

A TIME TO CELEBRATE

By Joe Pitt,
Philosophy Department Head



Dear Friends of the Department,
Well, a year has gone by and much has changed in that time. The College of Arts and Sciences ceased to exist July 1, 2003. Instead of creating a College of Liberal arts for the non-science departments of the old College of Arts and Sciences, however, the liberal arts were merged with what was left of the old College of Human Sciences and Education to become THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND HUMAN SCIENCES. It ought to have been a mess, but we are incredibly lucky to have Jerry Niles as our new dean and he is something of a magician when it comes to making things like this work. I think it safe to say that the Department has never been as well served by a Dean as we currently are. So, despite the turmoil and uncertainty generated by the events of the last two years, we have landed on our feet and we are in excellent shape.

Some changes within the Department have occurred as well. Deborah Mayo has accepted a joint appointment in Philosophy and Economics. The Dean gave us a full position to replace the half position she took with her and we have just

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EVENTS! “Peirce-pectives”

We are very excited about our conference “**Peirce-pectives’ on Metaphysics and the Sciences**,” scheduled for **April 23-25 2004**. This year marks the 90th anniversary of **Charles Sanders Peirce’s** death, the philosopher whom we have chosen for our 2004 conference.

Peirce (1839-1914) plays a unique role in the history of American philosophy, and of American scholarship in general. Although mistakenly identified as merely a background figure in the development of Pragmatism, his role as founder of this distinctively American movement is now beginning to be recognized. A true genius, the implications of his ideas have not yet been fully developed. It is only in the past decade or two that his brilliant contributions to practically all academic disciplines (physics, astronomy, topology, criminology, optics, metaphysics, logic, architecture, anthropology, economics, linguistics, psychology, education, religion, law, politics, business and management, computer science, to name a few) have been discovered. His ideas have so pervaded our lives, that the term “pragmatist” is now part of our everyday vocabulary.

We have an international list of invited speakers:

- **“Mathematics, Logic, and Metaphysics in Peirce’s Division of the Sciences”**
Cornelis de Waal, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy of Indiana University and Assistant Editor of the Peirce Edition Project, the ongoing recompilation of Peirce’s original manuscripts into a chronological version.
- **“Peirce, the Apriori, and the Principle of Determinism”**
Randall Dipert, is Charles S. Peirce Professor of American Philosophy at SUNY Buffalo. He has published extensively on the history and philosophy of logic, especially on Peirce and the 19th century.
- **“Not Cynicism But Synechism: Lessons from Classical Pragmatism”**
Susan Haack is Professor of Law, Cooper Senior Scholar in Arts and Sciences, and Professor of Philosophy at University of Miami. Dr. Haack is the author of several well-known books, including Evidence and Inquiry (Blackwell, 1993), Deviant Logic, Fuzzy Logic: Beyond the Formalism (Chicago, 1996), and Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate: Unfashionable Essays (Chicago, 1998).

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hired Brian Epstein, who is finishing his Ph.D. in philosophy of language from Stanford. Valerie Hardcastle has moved to STS as Chair of that department and the Dean has given us her position to fill next year. Valerie remains a full member of the Philosophy Department as well – so we are growing and we are healthy.

And we want to celebrate! So, in recognition of 50 years of Philosophy at Virginia Tech, the 20th anniversary of the Department of Philosophy, and the 10th anniversary of the graduation of our first class of masters students, we are throwing a party and you are all invited! It will be in conjunction with our annual spring conference, this year it is on the work of C.S. Peirce, the founder of American pragmatism (see conference information on first page). We hope you stay for the conference, but at least come for the party. Mark your calendars, and please let us know if you plan to come!

**Friday, April 23rd, 2004
6:00- 10:00 P.M.**

**At L'Arche Bed and Breakfast
301 Wall St. SW**
(across the street from the Univ. Club)
Blacksburg, VA 24060

RSVP (540) 231-4564,
(540) 231-4565, leisao@vt.edu

I sincerely look forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes,
Joe (jcpitt@vt.edu)

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Charles Sanders
Peirce (1839-1914)

**Sponsors of the conference:
The Virginia Tech Humanities Symposium
Award, the Office of the Provost, the College
of Liberal Arts, the Philosophy Department,
STS, College of Architecture.**

• ***“Induction as Error Correction”***

Deborah Mayo is Professor of Philosophy at Virginia Tech. Dr. Mayo’s work is in the epistemology of science and the philosophy of statistical inference. She received the Lakatos Prize, the world’s premier award for the study of the philosophy of science in 1998 for her book Error and the Growth of Experimental Knowledge (University of Chicago Press, 1996).

• ***“Diamonds are a Pragmatist’s Best Friend”***

Rosa Mayorga, Assistant Professor, is a new member of the Philosophy Department at Virginia Tech. Dr. Mayorga’s academic interests lie in the general area of metaphysics. She is currently working on a book that explores Peirce’s contributions to this field. Her conference for the Symposium explores Peirce’s seemingly contradictory positions of scholastic realism and “pragmatism.”

