Need Kierkegaard

BY Benjamin F. Danielson IV '19

I've had the privilege of playing the world's greatest game in college, where players throw their body around the field with reckless abandonment, fighting for victory. Football: every man who has played the game knows that this violent sport takes a toll on everyone who is lucky enough to be physically built and brave enough to put the helmet on. For me, my price was twenty-two shoulder dislocations and two surgeries since 2012. All in all, I'm walking away better than a lot of good guys I've played with.

When I had first begun to play, I had no idea of the mental weight that accompanies the game. The impact of breaking your body changes the mind and the spirit; that's the true punishment. I had decided to step away from football after I dislocated my shoulder for the first time since surgery my sophomore year. At the time, we had an incredibly dysfunctional coaching staff. My health wasn't worth risking for coaches I had no faith in. It was a dark time.

I come from two generations of Ole football players, a Danielson had never walked the campus of Olaf without the promise of a hard-hitting practice at the end of the day. I was lost and broken, considering antidepressants but no doctor or counselor could truly convince me pills would lead to my salvation. It seemed like a blanket that would make life bearable up on the Hill, as I wandered around my coursework like a stray dog. Luckily for me, my advisor was the Curator of the Kierkegaard Library. I joke that it was divine intervention, being a lifelong Pulp Fiction fan. I found myself looking for answers between the covers of aging Kierkegaard works.

The immortal words of the old Danish existentialist began to strengthen my mind, body and spirit. I began to feel the relief that all those counselors were promising, not because of some chemical alteration; but instead, through the power of the self, I was able to act in a way that started to lead me in the direction I wanted my life to go.

I rejoined the team after a new coaching staff broke down the doors and washed away the memories from our embarrassing past. I was placed in the fullback position; unfortunately, I couldn't be a weak side end anymore because every time I give someone a big hug, my shoulder would dislocate. I could no longer terrorize the feeble quarterbacks of the MIAC. But I was lucky, I had the best season of football I had ever played.

Without the Hong Kierkegaard Library, I would have never been able to begin the path to individuality and muster the courage to return to a team that had brought my life on the Hill to a stop. I sometimes romanticize the darkness that would have been my life without Kierkegaard, but I can never truly imagine it.

Once you let yourself fall, you'll find out the human condition has no end. My gaze has been moved upward as I continue the journey of faith and self, and I contribute a decent amount of that to a dead Danish man and his wonderfully curated library up on the Hill, closer to God than Carleton will ever be.



THE EXISTENTIALIST'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

Gordon Marino, Ph.D.

AVAILABLE FOR ORDER AT

ExistentialistsSurvivalGuide.com

The Grand Tour

BY Amanda Westcott '19

I can remember early on in my experiences as a Great Con student, peering into the Hong Kierkegaard Library for the first time. Eyes wide with amazement, my cohort squeezed through the Rare Book Room while Eileen gave us the tour.

I had never known that a special collections library of this calibre was tucked just under Rolvaag. Knowing more about the Library not only helped my class in discussion on nineteenth-century philosophy, but encouraged my own exploration of historical preservation and collections management, a field now near and dear to my heart and career aspirations.

I had the very fortunate opportunity to join my Library friends and fellow Connors, Amy Imdieke and Abby Shimota, on a "Grand Tour" of Europe this past January, learning more about European identity and the ethics of national museum curation.

Throughout the month, we applied our former Great Con readings while walking through the same monuments and ruins well-educated British aristocrats once ambled past in Rome. We viewed the same artifacts and artwork they decided to take back home, now on display in places like the Louvre and the British Museum.

The ethics of these practices were hotly debated, I can assure you! Moreover, we took that familiar concept of existential alienation of the self (thank you, Kierkegaard) and applied it instead to the learning and traveling process.

Even with such a large group of Americans, and in metropolitan areas where most everyone spoke English, we carried with us an important point raised by Professor Bejan during her lecture in Oxford: how we must, as Milton describes, undertake the process of "unlearning," of alienation.

Europe may be a very familiar concept. If you asked each of us, "What is Europe?" you would receive 35 very well-thought-out responses. But unlike the original Grand Tourists, who often saw themselves as inheritors of Western civilization after the Romans, our own situations called for a different approach - one that questioned European identity altogether.

Our "Grand Tour" was as rewarding as it was a good reminder of the things we learned in Great Con, Kierkegaard's philosophy chief among them.

"To cheat oneself out of love is the most terrible deception; it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation, either in time or in eternity."

Søren Kierkegaard

Grant-Writing Project for Students

BY Amanda Westcott '19

A group of students from Professor Sian Muir's Arts Management class (Mgmt 229) is currently writing a grant for the Rare Book Room in the Kierkegaard Library.

The project will allow the students to learn more about the grant application process, the concept of fundraising as an arts profession, and the Library itself!



Materials such as the pre-1856 volumes require a high degree of care, and therefore any additional funding for cleaning and restoration would ensure their better condition for future generations to handle and study.

The group, including Hongye (Judy) Lyu, Britta Larson, Karl Bjorkman, Amanda Westcott and Rachel Ropella, (supervised by the Program Coordinator, Eileen Shimota) will present their complete grant on May 1st after undergoing a concept and draft process.