

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2011

NEW STUDENT AWARDS HONOR FORMER DEPARTMENT LEADERS

This year, the Department inaugurated two new student awards, in addition to our now two-year-old *Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative Award*. The new awards, of \$500 each, go to the outstanding senior in Religious Studies and in Philosophy respectively.

The *Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald* and the *Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan*, and the Student Awards Reception at which they were presented on March 16, provided a wonderful opportunity to honor two stellar emeritus faculty for their contributions to making this a department of excellent scholar-teachers who are committed to serving the interests and well-being of their students.

The Student Awards Reception was held in the lobby of Withers Hall, with faculty, staff, students, parents, alumni, and other friends of the Department helping to celebrate. As the outstanding senior in the BS in Philosophy with a Concentration in Logic, Representation and Reasoning, Ashley Nicole Walls received the *Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative Award*; Mary Catherine Hamner received the *Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald*; and Jefferson Evans Guilford received the *Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan*. We were delighted that both Professor Fitzgerald and Professor Bryan were able to attend and present the prizes named in their honor.

Professor Fitzgerald joined NC State in 1956 and retired in 1992. When he arrived, the Department offered only a few courses in religious studies. Professor Fitzgerald worked on theology, but taught both religious studies and philosophy. The Department introduced a BA in Philosophy with a Concentration in Religious Studies in the late 1970s, and converted it to a full-fledged BA in Religious Studies in 1994.



Student Award Winners (L to R): Ashley N. Walls (*Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative Award*); Jefferson E. Guilford (*Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan*); Mary C. Hamner (*Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald*).

Professor Fitzgerald served on many college and university committees, and chaired some of them, including the University Courses and Curricula Committee. He was Assistant Head of the Department from 1974 to 1985 and again from 1986 to 1990. He also served as Assistant Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences from 1986 until 1992.

Professor Bryan was appointed Head of the Department of Philosophy and Religion (as it was then called) in 1966. He retired in 1989 after 23 years as Department Head, a record that may stand forever. When he arrived, a year after State College became North Carolina State University, the Department's big multi-section course was "Marriage and Family Living."

He dumped the course, and started a tradition of hiring PhDs from the top graduate programs to teach rigorous courses in philosophy and religious studies – our practice today. Professor

Bryan's own philosophical interests were primarily in ethics, philosophy of art, and philosophy of education. He was active in university affairs and served on many committees and chaired some of them, including the University Athletics Council. He helped establish a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at NC State. But Professor Bryan was, first and foremost, head of our department, and nobody has done more than he has to make it what it is today.

Jim Moorhead, a former member of the religious studies faculty who is now at Princeton Theological Seminary, said it best: "Bob and Curtis indeed did much to build the Department academically, but they also created an exceedingly congenial and collegial environment where one felt supported and valued as a person as well as an academic. They made the Department a wonderful place to spend the first nine years of my life as a professor."

See also *STUDENT AWARDS FUND*, page 2.

TONY STEWART WINS TWO AWARDS, ACCEPTS NEW POSITION

NC State has bestowed an Alumni Association Outstanding Research Award on Dr. Tony Stewart, Professor of Religious Studies. This is the University's highest award for research and scholarship. On top of that, Tony has also won the Outstanding Extension Service Award for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Tony received the Outstanding Research Award for his important monograph *The Final Word: The Caitanya Caritamrta and the Grammar of Religious Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2010). This book explores the origins, literary techniques and dissemination of Krsnadasa Kaviraja's *Caitanya Caritamrta* and thereby unlocks the history of the Gaudiya Vaisnava movement and explains the improbable unity of this dynamic religious group.

The book is the product of a distinguished career of historical scholarship, translation work, and ethnographic experience. It offers a revolutionary new understanding of important Bengali texts and traditions and makes a major contribution to the religious, intellectual, and social history of early modern India.

In the first review of *The Final Word*, which was published in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, John Stratton Hawley of Columbia University describes it as "a majestic and comprehensive book by any standard" and "a landmark in its field."

The world-class scholars who wrote in support of Tony's nomination all offered comparable praise, describing the book as "a work of prodigious scholarship," "masterful and nuanced," "a powerful and personal investigation," "a definitive study," and a "superlative monograph."

Tony received the Outstanding Extension Service Award for his leadership in developing and implementing an outreach and extension model for instruction in the languages of South Asia as part of an effort to bolster South Asia area studies in the Triangle, the USA, and abroad.