• ***“Probability and Peirce’s Blackberries”***

Robert Meyers, Professor in the Department of Philosophy at State University of New York Albany, is interested especially in American pragmatism. His publications include: “The Likelihood of Knowledge” (Dordrecht, 1988), “Early Influences on Peirce: A letter to Samuel Barnett,” (Journal of the History of Philosophy, 1993), and “The Marvelous and the Miraculous: A defense of Hume” (forthcoming).

• ***“The Classification of the Sciences and Crossdisciplinarity”***

Jaime Nubiola, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Universidad de Navarra, España (Spain), is Director of “Grupo de Estudios Peirceanos” (Peirce Studies Group) and Director of Anuario Filosófico, an international journal of philosophy. He has published extensively in Europe, South America, as well as in the United States. Lately he has been working on Pragmatism and its effects on Spanish literature and philosophy.

• ***“Pragmatism at the Crossroads”***

Nicholas Rescher is University Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh. He is a former president of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association, and of the C. S. Peirce Society. Author of some hundred books, with over a dozen of them translated into other languages, he was awarded the Alexander von Humboldt Prize for Humanistic Scholarship in 1984.

Contacts

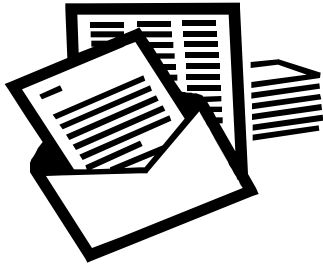
for more information on the conference:

Rosa Mayorga rmayorga@vt.edu

for RSVP to the celebration

Leisa Osborne leisao@vt.edu or
Terry Zapata tzapata@vt.edu

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ALUMNI SURVEY 2004

This year, for the first time, we decided to send out surveys (both written and online) to our alumni. We received over 60 responses! It is wonderful to hear from so many of you, some going back so many years (as far back as 1969!). We were also extremely pleased to hear so many awesome things about Virginia Tech, especially about our philosophy department. Here are some of your comments:

QUESTION: How have your philosophy studies affected your life?

"An emphasis in logic assists me in troubleshooting software errors and being able to readily understand complex processes. Philosophy is a part of my life more than any other subject could ever be"

Rielly, Ann 1984

"My studies in philosophy have affected my life in virtually every aspect. I am currently about to finish my Ph.D. in philosophy, and I have been teaching philosophy for many years as both a graduate student instructor and now as a primary instructor. My philosophy experience at Virginia Tech was wonderful and has not been met since I left. The faculty, as a whole, were very engaged with their students and the department had a real "family" feel to it. Since then I have been a member of three other philosophy departments and have observed many others; I haven't seen the kind of intimacy that Virginia Tech offered, during my years there, at any other place."

Watson, Lori (Paula) 1996

"I have never quenched my thirst for learning- about anything and everything. This seed was planted at my years at Tech & in Philosophy. I believe I view the world with much more understanding & always question why people think the way they do."

Hendrickson Evans, Robin 1970

"I have a different world view from most of my technical and engineering oriented peers. As a result, my solutions to industrial problems tend to be "outside the box". My customers seem to appreciate that. I also write "real good".

Willet, Vernon 1989

"Increased the breadth of my thinking, perceptions & education. Keeps my expectations real, my eyes on my goals, and my heart where it belongs."

Peters, Douglas 1992

"The have provided an ability to focus and logically analyze information, and to formulate a range of perspectives and arguments on the issues."

Slaughter, John 1994

"1) A great appreciation for writing and economy of language 2) Very critical of the logic of political presentations 3) The pleasure of being the only Asphalt paving philosophy major in the state of Virginia (to the best of my knowledge)"

Cox, James P. (Jim) 1969

"Not sure if it's some predilection which compels people of a sort to study philosophy, or the perspective that develops from its study, but there seems to be a relationship between philosophy study and an ability to view systems abstractly, and also adaptability."

Clark, Gerald 2001

"I think there's no better degree to have in the computer field. This field is ruled by quick thinkers who use logic and deductive reasoning. In general it's given me the ability to see all things from multiple views, allowing me to avoid mistakes made by others. I also feel that while other students at Virginia Tech may have spent 4 years learning how to do a job, I spent 4 years getting a classical education, which I feel is more valuable"

Derrenbacher, Jonathan L 1999

"Philosophy, especially political philosophy and ethics, makes me examine my and other peoples conduct. Ethical business/professional conduct is very important to me personally and in my job."

Frankel, Jack 1972

"Besides personal enrichment, I use both the analytical skills and my philosophical understanding to enrich my policy work..."

