



PHILOSOPHY @ VT

Greetings from the Chair

Dear Friends of VT Philosophy,
It has been an exciting year! We have a new Department Head, Douglas Lind from the University of Idaho. Dr. Lind will take over July 1 and we look forward to a long and prosperous journey together. (For more, see p. 4.) Other good news includes the creation of a significant endowment to fund a \$10,000 scholarship for a graduate student studying philosophy of science or technology by alumnus Jeff Rudd. Jeff has also funded a similar scholarship for an MA student studying ethics or political philosophy for the next 4 years. We thank Jeff profusely for his generosity. And, I might add, I hope Jeff's gifts to the department serve as gracious invitation for others to step up as well! I can report that the department is looking good. Our enrollments are strong; applications to the graduate program are strong. In short we are in a good position to start growing again. This year's Graduate Student Conference on Pragmatism was a huge success. Robert Brandom was our keynote speaker. The graduate students were also kind enough to ask me to serve as the second keynote speaker. The student presentations were excellent, exceeded in quality only by the commentaries provided by our graduate students. Kelly Trogdon put together a very



successful workshop on philosophy of mind that concluded the end of April. Speakers included Louise Anthony and Joe Levine from University of Massachusetts, Brie Gertler from the University of Virginia and our own Ted Parent and Kelly Trogdon. Our Colloquium Series has provided us with lively talks by a variety of visitors concluding this year with a presentation by Anne Margaret Baxley, formerly of Virginia Tech. It has been an honor to serve the department for a total of 15 years as department head. But I really I look forward to returning to my first love this fall, teaching.

Philologia: UG Research 2014-2015

Research done by undergraduates in our college is supported by *Philologia* through publication and grants. Marc Lucht is faculty supervisor. Demetria Lee (Philosophy, English & PoliSci) is editor-in-chief. Articles published this year included ones by Lee and also by Katy Shepard (Philosophy). Andrew Barber (Philosophy, Econ & PoliSci) received a grant to present his research at the ACC Meeting of the Minds. Peter Johnston (Philosophy & Religion & Culture) was a URI Scholar. And Lee received a grant to support her research.

Congratulations!!

www.philologia.clahs.vt.edu

Our Thanks to Contributors to Philosophy at VT!

Thanks to the following for their financial contributions to the Philosophy Department in the past year since May 2014: Regina Mary DePalma, Harrison Edward Karg, Elizabeth and Eric Hullett, Richard Burian, Gilbert and Frances Till, George B. Adams III, Joe Pitt, the Marathon Petroleum Corp. matching a gift from Thomas Kelly in memory of Dieter Seltzer, and, of course, Jeff Rudd. Join them!!

To make a donation, please write a check to the "Virginia Tech Foundation" and indicate in the "Memo" that the donation is directed to Philosophy. Send to us at: Department of Philosophy-0126, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, 24061. If you are interested in making a large donation or a bequest, please contact the College Director of Development, John King, at 540-231-8734, jhking@vt.edu. Donations are used to support conferences, speakers, and fund travel opportunities for faculty and students.

Spring 2014 Commencement

Bachelor of Arts:

Almen, Katherine Elias
 Babb, Alyce Macaulay
 Barrett, Jonathan H.
 Carpin, John Caleb
 Chau, Jessica
 Christie, Thomas Sebastian
 Coleman, Courtlyn Whitney
 DeVilbiss, John Andrew
 Doak, Sam Moore
 Few, Thomas Pierce III
 Haase, Kathleen Elizabeth
 Hodge, Nigel Denzel
 Hodge, Sydney Nicole
 Iruvanti, Sirisha Sayi
 Jarboe, Rebecca Lyndsey
 Karr, Jordan Gregory
 Kebede, Eskedar
 Lauterio, Joseph Thomas
 Leath, Alaxander Jake
 Lewis, Katherine Elaine
 Lindsey, Douglas Alistair
 Lord, Jon-Eric
 Lutterbein, Alexander Michael
 Lutton, Jonathan Thomas
 Mackin, Anne Mary
 Marsters Jr., S. Robert
 Matthew, Benjamin Ray
 McGrady, Sean Clayton
 Molson, Jessica Constance

Nguyen, Allison Thu Anh Tri
 Ridgeway, Matthew Thomas
 Rueckert, Theodore Thomas
 Sandler, Miles Alan
 Shepard, Kathryn Ann
 Smith, Adam Clyde
 Smith, Jennifer Louise
 Sparks, Ryan David
 Summerill, Lauren Ashley
 Sutherland, Michelle Jean
 Swengros, Thomas Jonathan
 Wedel, Jordan Elizabeth
 Wilson, Benjamin Aaron
 Wolfe, Samuel Alexander
 Zaboji, Steven G.

