

The Owl

The St. Olaf Philosophy Department's Newsletter • September 2016

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A Greeting and Introduction to the Department from Charles Taliaferro



Greetings to our current students and philosophy-major alumni from our temporary offices on the ground floor of Buntrock Commons! We expect to move back to the renovated Holland Hall in the summer of 2017. You are warmly invited to visit us here now or in our new digs, attend the Belgium Lectures in the spring (offered by Ed Langerak), and attend and participate in any of our meetings in our joint symposiums with Carleton philosophers (posted on our website). Enrollment in our courses this fall is quite healthy (over 390); philosophy was also listed as a significant interest by over 300 incoming students, class of 2020. Because Michael Fuerstein, Danny Munoz-Hutchinson, and Corliss Swain are on sabbatical, we have been joined by three brilliant philosophers: Kathryn Swanson (University of Wisconsin), Laura Engel (University of Binghamton), and Karen Gervais (who has been with us as an adjunct for many years). For alumni, we would love to hear from you! Please send news to newlands@stolaf.edu. In terms of graduates going on in philosophy, Thomas Lambert (Class of 2015) has entered the Ph.D. program at Princeton University and Robert Riordan (Class of 2013) is in the Ph.D. program at Marquette University.

Your philosophy faculty do our work here on the hill with absolute gratitude and humble appreciation for the lives and work of our students. We wish all who read this a life of prosperity, deep fulfillment, and the love of wisdom.

If you are alumni be sure to let us know what you are up to! We post news on our website:
<http://wp.stolaf.edu/philosophy/>

Please send an update to Sue Newland (newlands@stolaf.edu).

Charles Taliaferro, Chair of the Department of Philosophy (2013-2019)



Phi Sigma Tau Fall Events

page 2

Alumni at Routledge

page 2

Faculty News

page 3-4

Department Retreat

page 5

Philosophy Alum Wins Service Award

page 5

The Kierkegaard Library

page 6

Eunice Belgum Memorial Lectures

page 7

Pizza Thursdays

page 7

Contact Information

page 7

Donation Request

page 8

Phi Sigma Tau Fall Events

Phi Sigma Tau is seriously excited for the upcoming school year, planning student colloquium, faculty talks, and events for World Philosophy Day. During the co-curricular fair, we were successful in adding around 15 new members to the interest alias and hope they will become involved. Next month, Alexander Quanbeck will present his paper at our first student colloquium.



2016-17 Phi Sigma Tau Officers (left to right): Annika Beck '17, Alexander Quanbeck '17, Elise Steichen '18, and Zhaoqi Hu '17

Also in October, we plan to initiate new members. Professor Huff will speak in November. Suggested event ideas for World Philosophy Day, also in November, include making and selling favorite philosopher buttons, a debate between Carleton and St. Olaf professors, a showing of the bioethics-related documentary short *Extremis*, and a book display in Rolvaag library.



Every St. Olaf student who loves philosophy is welcome! If interested contact Elise at: steich1@stolaf.edu

Grads at Routledge

Three of our philosophy majors, class of 2016, made an excellent impression on a senior editor at Routledge Publishers (located in New York and London). Andy Beck was looking for an editorial assistant at the NYC office. He interviewed three of our majors twice over, offered the job to one of them, and forwarded this overview which I am proud to share with you:

"I found the three St. Olaf candidates to be just as, if not more, knowledgeable about the discipline of philosophy as were graduates from places like Columbia, Princeton, and Swarthmore. But all of the Olaf grads also were naturally poised, knew a good deal about academic book publishing, seemed to lack fear or even any nervousness, and were eager to answer my questions thoughtfully and ask me both necessary and interesting ones of their own. Their personalities—far from being wrung dry by four years of hard labor—appeared to have naturally absorbed the fruits of their learning. In our increasingly technological and ever-practical age of career anxiety, a lot of questions are being asked about the value of the humanities.... [M]y experience with these St. Olaf graduates is the strongest testament I've encountered recently for the value of the humanities in general and philosophy in particular. It was my deep pleasure to interview all three of them."

Bravo!

Faculty Summer News

Professor Jeanine Grenberg

Professor Grenberg spent her summer in the United Kingdom where she accomplished various projects while still finding time to enjoy herself. She spent a lot of time working with her colleague, Jens Timmerman, at St. Andrew's University in Scotland, on a new translation of Kant's *Doctrine of Virtue* (with any luck, coming out with Cambridge University Press next year!). She also wrote a couple articles, one about the relationship of feeling and time in

practical phenomenological experience, and the other using Kant's ideas about debt management, servility and arrogance to interpret Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. The latter Jane Austen writing is the first bit of what she hopes will become a book when she is on sabbatical next (2017-18) year. She also practiced her cello so much that she got "trigger thumb" and had to stop practicing for a few weeks while that heals. And she took good advantage of great butchers and fish mongers near her London flat, making nice dinners for friends and family.