Firey, Thomas 1999

"As a manager & supervisor I constantly have to evaluate and analyze the big picture and the small details, as a programmer/ software analyst and developer I have to analyze logic flow in program execution. All of this has been greatly helped by my philosophy studies and my concentration in logic. Tell Joe I said Hi!"

Hammel, Michael 1974

"Practically, the logic classes have definitely helped me professionally, they have helped me as a programmer both

to design new programs and to debug existing ones. More broadly, I believe philosophy as a whole has helped me to maintain an open-minded, questioning outlook toward life & world events."

Judd, Matthew 1991

"Taught me how to think and write. Enabled me to feel confident in many situations- makes me feel smart, encouraged variety of reading & interests throughout my life- gave me tolerance and openness to many ideas & disciplines."

Bowers, Deborah 1972

"I use my philosophy in all phases of my life... and on a daily basis. They are what/who I have become. I think philosophy is a very solid base on which to build the rest of one's professional and non-professional life."

Overbay, Mary Gay 1972

"My philosophy studies allowed me to make a transition into a career in editing. My undergraduate background was very strong in science but weak in writing. The Philosophy department's heavy emphasis on writing, including the thesis requirement, gave me the writing experience that I needed. In addition, the opportunity that Joe Pitt gave me to serve as Managing Editor of "Perspectives on Science" was extremely valuable in helping me to obtain an editing position after graduation."

Early, Darren 1999

"I must deal with balancing the real-world conditions of the construction job and what the plans say. I must make compromises and justify my position. It is too long to list here but I do use my exp. in epistemology & ethics classes every day."

Kendrick, John 1996

"I'm more pragmatic, but always willing to consider alternate viewpoints."

Depalma, Regina 1975

"I feel empowered to think critically and ethically."

Kilner, Peter 1998

"Definitely- the whole mind set, way of thinking. The way I raised my children, taught them to think things through. (They were both salutatorians- can I take credit for that?)..."

Warner, Patricia (maiden Hillery) 1979

Philosophy continues to challenge me. Through philosophy the ordinary, whether a repeated daily occurrence or common problem at work, holds an opportunity for the possible. Philosophy has given me a way to generate new ideas and solutions in all aspects of life. My life is much richer as a result of studying philosophy.

Collier, James 1983

They have helped me understand complicated standards, policies, procedures, laws, etc.

I have enjoyed revisiting the endless topics opened up in my classes many times over the years.

Randall, Newell 1979

An excellent background for my theological and ethical studies

West, Ben 1969

They have consumed a large part of it.

Gardner, Jason 2003

Personally they have broadened my understanding of the world, history, and sharpened me analytically. Professionally it helped me land a position (for a time) as a photo-journalist...

Peters, Douglas 1992

My BA was my first step in an academic career. While I'm not appointed in a Philosophy Department, philosophy, like most bad habits, is hard to shake.

Dietrich, Michael 1985

1) I am in the process of publishing a book with "1st Books" the content of which grew out of my philosophical studies (Author will be anonymous though)

2) Philosophy was a drug that I desperately needed and wanted and I appreciate the opportunity I was given to take it but it has side effects...

Murphey II, Douglas 1998

Yes, both good ways and bad. It was a good major for journalism. It has contributed to my studies in bi-lingual lexicography and to the book I am writing which has been accepted by McGraw-Hill. But when I was trying to change careers, I found it was a difficult degree to sell. I suppose this is not a defect of the degree, however, just of my own choices.

Wirsing, Whitwell 1968

It made me realize you can learn from the past and doubt media comments until you can independently learn through research. Helped me form my own philosophy of opposing forces in all things science, politics, and life.

Guedri, Wayne 1968

Enabled me to interrogate other sciences to solve problems in one discipline.

Godfrey, Timothy 1984

Although it has not been my profession, my philosophic studies have been decisive in determining the sorts of activities I seek out, and how I react to works of art & events in the wider world.

Brenner, Eliot 1999

In everything! I teach it in all my classes and use the critical thinking skills to think on my feet as an educator. I teach philosophy in many forms throughout all of my class including: ethics, ancient, modern, and logic.

Vazquez, Laura 2000

I'm often asked how a philosophy major ended up as a computer analyst. Computers are logical systems. Need I say more?