Master of Arts:

Creek, Richard
 Ferguson, Ryan
 Haderlie, Derek
 Jerrell, Tyler
 Linford, Dan
 Malone, Rory
 Mischler, Steven
 Wright, Jessica
 Zarella, Michael



2014 Bachelor of Arts graduates



2014 Master of Arts graduates

2014 Speakers and Awards



Mike Butera with an Artiphon.

Guest speaker for our 2014 Philosophy Department Commencement ceremony was alumnus Dr. Michael Butera ('09 Philosophy MA; '11 ASPECT PhD). Mike went on to start a company called Artiphon <http://www.artiphon.com> that produces and markets digital musical instruments. His speech was entitled "From Valid to Sound."

The William H. Williams Prize for Outstanding Senior went to S. Robert Marsters, Jr. The Marjorie Grene Prize for MA student that contributed most to the graduate program was jointly awarded to Ryan Ferguson and Rory Malone. The prize winners each gave a speech.

Philosophy Alumni: What Have You Been Up To?

This year we have been finding ways to encourage new Hokies to major in Philosophy. We gathered information about some of our graduates from the last 15 years. Here are stories about five of our alumni:

Anubav Vasudevan, this year's invited graduation speaker, won the awards for best graduating senior in both Philosophy and Physics at VT in 2002, MA from VT in Philosophy in 2004, and a PhD in Philosophy from Columbia in 2012. He is now an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago.

Pegah Parsi graduated in 2005 with a triple major in Philosophy, Political Science & Technical Writing, while also serving in the US Army. She has earned a JD from the University of Maryland in 2010 and an MBA from University of Baltimore in 2011. Pegah is a lawyer who represents immigration clients and consults on corporate social responsibility matters related to human trafficking and human rights. She is also a contract officer at Stanford University. "The VT philosophy program provides an exceptional foundation for any career. I found it particularly beneficial for legal analysis, whether for a career as a practicing attorney or as a policymaker. In addition, my philosophy background has served as a guiding light in business ethics concerns."

Sophia Bous Hufnagel graduated with a BA in Philosophy, BS in Bio & a minor in Chem in 2006. She earned her medical degree from George Washington University School of Medicine in 2010 and graduates from her combined residency and fellowship training in Pediatrics and Medical Genetics at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in 2015. She has used her interests in medical ethics to pursue research and publish in the ethics of caring for children with special needs as well as in the rights of minors in genetic testing. She has completed away rotations in Egypt, South Africa, Thailand, Australia, and Colombia, in which she focused on the care of children with complex genetic disorders.

Nicole Shiner Radunsky graduated from VT with a triple major in Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology in 2008. After graduating she worked in West Africa, in Ghana and Mali, for the Millennium Village Project, focusing on infrastructure and community development. She is now working on a Master's degree in International Affairs at Johns Hopkins.

Alex Lindsay graduated from VT in 2013 with a double major in Philosophy & Biology. He was the first graduate of the new Philosophy track in Pre-Medical Professions. Alex is a clinical lab scientist who plans to join the Air Force and eventually attend med school. "The pre-med track in Philosophy is a great way to both develop a critical mind and learn how to apply it to problems in science in medicine. A solid base in problem solving, critical thinking and rhetoric is immensely useful for solving problems with quality control, writing proposals and procedures, diagnosing patients and viewing the lab as an abstract system. The kind of mind that a philosophy degree builds can be particularly suited to medicine, as it is able to take in and process a lot of data to find a diagnosis, increase efficiency or catch errors in testing."

We want to hear from you...

With hundreds of Hokie Philosophy alumni out there, we should be getting all kinds of news, but you seem to be shy. Please let us know what you've been up to. Drop us e-mails at jklagge@vt.edu and we'll plan to get it in the next newsletter. And please join our "Virginia Tech Department of Philosophy" Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/78145381226/>. We regularly post photos, info about events, and discussions about philosophical topics in the news. It's a good way to stay in touch with us, with each other, and with philosophy. Check it out—stay in touch.

The Department has hired a new chair...

...after a national search! We welcome Douglas Lind. Originally from Minnesota, Prof. Lind is trained in both philosophy and law. After earning a BA in philosophy from U of Minnesota, he completed a JD at Washington University in St. Louis and then his PhD in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania. Since the early 1990s he has taught philosophy at the University of Idaho, working through the ranks to full professor and serving as Philosophy Dep't Chair from 2002-2011.