Professor Gordon Marino

Professor Marino had over 50 scholars in residence at the Hong Kierkegaard Library so most of his summer was taken up with attending to visiting scholars and directing a very active seminar program. Charles was kind enough to give a guest lecture to our summer Kierkegaard scholars on thought experiments in philosophy. He was a great hit. During July, directed at our Young Scholars Program at the Library, a program that brings rising seniors and recent graduates from all over the nation and the globe to do advanced research on Kierkegaard. They met for seminars four days a week. This year there were two St. Olaf philosophy majors in the group. He also squeezed a little time in for writing and throughout the summer continued to coach boxing in town.

Professor Mike Fuerstein

Over the summer, Professor Fuerstein began research on a book manuscript that seeks to offer a new model of moral progress in democratic societies. The manuscript - tentatively titled *Democratic Experiments* - will serve as his primary project over the 2016-17 academic year. Professor



Fuerstein also began preparation for a new course on "Ethics, Economics, and the Marketplace" which he plans to offer at St. Olaf in 2017-18. In August, he and his family relocated to Fontainebleau, France, where he will spend a 2016-17 sabbatical

as a Visiting Scholar at the INSEAD business school. While at INSEAD, he will continue his work with the Society for Progress, a community of philosophers, economists, business scholars, and executives which seeks to better align the paradigm of business practice with moral and social ideals.

Professor Danny Muñoz-Hutchinson

Since last May, Professor Muñoz-Hutchinson has presented papers at conferences in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Washington, D.C., and Seattle. Moreover, he completed his book manuscript and re-submitted it for review to Cambridge University Press.

Professor Anthony Rudd

Professor Rudd spent the summer in the UK. As well as re-reading Plato and Aristotle in preparation for teaching Ancient Philosophy this semester, he was able to start doing some writing in connection with his current research project, on the philosophy of painting. His long-term aim is to write a book exploring the question of why we do, or should, value painting- a surprisingly neglected question, even within the



philosophy of painting.

Do great (or even less great) paintings have something to tell us? Can paintings convey truths - and are there truths that can only be expressed through painting?

Professor Rudd aims to develop a response to Plato's critique of the representational arts, and to consider whether certain kinds of religious art (icons) can give us a clue as to the possible significance of painting in general. He has drafted three chapters, a version of one of which he has submitted to a journal; and he has had invitations from the University of Michigan and Iowa State University to present on his research. As well as writing, he was able to spend some time exploring art galleries in London, and doing some painting himself.

Professor Corliss Swain

Professor Swain was able to enjoy her summer office in Northfield, researching topics related to sexual assault, focusing on two areas: conceptual issues and issues of justice. On the conceptual side, she investigated some of the problems of defining sexual assault and rape in terms of consent—positive, negative, and implied. With regard to justice, sexual assault involves both criminal justice and civil rights.



Criminal justice for victims of sexual assault has been a focus of rape law reforms starting in the 1970s and continuing today with the American Law Institute's proposed revision to its model penal code. The civil rights aspect is not new; it played out in the 1960's Civil Rights

Professor Swain's summer office.

movement in efforts, including those by Rosa Parks, to get

justice for black women assaulted by white men. Recent deployments of Title IX also conceptualize sexual assault as a civil rights issue in that women's opportunities in education are seriously and disproportionately affected by sexual assault and the pervasive threat of sexual assault on college campuses. One of her goals is to determine whether and how the successes and failures of rape law reform as it concerns criminal justice can inform efforts to insure the civil rights of college students who are disproportionately affected by sexual assault and the threat of assault.

Professor Charles Taliaferro

Charles Taliaferro gave three talks over the summer: "The Virtue of Unconditional Love," given to alumni on Reunion Weekend at St. Olaf, "The role of the imagination in philosophy of religion" to the Kierkegaard Society, "The virtues of Chestertonian Eccentricity" at Wake Forest University. He submitted a book proposal to Cambridge University Press, completed five chapters for five books, wrote two book reviews, edited the 6 volume The History of Evil, commissioned entries for the 6 volume Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Religion with 4 advisors, 15 assistant editors, and over 400 scholars involved as contributors, and worked with Caroline Priore (class of 2017) on a Dictionary for Philosophy of Religion. Two book chapters co-authored with Meredith Varie (Class of 2016) were also completed, and Christophe Porot (Class of 2013) and CT completed a paper forthcoming in the European Journal for Philosophy of Religion. Christophe is the managing editor with CT for the Religious Studies Review.