Christy, Logan 1976

The study of philosophy at Virginia Tech inspired me to be a better student. I would likely have been a poor student and may likely not have graduated at all, except for the interest and challenge that the philosophy courses provided... In my profession as a lawyer and in my life in general the liberal education I received at Virginia Tech, due largely if not entirely to the Philosophy Department,

has given me confidence that I am as well educated as any other person I meet. The skill to take apart an argument which I learned in my philosophy studies has been valuable... The study of philosophy was excellent preparation for law school. But let me be clear about one point-- Law School was TRADE SCHOOL compared to the scholarly study of philosophy encouraged and provided by the Philosophy Department at Virginia Tech. The level of intellectual rigor was higher in my philosophy studies than in law school... Also, the Philosophy Department's curriculum itself was a great benefit. The range and depth of study offered was impressive and inspiring. And, in my experience since graduating, I have come to learn that it is rare for a large state university, especially one with a reputation for engineering, to have such an excellent philosophy department... My years in the Philosophy Department at Virginia Tech (looking back 15 or so years now) are some of my most pleasant memories... My philosophy studies showed me that studying could be interesting; that scholarship was something even I could aspire to; that I was not dumb and in fact could read, understand, discuss and write about some of the most difficult intellectual material taught in the university... If Dr. Smith, Dr. Stump, and the rest of the Philosophy Department (along with a couple of professors in other departments) had not inspired and challenged me to succeed, I likely would not have graduated, not married my wife, not gone to law school, not be practicing law, not be a partner in a good and decent law firm, and not be living what in most respects is a satisfying and comfortable life. So, does that answer the question?

Hulett, Eric 1990

I strongly believe that I have the ability to learn anything. My philosophy degree taught me that learning how to learn was the most important thing.

Helms, David 1979

Studying a formal curriculum in philosophy forced me to read and consider ideas that have served as a foundation for my own thinking, and for considering the thinking of others. I don't have the self-discipline to work through that material on my own, nor have I always been surrounded by many people committed to thinking "thoroughly." Not only do I have no regrets about my philosophy major, I continue to enjoy it.

Miller, Carol Lane 1972

They brought me into a PhD program in philosophy. They also helped me to look at all sides of any given problem in everyday (normal?) life, which is always an asset.

Jones, Clint 2001

It has made me understand and embrace the answer "why not" when asked the question "why".

Grimes, Steven 1982

I suppose by making me a philosopher now. But also helping clarify my thinking and writing.

Nicholas, Jeffery 1995

They got me...here...and I am planning to pursue a PhD.

York, Justin 2003

I have thought about this many times (as I have been asked why philosophy and how did I get from there to Computer Science) and have always believed that philosophy taught me how to think... how to process information, analyze and

understand written and oral data. This is an ability that translates into a useful skill in any career. As my profession for many years was in the computer field, I found that my analytical skills were very beneficial. I know that for many situations today I rely on the fundamentals of the philosophy classes that I took 30 years ago. It still often seems like yesterday, and sometimes a world away, but I remember my times in the Philosophy Department fondly and with pride, not only that I graduated from a great university and department, but also that I gained a basis for making choices which stands by me today...

Smith, Carol (Parker) 1975

Not at all.

(name withheld) **1974**

No. I took a basic required philosophy course at my undergraduate school but would have to say that life experience has affected my thoughts and attitudes on philosophy and religion more than the other way around.

Wedin, Laura 1984

A sound foundation for my vocation.

West, Benjamin 1969

Studying Philosophy at Virginia Tech was one of the best experiences in my life. Although I never went on to graduate school, what I learned at Virginia Tech has stayed with me for the past 30 years. As I tell jazz musicians that ask me what instrument I play, I say, I can't play a note, but I am a lover. That has been my attitude towards philosophy, I never went pro, but I am a lover. My studies have never stopped... The study of Philosophy is actually more than a passion it is what human existence is all about.

Davis Jr., David 1974

As an attorney and now professor of law, the study of philosophy helped me to develop the skill of critical thinking. I also developed excellent writing skills that have allowed me to succeed in my chosen profession.

Dove, Kathryn

"Allows me to drive my kids nuts."

Jones, Dale 1980

QUESTION:

Who was your most influential philosophy professor? Why?

(the following are compilations of your answers)

They were all influential in different ways.

I cannot select a single philosophy professor as the most influential. All of the staff molded my viewpoint. The staff cared about their students, unlike other parts of VT!

They were all great (of course). But I'd have to say Lou Warner, who died. I was in Search for Reality as an elective and he saw my potential as a philosophy student?! He re-arranged all my classes so that they would make

sense, coerced other professors to take me into already full classes. This may have been in the days before student advisors- he was a great help.

All the professors in the Philosophy Dept. were influential in helping me become who I am. Dr. Palmer Talbutt introduced me to the Medieval Philosophers and was instrumental in my continual studies of Plotinus, G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell. Dr. Guy Hammond introduced me to the ethical theory of Kant, Cartesian Ontology, phenomenology and existentialism the works of Paul Tillich and was influential in my continual studies of the works and meaning of Philosophy of Hegel and Marcuse. Conversations that I had with Dr. Harlan Miller about the metaphysics and logic of Aristotle were very inspiring. I was saddened to hear of Bill Williams's death. He was my advisor and taught me the Nicomachean Ethics. Dr. Norman Grover and I had a number of interesting conversations about the Philosophy of Religion and life in general. The most influential Philosophy professor I had was Dr. Joe Pitt. From Dr. Pitt I began my studies of Plato and hey continue to this day as I have found Plato in every aspect of my life and every action I have ever taken. Plato has been my guide and Dr. Pitt guided me to Plato.