Prof. Lind's multidisciplinary training carries over to his work experience, teaching, and approach to philosophical research and departmental administration. Prior to becoming an academic, he worked as a practicing lawyer, serving as an Ass't Attorney General for the State of Missouri and, while in graduate school, working at a small firm in Philadelphia. Most of his experience in legal practice came in environmental law, a field in which he holds a special interest.



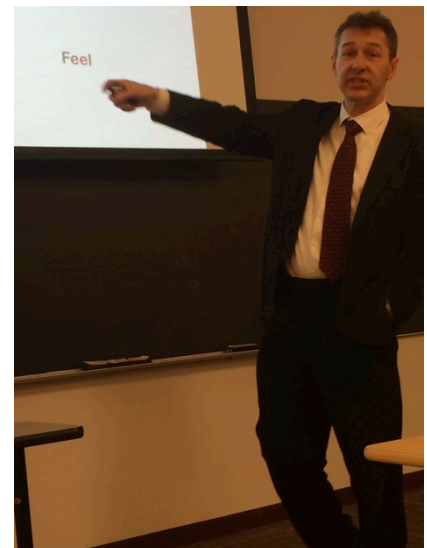
Understandably, Prof. Lind's principal area of philosophical research is philosophy of law, or jurisprudence, and is heavily influenced by the philosophy of pragmatism and the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Details about his publications and interests can be found here: <http://www.uidaho.edu/class/philosophy/douglaslind>. Administratively, his experience at Idaho positions him well for helping our philosophy department face the ever increasing pressures of maintaining major counts, enrollment management, and interdisciplinary cooperation. Among the aspects of the Virginia Tech philosophy department that most excite Prof. Lind are the research creativity of the faculty, the department's traditional strength in philosophy of science, the strong reputation of the MA program, and the department's participation in the STS and ASPECT interdisciplinary programs. Maintaining these top his list of administrative goals.

"Ethics Week at VT"

For the last several years the department has participated in a University-wide "Ethics Week" each spring. This year the Pamplin College of Business featured a talk by Tom Clarke, CEO of Kissito Healthcare, on "Beyond Corporate Social Responsibility: The Ethical Responsibility of Business in Social Change." The Philosophy Department sponsored Professor Bertram Malle of Brown University, speaking on "Ethics of Social Robots and Ethical Social Robots: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach." The talk focused on the challenges of discerning and programming social norms. In past years we have featured John Christman of Penn State on "Professional Ethics: from the personal to the political and back again," Larry Becker of Hollins College on "Health, Justice and Disability," Diane Michelfelder of Macalester College on "Technological Paternalism and Design," and talks by Harlan Miller, Joe Pitt, and Bill FitzPatrick of VT.

TRANSITIONS:

In addition to the change of department chairs, this year Michael Moehler and Tristram McPherson both earned tenure. Congratulations! Unfortunately, Ohio State made Tristram an offer he couldn't refuse, and we will lose him. Good luck to Tristram, Amy and Finn!



Professor Malle on the ethics of social robots

Ben Jantzen wins NSF Early Career Award



Benjamin C. Jantzen, assistant professor of philosophy, has won a 2015 National Science Foundation Faculty Early Development (CAREER) Award to study how to enable machines to carry out scientific research on their own. The [CAREER Award](#) is one of the NSF's most prestigious, providing multiyear support for especially promising junior faculty members.

Jantzen's project is at the intersection of philosophy, computing, and scientific discovery. It addresses a perennial challenge in scientific research: Of all the variables related to a given phenomenon, which ones are relevant to discovering the scientific laws behind the phenomenon?

The project's goal is to create a robot scientist by developing computer algorithms – step-by-step procedures for solving problems – that can automatically choose the variables to be considered. Jantzen calls his approach the Dynamical Kinds Theory. "The challenge is how to get machines to carry out novel and interesting scientific research on their own,"

Jantzen said. "I have developed a solution to this philosophical problem, and my CAREER project will allow me to test that solution by developing some radically new

programs for automated scientific discovery." These programs will be able to choose new properties or scientific variables appropriate for investigating a particular phenomenon or system of interest, Jantzen said. They might be applied to problems such as discovering which ecological properties are useful to conservationists trying to solve a particular environmental challenge. Jantzen will lead two summer initiatives as part of his research. A weeklong session, Philosophy and Physical Computing, is targeted for graduate students from around the country in philosophy and computer science. "The idea is to help foster a community of researchers with the skills and understanding to exploit the overlap between the philosophy of science and machine learning," said Jantzen. "Computer science students will learn how philosophical investigation can be applied to scientific methodology," Jantzen said. "Philosophy students will acquire the basic programming skills to apply and test their theories in the real world." The graduate students in turn will help with a workshop for middle school children. Titled Robot Scientist, the two-day event will be hosted at the Science Museum of Western Virginia in Roanoke. "Kids will get the chance to build simple systems that carry out measurements and build theories about interesting physical phenomena," Jantzen said.