This work has improved instruction in South Asian languages and made it available to a far

wider range of students. It has also promoted the development of pedagogical tools such as televideo language courses in Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali, as well as digital resources such as dictionaries of South Asian languages. Tony's leadership in this field has contributed to a dramatic change in the teaching of South Asian languages that will have a lasting impact in both America and abroad.

After 25 years on our faculty, Tony is resigning from NC State this summer to take up a prestigious new appointment as Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt. We are very sorry to lose him, but we wish him all the best in his new position.



Dr. Tony K. Stewart in April 2011. Photo courtesy Robert Bell.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES DEGREE SUBJECT TO UNIVERSITY REVIEW

In March 2011, NC State University announced its plans for a strategic realignment process that will have an important impact on the University's administrative structures and academic programs. This announcement included a list of sixty degree programs that have been identified for further evaluation, among them the Department's BA in Religious Studies.

Fueled by media reports suggesting that the programs identified had been targeted for elimination, this caused considerable alarm to many faculty, students, parents, and members of the public. But Provost Arden subsequently made it clear that, while the reviews – which will be conducted during 2011/12 – might result in the elimination or restructuring of some weaker programs, stronger programs will be retained in their current form, and some of them may even be assigned additional resources.

The list of programs identified for review was based on very limited statistical criteria. In the upcoming reviews, these statistics will be replaced by far more sensitive criteria that are now being determined by an academically diverse task force that has been appointed to conduct the reviews.

The BA in Religious Studies was identified for further evaluation entirely because it is a small program with relatively few applicants, majors, and graduates. But it is also a very strong program; it has excellent faculty with an outstanding record of publications, fellowships, and grants, as well as awards for teaching, research, and extension service; it addresses issues concerning our global, pluralistic world that are of major importance for the United States, North Carolina, and the profit and non-profit sectors; and it is both efficient and cost-effective.

The Department is confident that Religious Studies will come through its review with flying colors, and that it will continue as a degree program at NC State.

STUDENT AWARDS FUND

At the beginning of the 2010/11 academic year, each department in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at NC State University was assigned a small sum of once-off money from alumni annual giving to devote to some worthy purpose. It is expected (but not guaranteed) that this practice will continue.

Because the Department had no scholarships or awards of its own other than the Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative Award, it decided to use its allocation from alumni annual giving to support student awards in Philosophy and Religious Studies in honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan and Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald respectively (see page 1).

The Department also decided to use the new awards as an opportunity to set up a student awards fund that will eventually grow big

enough to be converted into an endowment that will support these two awards – and possibly others – in perpetuity. The Philosophy and Religious Studies Student Awards Fund was publicly launched at our Student Awards Reception on March 16.

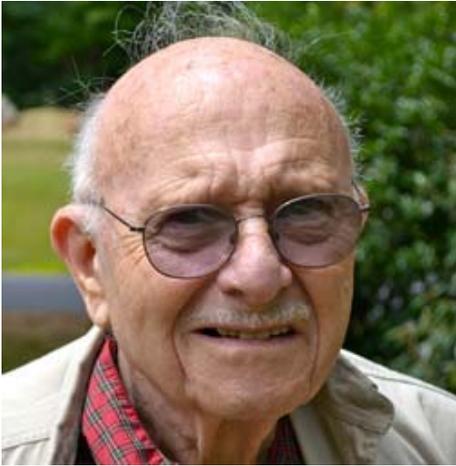
By that time the fund had solid foundations. Led by current faculty members who had overlapped with Professors Bryan and Fitzgerald, over 75% of the Department's tenured and tenure-track faculty had made donations or pledges to the fund, which had also received generous gifts from several former faculty members who had moved on to other institutions.

Since its launching, the fund has received further generous donations from alumni, emeritus faculty, other former faculty, and other

friends of the Department. As a result, its value has more than tripled. But it still has a long way to go before reaching the sum of \$25,000 required to convert it into an endowment.

We now appeal more broadly to friends of the Department to contribute to our Student Awards Fund. Your donations will not only support our student awards and honor Professors Bryan and Fitzgerald, but will also help those who control the purse strings to recognize that the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies has the full support of people who are best placed to appreciate the value of its work. During times of drastic budget-cutting, this is an important message to convey.

For information on how to make a donation, see the Department's web page on Giving: <http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/philogiving.html>.



Dr. Robert S. Metzger in June 2011.