Professor Williams, impressed by his lecture on Plato (that's why I became a philosophy major)... Russ McCabe and Bill Williams; both made me think about things in new ways.

Dr. Palmer Talbutt- Excellent Religion & Metaphysics Teacher

- 1) Talbutt for introducing me to Husserl
- 2) Hammond for introducing me to Plato and Kant
- 3) Miller for introducing me to Russell

Dr. McCabe- helped me get through/ past symbolic logic! (my advisor)

Dr. Kennedy- memorable character- inspired toward additional learning & education

Dr. Hammond- a total class act! Brilliant, great integrity

It's impossible for me to name just one. There were actually three: Pat Croskery, Jim Klagge, and Dick Burian. These professors instilled in me the necessity of maintaining the highest philosophical rigor (ie, the necessity to keep asking the tough questions and to not accept easy answers).

Dr. Guyton Hammond- Excellent "Plato" seminar, my advisor... One professor stands out in my mind, but I'm not sure of his name. It could be Dr. Hammond. He taught a course in not too ancient philosophers. He was very good at getting discussions going and he showed me how to read and understand what these thinkers were saying. I did a paper on DeChardin and actually got an A on it. I was greatly encouraged by this course and the professor was one of my positive role models to be the best I can be... The dept. was so small at that time, I was well acquainted with them all. I was influenced by them all as well. Guy Hammond was probably the most influential. He was my advisor and was my professor for the greatest number of subjects in my major.

This is difficult, since both Dr. Pitt and Dr. Cardwell especially challenged me to examine ideas so that they continue to unfold 25 years later. I enjoyed Dr. Miller's classes in logic quite a lot. But even today, I feel excited when I recall the independent study I took with Dr. Cardwell to explore

epistemology. That academic experience, more than any other before or since, strengthened my resolve to think critically, and it built my confidence for the same... Charles Cardwell. He taught me to think logically & creatively!... I have several memorable philosophy professors, but Charlie Cardwell and Joe Pitt stand out the most. I was not the best student, however I loved logic and was one of the student assistant teachers when Charlie Cardwell was developing his self-paced logic program. I remember when Charlie and Joe shared an office and visiting them was always an interesting and fun experience and I learned what an "Aha Revelation" was from them. I also remember small seminar sessions at Joe's home when his dogs would greet us and his wife would fix us supper and we'd talk about the current topic of the day. The early 70s were a special time, not just in my life, but in the world and I feel lucky to have shared them with friends and professors I met then.

Joe Pitt and Deborah Mayo... Joe Pitt. Intellectually, Joe made me reason carefully, consider how things "hang together", and integrate the ideas we analyzed in class in my work and life. Personally, Joe's interest in me through the years has sustained and advanced my career. He helped me make a decision several years ago that resulted in my becoming an academic... Joe Pitt because of his motivation and interest in his students. Students were made to think not just memorize and regurgitate!... Joe Pitt: "Even when he was wrong, he was right"... Joe Pitt. He constantly challenged my intellect. Also he was shorter than me... Joe Pitt: He has demonstrated and acted on a sustained and sincere interest in my academic and professional development and relevant motivation and constructive criticism toward professional goals... Probably Joe Pitt. I took a phil. of science class early on in my schooling, and it convinced me to switch from philosophy as a minor to a second major. I had him for higher level courses later on, and he more than any other professor was able to draw me out into classroom discussions/ arguments. That experience has helped me to present and defend my positions in many different public situations... Joe Pitt. Joe befriended students. Party at his house, etc. Joe picked on students. He made us think! I am still thinking. Philosophy was fun... Joe Pitt. I was his first "advisee". I will never forget the sessions/ discussions we had sitting on the floor in his small house in B'burg. (And drinking his homemade beer!) Joe made us work hard. Made us think hard... Professor Joe Pitt was my most influential professor. It was inspiring to watch him teach the class. I admired his knowledge and mastery of the subject as he taught. The combination of his personality and his teaching style continually challenged me to reach for more than what came easy. I've carried this 'reaching' from the classroom into my life. Sometimes it produces success and sometimes not, but the effort is ever present. Joe sets the standard for teaching excellence... Joe Pitt. Like many students, I entered Virginia Tech as an Engineering Major. When I realized that my talents were more prominent in the liberal arts, I took a survey Philosophy class taught by Joe Pitt. He quickly picked me out of the class of 200 and engaged me in the Socratic method. At the end of the semester, I changed my major to Philosophy with a minor in Legal Studies. The rest is history!... Joe Pitt- roofing skills

Nick Smith - because he was highly motivating... Nick

Smith. Nick taught me to think "out of the box", to see what others have not... Nick Smith, due to personality, analysis of subject matter, and degree to which he pushed students to delve into the material and field in general...