Jantzen's grant is expected to total \$443,427 over five years. "It is almost unheard of for a humanities scholar to win a CAREER Award from the NSF, but Ben's project is that rare thing: a truly innovative project that will bring philosophical understandings of how humans create, understand, and use categories as a tool for automating what have always been the most human of activities: curiosity-driven knowledge making and discovery," said Elizabeth Spiller, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. "Building robots is one thing; building robot scientists quite another. This project exemplifies the kinds of intellectual leadership that distinguish our humanities disciplines at Virginia Tech."

Faculty News:

Assistant Professor Kelly Trogdon writes: This year I published a paper (co-authored with Paisley Livingston) entitled “The Complete Work” in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, as well as an entry (co-authored with Ricki Bliss) for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* on the notion of grounding. I’ve also finished a chapter entitled “Grounding, Placement, and Mental Content” for Chris Daly’s forthcoming volume *The Palgrave Handbook on Philosophical Methods*, as well as a response to a critical piece on “The Complete Work” (again, co-authored with Paisley Livingston) that’s forthcoming in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

I organized a philosophy of mind workshop that was held at VT on April 24th and 25th. I presented my paper “Experiential Revelation” at this workshop and at the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology meeting in New Orleans. I gave commentary on two papers this year: Ricki Bliss’ “What Dependent Entities Explain” at the Junior Metaphysics Workshop at Grand Valley State University, and David Mark Kovacs’ “Metaphysical Explanation without Grounding” at the Central APA in Saint Louis. I was on the program committee for the Canadian Philosophical Association 2015 Annual Congress – the conference will be held at the University of Ottawa this summer – and I’ll present a paper there. And this summer I’ll also be traveling to Ascona, Switzerland (to a place called ‘Truth Mountain’!) to give a talk on metaphysical explanation. I’ve also been working as an Associate Editor for the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* and have referred a bunch of papers. And I’ve been a member of three MA thesis committees this year and have quite enjoyed giving my students a hard time!

Professor James Klagge became a grandfather this year, giving his grandson a shirt with a picture of Wittgenstein! Klagge was a visiting scholar at Masaryk U. in Brno CZ for a week in November, he was a speaker at a week-long Wittgenstein conference in Austria in March, and will be a speaker at a week-long Wittgenstein conference in Iowa in May. He is working on a short introductory e-book on Wittgenstein, *Simply Wittgenstein*, and a collection of background material on the *Tractatus*. In November Klagge will run the Marine Corps Marathon to raise money for the Parkinson’s Foundation, in honor of his late father. Marathon #18!

Assistant Professor Michael Moehler works in moral and political philosophy, with a focus on some of the key figures of both disciplines, such as Hobbes, Hume, Kant, and Rawls. This academic year, his article “Rational Cooperation and the Nash Bargaining Solution” was published in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*. In addition, at the undergraduate level, Dr. Moehler started to direct, with great enthusiasm, the newly established Minor in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Virginia Tech and, with equal enthusiasm, in his role as committee member, graduated his first Ph.D. student in the ASPECT Program. During the spring semester, Dr. Moehler attended a workshop in political philosophy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and he gave a seminar for the Alexis de Tocqueville Project in Law, Liberty, and Morality at the University of New Orleans. On World Philosophy Day, Dr. Moehler discussed his newest article with the title “In Defense of a Democratic Productivist Welfare State” at the Public Library in Christiansburg and helped organize two ASPECT faculty book presentation-and-signing events in the Newman Library at Virginia Tech. This summer, Dr. Moehler will be serving as the John Stuart Mill Visiting Chair of Social Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hamburg (Germany) and as Visiting Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Graz (Austria). He will teach three graduate seminars (one of which will be co-taught with a colleague from the Department of Economics at the University of Hamburg), give research talks in both Hamburg and Graz, and will be a guest speaker at the Peter Löscher Chair of Business Ethics at the Technical University of Munich. In addition, Dr. Moehler will organize a 1.5-day workshop at the University of Hamburg. The workshop will focus on his work on contractarian ethics and related topics.