Visiting Instructor Laura Engel

Laura spent much of the summer working on her dissertation and revising an article for publication. In addition, she was able to enjoy the outdoors, take a few aerial silks classes, and travel to Alabama and New York to visit family.

Professor Kathryn Swanson

This summer, Professor Swanson finished a complete draft of her dissertation. She also took care of her two children. They spent a lot of time outside swimming and hiking at national and county parks across the state.



A Warm Welcome to our New Faculty!

This year, the department is pleased to introduce two new members of our faculty, Laura Engel and Kathryn Swanson.



Laura specializes in Ethics and Feminist Philosophy. Her dissertation focuses on questions about what have been called "adaptive preferences" considered from a metaethical constructivist framework, i.e. a framework that assumes that value is ultimately the result of valuing. She argues that once one acknowledges the central nature of some adaptive preferences to a person's sense of meaning or self, one must consider not only the posited benefits of changing these preferences, but the costs as well. According to the resulting framework, for intervention to be morally defensible in these cases it must be justified by an appeal to other values held, in some form, by the individual or their community. Laura's other research interests include topics in Social and Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Race, and Moral Psychology.



Kathryn Swanson's areas of specialization include philosophy of law, feminist philosophy and social and political philosophy. She received her JD from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 2009. Prior to beginning her PhD in philosophy, she clerked for organizations such as the Minnesota State Public Defender's office and worked as a reference attorney for Thomson Reuters. In her dissertation, she argues that philosophical accounts of autonomy should avoid relying on idealized notions of reason, rationality and critical reflection. Instead, a non-ideal account of autonomy (one that is empirically responsible) treats autonomy as a human need that is contextualized by a diverse range of human abilities, vulnerabilities and dependencies. She lives in Minneapolis and likes to run and learn about rocks.

This Year's Philosophy Retreat

In mid-October the philosophy faculty of St. Olaf and Carleton colleges met for a Friday to Sunday weekend retreat in which they engaged the work of Sally Haslanger of MIT. Haslanger led discussions on racism, the resistance to oppression and suppression, sexism, economic inequalities, and a theory of justice and meaning which gave prominence to those who stand against injustice. All agreed it was a rewarding experience that will inform future courses and research. Some other details: Sue Newland deserves a medal for her arranging the retreat details, Ed Langerak prepared his famous breakfast omelettes on Saturday and Sunday, Taliaferro prepared lunches and a vegetarian dinner, and Cunningham cooked asparagus on the grill and offered a sung grace in Latin.



Philosophy Alum Awarded 2016 Outstanding Service Award

Douglas Koons '71 and his wife Jane Baker Koons '71 have been awarded a 2016 Outstanding Service Award from St. Olaf College. They have been featured in the fall 2016 edition of St Olaf magazine. Doug majored in philosophy, and after graduating went on to teach in Hong Kong at the Yuen Long Lutheran Middle School. He later earned a master of divinity degree from Luther Seminary. In 2007, the Koons moved to Tamil Nuda, India, to help set up a system of libraries in the Arcot Lutheran Church's 95 village and town schools. The Koons, together with their classmates, have formed the Fjord Foundation, which provides support to individuals and families with immediate financial stress who may otherwise be overlooked by institutional donors.



Douglas Koons '71, and his wife Jane Baker Koons '71

You can read the full article commemorating the Koons' success in the [St. Olaf Magazine](#).

The Kierkegaard Library



For St. Olaf's philosophy majors, the Hong Kierkegaard Library constitutes a uniquely valuable but sometimes underutilized resource. Located on the second floor of Rolvaag Library beneath the English Department, the Kierkegaard Library serves as an international center for the study of existentialism, standing with Copenhagen's Kierkegaard Research Center as the global focal point for study of the Danish philosopher and the existential movement more broadly. Because of this, visiting students will find the library an important resource both in their academic courses at St. Olaf and in their personal exploration of philosophy, theology, and other relevant disciplines. In particular, the library offers important tools for students taking Professor Gordon Marino's existentialism course. All are welcome to visit the library's collection of about twenty thousand volumes on weekdays between 9:30 am and 5:00 pm. During these times, students may also access the library's extensive collection of rare books, which are available from the vault by request.