Eleanore Stump and Nick Smith were the most influential professors. Their courses on Greek and Medieval philosophy were taught superbly. They inspired me to want to explore philosophy in greater depth and helped me to develop a love of scholarship and liberal education that I hold dear to this day... Eleanore Stump... Eleanore introduced me to the joys of critical thinking and nurtured my budding interest in medieval ethics.

Norm Grover... Norm Grover, a man who was genuinely concerned and interested in his students.

Dr. Kruse. He had a rare ability to, by questioning, help students understand the implications or bases of their intuitions and a more rare ability to respect intuitions that varied widely from his own.

Prof Stephens (adjunct at the time, probably not there anymore, came from Rice originally). Because he was not only available to his students, but the fact he always came off as a real and genuine person, went out of his way to keep himself qua professor/husband/person accessible and honestly shared his struggles in the profession. In fact, he's the one who encouraged me to continue to follow my second degree in nursing before attempting a graduate degree - whether in philosophy or otherwise. He accentuated that the field is just tough enough where feeding yourself is primary, i.e. staying employed is paramount, THEN fulfilling your aspirations in an academic field can be achieved (while also pursuing marriage/family life, etc).

Dr. Mark Gifford---intelligent, fun, thought provoking professor and class... Mark Gifford -- my adviser, chair of my thesis committee, and specialist in my field of study (Greek)... Dr. Gifford helped me work through ideas and organize a paper... Mark Gifford. The way he structured the class led to many good debates where you could see both sides. He helped me realize how many things revolve around philosophy... Mark Gifford- thesis advisor, specializes in my area of concentration, good friend and motivator... Dr. Mark Gifford- intellectual & fun... Gifford. In his introduction to ancient philosophy & subsequent seminars, he instilled a spirit of inquiry in which the classical philosophers were not worshipped like distant monuments but engaged as if vital and very alive contemporaries...

#1 Mark Gifford.

1) he was my advisor
2) In Morality & Justice he introduced me to his T/A Thomas Firey who never tired of my emailing him questions. He always responded... every day to every question without hostility always with a teaching spirit.

#2 Eric Watkins

1) He taught my first class Knowledge & Reality and my Phil. of religion . Favorite class.
2) he could argue both sides of any issue better than anyone I've ever met. He could turn a theist to atheism or an atheist to theism.

#2 only b/c of his heavy involvement with Kant one of my least favorite philosophers.

A hard question to answer, but perhaps Bill Fitzpatrick because he taught me so much about good philosophical and scholarly writing. Entering the program with a BS in Physics, I had quite a bit to learn about writing in the humanities, and I was lucky enough to take his ethics course my first semester. His willingness to really go beyond what was necessary in order to give me a lift in this area really made a difference... William Fitzpatrick. He really got me interested in normative ethics. I use my notes from his class to prepare lesson plans for my philosophy class.

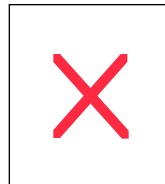
Dr. Harlan Miller taught the first philosophy course I took at Tech. He showed me how the seemingly incongruous disciplines of math and philosophy go together very well... At Tech: Harlan Miller for his honor and intellect; John Christman for directing my master's thesis... Professor Miller. He took philosophy studies out of the realm of history and into everyday reality. PS The lesson of the pipe was not lost on all of us... Harlan Miller taught me symbolic and nonsymbolic logic, which I find I use often and in myriad ways. I wish you had had more logic classes.

Pat Croskery. He was a great analytical thinker and he always had time to talk. He showed me what it meant to think philosophically... Patrick Croskery/ Gary Hardcastle... Mr. Croskery taught me the complexity of ethics and how to make sound ethical judgments (which I use everyday). Mr. Hardcastle taught me the value of questioning knowledge and encouraging me to question my basis for belief... My most influential Philosophy Professor(s) John Cristman and Pat Croskery. Both John and Pat played a very active role in my philosophical education. I did independent studies with them both, both were on my thesis committee for the M.A., and both fundamentally shaped the way I do philosophy. I continue to look to them both as friends and mentors today, and remain in touch with them both.

We want to hear from you!!!!!!

Please give us your comments, suggestions on what you think of our newsletter, any special features you would want included in future editions, etc.

Remember to check our website www.phil.vt.edu



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Faculty NEWS!

Roger Ariew

presented several papers at international conferences: Fourth Athens-Pittsburgh Symposium, Forms of Proof and Demonstration in Philosophy and Science, Delphi, Greece, June 2003, Journée Descartes, Centre d'Etudes cartésiennes, Paris, France, June 2003, International Summer School on Souls, Clocks, Atoms and Forces: Competing Models of Individuals in Early Modern Thought, Macea, Romania, September 2003, Conference on Jesuits, Education, and Science, Evora, Portugal, September 2003, Conference on the Rhetoric of Seventeenth Century Science, Ghent, Belgium, December 2003.