More Faculty News:

Professor Joe Pitt reports: I had a good, if full, year. Top of the list was being elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. I am humbled to be so honored by my colleagues. I also managed to publish some papers. "Putting Engineering into Philosophy," "Guns Don't Kill, People Kill: Values in and Around Technology," and "Space Technologies." Steve Mischler and I also produced an annotated bibliography, "Instruments in Science," for the Oxford Online Bibliographies. I also helped organize the Fifth Meeting of the Forum for "Philosophy, Engineering and Technology," held here in Blacksburg last May, where I presented "The Role of Technologies in Undermining the Perennial Philosophy." My presentation to the Graduate Student Conference was entitled "Rescherean Pragmatism." I am still working on my book manuscript, "Seeing Near and Far: A Heraclitean Philosophy of Science." And Ashley Shew and I are working on the Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Technology.



Professor Pitt lecturing – a familiar sight to all alumni for the last 40+ years!

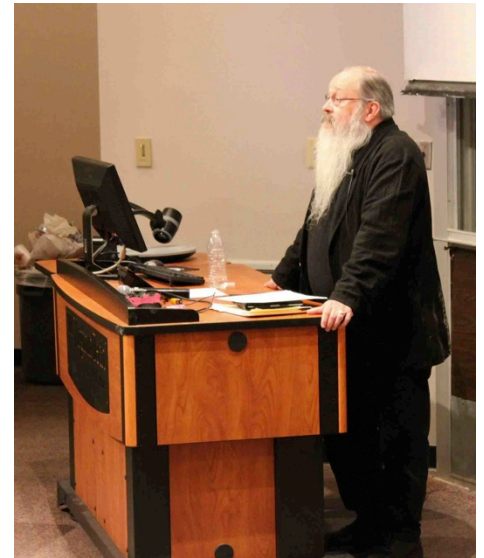
In 2014 **Associate Professor Lydia Patton** published a textbook, *Philosophy, Science, and History: A Guide and Reader*, with Routledge Press. The text is a compact overview of the history and philosophy of science that aims to introduce students to the groundwork of the field, and to stimulate innovative research. The general introduction focuses on scientific theory change, assessment, discovery, and pursuit. Part I of the Reader begins with classic texts in the history of logical empiricism, including Reichenbach's discovery-justification distinction. With careful reference to Kuhn's analysis of scientific revolutions, the section provides key texts analyzing the relationship of the history and philosophy of science to the history of science, including texts by Santayana, Rudwick, and Shapin and Schaffer. Part II provides texts illuminating central debates in the history of science and its philosophy. These include the history of natural philosophy (Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, Kant, Hume, and du Châtelet in a new translation); induction and the logic of discovery (including the Mill-Whewell debate, Duhem, and Hanson); and catastrophism versus uniformitarianism in natural history (Playfair, de Buffon, Cuvier, and Darwin). The editor's introductions to each section provide a broader perspective informed by contemporary research in each area, including related topics. Each introduction furnishes proposals, including thematic bibliographies, for innovative research questions and projects in the classroom and in the field.

ASPECT Faculty Authors' Book Presentations

In April Ben Jantzen presented and signed copies of his new book *An Introduction to Design Arguments*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2014. He was part of a panel of four authors in the college who discussed their books and answered questions. The event was sponsored by ASPECT and held in the Newman Library. The book discusses the history of arguments for the existence of God that are based on the complexity of the world, and evaluates those arguments. In December Lydia Patton presented and discussed her recent book *Philosophy, Science and History: A Guide and Reader*, published by Routledge in 2014, at a similar event. Her book deals with the intersection of these three fields. Previous ASPECT Author events have featured Klagge's book *Wittgenstein in Exile*, and Pitt's book *Doing Philosophy of Technology*.

Conferences: Graduate Conference on Pragmatism in November & Faculty Conference on the Philosophy of Mind in May

Caitlin Parker welcomes attendees to the 11th Annual VT Graduate Conference on "Pragmatism."



Featured speakers at the Graduate Conference were Joe Pitt and Professor Robert Brandom of University of Pittsburgh, shown above.

The Faculty Conference on Philosophy of Mind featured talks by Louise Antony and Joe Levine of UMass, Brie Gertler of UVA, and Kelly Trogon and Ted Parent of VT.



Ted Parent, above, spoke on "Second Order Judgment and Autological Expression."