FEATURE EMERITUS: DR. ROBERT S. METZGER

Robert S. ("Bob") Metzger, who taught philosophy at NC State for 30 years, helped form the Department's core in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy even before its flowering under the Headship of Bob Bryan (see our June 2008 *Newsletter*). Actually, for many years he was the core. Bob was responsible for teaching the logic courses, the philosophy of science course (his special interest was in philosophy of physics and the role of symmetry in constraining theories), and history of philosophy courses ranging from Descartes to Kant.

His training at Columbia University (then and now very strong in philosophy of science) no doubt prepared him for these burdens. Equally important to his colleagues and students was Bob's casual cosmopolitanism. This was evident in his offhand, yet thorough, knowledge of literature, world history, French food and the corpus of works for his beloved cello.

Bob's cosmopolitanism was earned, probably not at Columbia, but during his stint as a reporter for the *Daily Pacifican* (a major army newspaper, based in the Philippines during World War II), his immediately post-war sojourn at the University of Paris and his seven years with the Central Intelligence Agency.

His CIA years were less about cloak and dagger than they were about reading and writing. Most importantly, it was at the CIA that he met and then married another analyst there, Eva. Bob left for academe when the CIA's interest in waging the Cold War, rather than fighting fascism, exceeded Bob's.

Bob retired from teaching in 1988. In 1995, he published a novel, *A Master of the Century Past*, "an 'autobiography' of a celebrated society portraitist who, incidentally, happens to be the most celebrated art forger of the twentieth century." One reviewer reports that the novel is "filled with insights into our tangled world..., delicious social satire." (*The Literary Lantern*, Guy Munger, 1996).

Bob and Eva are spending their retirement years in Chapel Hill.

— David Auerbach

WORK IN PROGRESS: DRISCOLL ON PHILOSOPHY, EVOLUTION, AND HUMAN NATURE

In this article, the second in a series on faculty scholarship and research, Catherine Driscoll, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Undergraduate Advising, gives a brief overview of her current work.

One of the most intriguing questions that scientists currently seek to answer is that of how the human mind evolved. This question is not only fascinating in itself but also interesting from a biological perspective because we are such unusual creatures.

Human beings have exceptionally long lives and long and highly dependent childhoods, a capacity for altruism and morality, and a remarkable ability to acquire ideas and technologies from each other and improve them over time – an ability without which the technological marvels of the 21st century would be impossible.

Scientists trying to understand our distinctive life history and capacities face a tangle of fundamental theoretical and conceptual problems. Philosophers of science, like me, can help untangle some of these problems, such as the following: What might it take for cultural learning to evolve? How could cultural learning contribute to our biological survival and reproduction? What types of evolutionary processes might explain highly altruistic behavior?

Philosophers of science can also do large-scale synthetic work, drawing on evidence from

multiple scientific areas to help solve a problem. And they can even use their analytical training to help advance otherwise unproductive scientific debates by suggesting kinds of evidence that might settle what is at issue.

In some of my recent work, I argue that current explanations of human altruism and life history are incomplete, and that there might be a common explanation of the human capacity for sharing and altruism, the human capacity for cultural learning, and the unusual patterns of human life. Long childhoods enable cultural learning; but long, dependent childhoods also require the altruistic provision of food and resources from mothers, fathers, grandmothers (hence their long post-menopausal life), and other members of the group.

I also have an ongoing interest in whether human psychology can evolve by natural selection. Did our brains develop and are they coded by genes in such a way that brain systems – and our capacity for altruism and morality – can be transmitted reliably across generations and make a difference to our survival and reproduction; or must they be acquired anew in each generation?

Even more interesting is the question of what is required for something to be "transmitted reliably" and "acquired." Could some processes of human cultural acquisition become ways of reliably transmitting fitness-increasing traits across generations, with the result that those traits may be open to natural selection?

NEWSBITES

TOM REGAN – A CELEBRATION: On April 15-16, the Department hosted this workshop on the ethics of Professor Emeritus Tom Regan, who is famous for his work on animal rights. Speakers from twelve colleges and universities across the United States participated in the event, which was organized by Dr. Gary L. Comstock, Professor of Philosophy.

A TIME TRAVEL EVENT: Held at NC State on April 7–8, this program was organized by Dr. John W. Carroll, Professor of Philosophy. The event consisted of **A Time Travel Lecture** and **A Time Travel Conference**. The lecture, "Time Travel in Einstein's Universe," was presented by J. Richard Gott III, the renowned Princeton Professor of Astrophysical Sciences. Philosophy professors from five universities across the United States spoke at the conference.