He also co-wrote the Historical Dictionary of Descartes and Cartesian Philosophy (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2003), xvi + 304 pp., wrote an introduction with Marjorie Grene for Apology for Raymond Sebond (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003) x + 164 pp., and wrote "La vitalité de la science d'Aristote au dix-septième siècle: l'explication des observations astronomiques de Galilée," Esprits Modernes, Etudes sur les modèles de pensée alternatifs aux XVIe-XVIIIe siècles, edited by Vlad Alexandrescu and Dana Jalobeanu (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2003), pp. 27-52.

He directed a Summer Seminar on Leibniz June: 2002-03, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Grant for Directors of Summer Seminars for Collegiate and University Faculty, co-director, Leibniz and His Contemporaries, Blacksburg, June-July 2003. He has been editor for Perspectives on Science, advisory editor for Isis, editorial consultant, The New Synthese Historical Library, and co-chair of the Program Committee of the International Society for History of Philosophy of Science (HOPOS) meeting in San Francisco, June 2004.

Anne Margaret Baxley

Dr. Baxley's principal areas of research are Kant, especially Kant's ethics, the history of ethics, and ethical theory. She teaches courses on Kant, ethics, and the history of modern philosophy. Dr. Baxley has been selected as an American Fellow of the American Association of University Women (2002-2003) and has received a summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities (2003). In 2003-2004, she will be a fellow in residence at the National Humanities Center, where she is working on a book on Kant's theory of virtue. A complete curriculum vitae is available from Dr. Baxley upon request.

Richard Burian

has general research interests in history and philosophy of science (especially conceptual change) and epistemology. He specializes in philosophy of biology, with specific concerns in the history of nineteenth and twentieth century evolutionary theory, theories of heredity, and theories of (biological) development; the relations among biological disciplines; the impact of the molecular biology on the theory and practice of biological disciplines; historiography and methodology in history and philosophy of science; and scientific realism.

Andrea Falcon

is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy for the 2003-2004 academic year. His main interest is in ancient philosophy, and in particular Aristotle. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Padua in 1995, and has also been a visiting student at Balliol College, Oxford, and at King's College, University of London. He was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship in 1997-1999 at Padua, and has since then been a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Departments at the University of Pittsburgh, Ohio State University, and the University of California, Berkeley.

William FitzPatrick

began serving as Director of Graduate Studies in the summer of 2003. He is a member of the Virginia Advisory Committee on Ethical, Legal and Social Issues in Genetic Research, and also serves on the New River Valley Local Human Rights Committee. His research is in moral philosophy, and he has recently published articles on topics ranging from the foundations of ethics and the nature of normativity (e.g. "Reasons, Value, and Particular Agents: Normative Relevance Without Motivational Internalism," Mind, Vol. 113, Issue 450), to ethical issues surrounding human embryonic stem cell research (e.g. "Surplus Embryos, Non-reproductive Cloning and the Intend/Foresee Distinction," in The Hastings Center Report, Vol. 33, No. 3). Other papers now under review, and being presented at conferences, take up the debate between realists and constructivists in ethical theory, focusing on a critique of Korsgaard's influential neo-Kantian constructivism and a defense of a moderate form of non-reductionist ethical realism

Mark Gifford

Presented papers on Plato at the 11th International Conference on Greek Philosophy in St. Petersburg, Russia and in the international symposium at the World Congress of Philosophy in Istanbul, Turkey. He is currently on leave from teaching while doing research on an NEH Fellowship on Aristotle.

William "Mark" Goodwin

is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy for the 2003-2004 academic year. He is a native of Baltimore, Maryland, and did his undergraduate work at The Johns Hopkins University, where he double majored in Chemistry and Philosophy. He completed his PhD in Logic and the Methodology of Science (from the University of California at Berkeley) in the summer of 2003. In addition to his degree in Logic, Dr. Goodwin also holds masters degrees from Berkeley in both Chemistry and Mathematics. His dissertation, Kant's Philosophy of Geometry, presents a new interpretation of Kant's central claims about the nature of mathematics in light of contemporary work on the role of diagrams in mathematical reasoning. In addition to his interests in the history of the philosophy of mathematics, Dr. Goodwin is also interested in contemporary issues in the philosophies of science and mathematics.

In the fall semester of 2003, Dr. Goodwin taught Knowledge and Reality, an introductory philosophy course, as well as Naturalism and Ontology, a graduate seminar. In

the spring, he will be teaching Knowledge and Reality, again, as well as Berkeley, Hume and Kant, a mid-level course in the history of philosophy. At present, Dr. Goodwin is working on getting the ideas developed in his dissertation published. In addition, his article, "Explanation in Organic Chemistry" recently appeared in the compilation Chemical Explanation: Characteristics, Development, Autonomy published by The New York Academy of Sciences.