In addition to the Kierkegaard Library's regular operation during the school year, the summer ushers in a wealth of unique programs. Each year the library welcomes over fifty scholars from around the world who use its resources to aid them in their research. During the summer, the Kierkegaard Library hosts lectures, seminars, and academic discussions designed to promote cooperation and philosophical dialogue. The library's website offers a detailed list of programs available for both graduate and undergraduate students who wish to enhance their study of philosophy. St. Olaf philosophy majors should especially consider the Young Scholars Program. This month-long program unites about twenty rising seniors and recently-graduated students from around the world to attend a seminar-style course with a close-read of a Kierkegaard text. Professor Marino provides individual mentoring for Young Scholars as they pursue their own research projects.

Both through the course of the academic year and in the summer, the library's staff stands ready to aid students and scholars in their research. Professor Gordon Marino serves as curator of the collection and directs the library's academic mission. As the author of *Kierkegaard in the Present Age*, co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, editor of *Modern Library's Basic Writings of Existentialism and Ethics: The Essential Writings*, and editor of *The Quotable Kierkegaard*, Marino's contributions to the field of Kierkegaard studies are substantial. In addition to his scholarly publications, Marino's essays have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *The Atlantic*, *Wall Street Journal*, *the American Poetry Review* and many other national publications. Marino serves as a mentor to scholars and students visiting the library, providing guidance and direction to aid their scholarly pursuits. Program coordinator Eileen Shimota manages the operation of the library and works extensively with Kierkegaard scholars, students, and library visitors. Finally, student workers keep the library organized and can assist students and scholars in using the collection. All members of the Kierkegaard Library staff invite you to visit and explore this unique resource!

Pizza Thursday

This year, the department is proud to continue the tradition of Pizza Thursdays, a weekly event sponsored by Google and a St. Olaf Philosophy alumnus. Students and faculty are invited to gather during community time each Thursday for philosophical discourse on any number of topics, and free Pause pizza. This year, we've seen some of the largest turnouts of students and faculty in department history, hosted in the Kierkegaard Library foyer and the department's common room. Topics so far have included the ethics of condemnatory language, hosted by Professor Swain, and a discussion on Kierkegaard lead by Professor Marino.

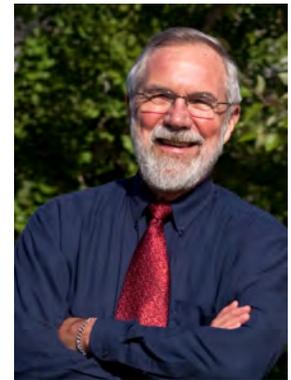


Future Events

Eunice Belgum Memorial Lectures

The 38th Eunice Belgum Memorial Lecture, "Meanings of Life and Death", will be delivered on March 9th and 10th by Edward Langerak, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at St. Olaf College.

Professor Langerak has edited and translated the complete works of Plato as well as *Seneca's Moral and Political Essays*. He is the author of several books, including *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*; *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory*; *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy* and *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus*.



More details regarding the Belgum Lectureseries can be found on the philosophy department's web site at: <http://wp.stolaf.edu/philosophy/eunice-belgum-memorial-lectures-podcasts/>

Check out these Resources from the St. Olaf Philosophy Department!

To stay connected and receive regular updates on activities, check out the St. Olaf Philosophy Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/St-Olaf-Philosophy-565288890180412/?ref=h>

Learn more about the department and the major on the Philosophy Department's web site:
<http://wp.stolaf.edu/philosophy/>

Check out stories from St. Olaf Alumni to discover how Philosophy students have used their college training to make the world a better place at:
<http://wp.stolaf.edu/philosophy/alumni-profiles/>

A Call for Help

For nearly 40 years the Belgum family have financially supported the **Eunice Belgum Memorial Lecture** series via an endowment fund. However the endowment, which the Belgum family generously provided, is no longer sufficient to cover the ever-rising costs of these lectures.

In order to continue the lecture series in its current format, the endowment needs to grow by about \$40,000. This is where you, our dear philosophy alumni, come in. Would you be willing to donate 'to the cause'? Any amount would be gratefully accepted.

Please attach the slip below to your check.

Thanking you in advance,

Charles Taliaferro,
Chair, Philosophy
department



Donation to Eunice Belgum Memorial Endowment Fund

Name: _____

Address: _____

Amount of Donation: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to 'St. Olaf College', and send to Development Office, St. Olaf College. 1520 St. Olaf Avenue, Northfield, MN 55057.

Thank you.