Valerie Gray Hardcastle

is the new Chair of STS. She works in the areas of philosophy of mind and cognitive science. Aside from the more traditional issues in philosophy of mind, and related concerns in epistemology and metaphysics, she is also interested in how (and whether) psychological phenomena (such as consciousness, memory, perception, and so on) relate to underlying neurophysiology, what these relations tell us about the mind, ourselves as cognitive creatures, and the possibility of a cognitive science.

James Klagge

is teaching at VT's Center for European Studies and Architecture, in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland. He is teaching courses on "Machiavellian Political Philosophy" and "Philosophical Themes in Central European Literature" which tie in with places that students visit during the semester. He has already been with students to visit Venice, Rome, and other cities in Italy. Later they will go on a group trip to several cities to the north, in Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. While he is in Europe Klagge will also be consulting with several colleagues that share his research interest in the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and he will be giving a paper at the Philosophical Academy of Charles University in Prague.

Deborah Mayo

has a joint appointment in Philosophy and Economics. Her work is in the epistemology of science and the philosophy of statistical inference. Her recent research has involved developing an account of experimental inference in science based upon statistical reasoning and the idea of learning from error. Her "error statistical" philosophy of experiment is set out in her Error and the Growth of Experimental Knowledge (The University of Chicago Press, 1996). She applies her approach toward solving key problems in philosophy of science: underdetermination, the role of novel evidence, Duhem's problem, and the nature of scientific progress. Dr. Mayo is also interested in applications to problems in risk analysis and risk controversies, and has co-edited Acceptable Evidence: Science and Values in Risk Management (with Rachelle Hollander). Dr. Mayo teaches courses in introductory and advanced logic (including the metatheory of logic and modal logic), in scientific method, and in philosophy of science. She also teaches special topics courses in Science and Technology Studies.

Rosa Maria Mayorga

is coordinator of the spring conference and editor of the newsletter. She created the alumni survey and is currently working with the computer department on a video showcasing our department, to be posted on the

Many thanks for your contributions!!!!

The Philosophy Department is grateful for the generous donations you have made through the Virginia Tech Foundation. Your support contributes in a very direct way to both the intellectual and social life of the department. In particular, it enables us to continue our tradition of hosting regular conferences and colloquia, which is vital both to our functioning as a recognized center of active philosophical research and to the broad education of our students.

Please contact our chair, Professor Joe Pitt (jcpitt@vt.edu) when you submit information about your gift. With your permission, we would like to list contributors in future newsletters, with categories as follows:

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philosophy website. She developed an online version, which she teaches once a year, of her regular lecture class of Morality and Justice. This year she has a manuscript under review, and an article forthcoming in The Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society. She received Virginia Tech's 2004 Humanities Symposium Award.

Laura Perini

has research interests in philosophy of science and philosophy of biology, a focus reflecting her background in the life sciences. She studied biology at UCLA and spent time on research in molecular biology and biochemistry. She received her Ph.D. at the University of California, San Diego. Her dissertation was an analysis of visual representations in scientific arguments, a project that combined her interest in philosophy of science and aesthetics with an old curiosity about scientists' dependence on diagrams, graphs, and other kinds of figures. Prior to joining the department at Virginia Tech, she held a position as a visiting lecturer at Connecticut College.

Joseph Pitt

has been very busy with his duties as Chair, in addition to serving on many university committees. He has also been doing a lot of traveling: Baltimore (he delivered the keynote address of the Association of Science and Technological Studies), New Mexico, Boston, Saskatchewan, to name a few.

Emeriti:

Henry Bauer, Emeritus Professor
James Buchanan, Emeritus Distinguished Professor
Marjorie Grene, Honorary Distinguished Professor
Harlan Miller, Emeritus Professor
Palmer Talbutt, Associate Professor Emeritus

Instructors:

Andrew Garnar
Brad Kelley
Eric Lewis
Matt Rea
Carrie Sewell
Scott Thomson
Justin York

We also have a great group of graduate students:

Marley Banker,	Brian Berner,
Seth Brown,	Brandiff Caron,
Lucas Covey,	Robert Eiben,
Jason Gardner,	Ivan Guajardo,
Sarah Anne Hippolitus,	John Adam Kane,
Liam Kelly (STS/Phil.),	Bo Klintberg,
Noah Merica-Jones,	Jean Miller (STS/Phil.),
So Yeon Park (STS/Phil.),	Charles Repp,
John Smolen,	Roger Stanev,
Scott Thomson,	Christopher Upton
Anubav Vasudevan,	(STS/Phil.),
Laury Ward,	Michael Wenzke

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY



Spring 2004 Newsletter