MAY 2011 GRADUATES SPARKLE: The Department's most recent cohort of graduates was no ordinary class. At the departmental commencement ceremony in May 2011, we awarded seven degrees in Religious Studies and thirteen in Philosophy to eighteen students. Five of these eighteen students graduated *summa cum laude*; eight graduated *magna cum laude*; and two graduated *cum laude*. So a remarkable 83% of the class graduated with Latin honors. In addition, no fewer than eight graduated with two majors, and nine graduated with one or more minors.

NEW CONTRACT FACULTY: Several years of incremental budget cuts by the State and the University have cost the Department a number of permanent faculty positions. As a result, we have had to rely increasingly on fixed-term contract faculty to meet our teaching obligations. It is our good fortune that the new contract faculty that we were able to appoint during 2010/11 were of the highest quality, like our reliable old hands. The new appointees were William A. Bauer (PhD, Nebraska-Lincoln) and Eric K. Carter (PhD-candidate, Ohio State) in Philosophy, and Brian H. Collins (PhD, Chicago) and Matthew V. Novenson (PhD, Princeton Theological Seminary) in Religious Studies. All four have received new contracts for 2011/12. Brian Collins, who is one of our own graduates, established the Department's Bowling Smackdown between students and faculty in Philosophy and students and faculty in Religious Studies in 2000. The Smackdown soon became an established annual event. The overall record is now Religious Studies 5, Philosophy 5.

ALUMNI NEWS

David Moazed, BA in Philosophy '77, retired as an information architect from Microsoft Corporation in 2008 after a 30-year career in IT. He is now Vice-President of the Icicle Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited and does volunteer work with other Leavenworth, WA area organizations. He has been married to Teresa Moazed (Vet Med '84) for 33 years and counting.

Elizabeth Cordes, BA in Philosophy and BA in French '80, DDS (UNC-Chapel Hill '91), is practicing general dentistry in Oriental, NC, having sold her practice in Raleigh in 2005. Her husband, Roger (BA in English '05), facilitates the technical aspects of her practice and manages the business office. Their son Roger (BA in Industrial Design and Art and Design '04) resides with his wife, Meghan, in San Francisco. Their other son, Evan, is a chef in Atlanta.

Lawrence L. "Lee" Wentz, BS in Philosophy and BS in Mathematics '97, JD (Pennsylvania '04), lives in Philadelphia and practices (mostly) public interest law in Delaware and Pennsylvania. He focuses on the education rights of disabled children in public school systems, and he also litigates employment discrimination and commercial matters. After graduating from NC State, he pursued doctoral studies in Philosophy at Rutgers University, and has put much preparation and thought into his unfinished doctoral thesis on autonomy and freedom of contract. During the summer of 2011, he will teach a course on special education law to graduate students in art education at the Moore College of Art & Design in Philadelphia. He has never cited a philosopher in a legal brief (yet), but uses philosophy every day.

Nathan J. Speer, BS in Philosophy and BS in Physics '02, PhD in Physics (Illinois Urbana-Champaign '08), lives in Portland, OR, where he works at Intel Corporation as a research and development engineer in a team that focuses on the development of future generation semiconductor processes. He lives with his wife, Jessica, and their two children, Isaac and Evelyn.

Melissa Schumacher, BS in Philosophy with a Concentration in Logic, Representation & Reasoning and BS in Electrical Engineering '09, is a second-year grad student in philosophy at MIT, specializing in logic. She is currently working on impossible worlds and mathematical theorems. Melissa also serves as a photographer for the student newspaper and builds pinhole cameras in her spare time.

THE WAY IT WAS

Jeff Pflaumbaum, BA in Religious Studies '98, lives in Boston, MA with his wife Lisa (BA in Psychology '99). He leads a large ensemble, *The Wings of Fire Orchestra* (see <http://wofo-music.com>), and works as an independent writer, arranger, and composer. Jeff reminisces here about his experience as a student of Religious Studies at NC State.

My time as a student in the Religious Studies program at NC State was nothing short of transformative. Actually, to adapt a phrase from my studies, it was my own personal Great Awakening. I look back on those years and can trace the origins of my becoming a more educated, self-informed, socially aware, culturally empathetic, and even astute person. The value of what I learned cannot be measured, yet its influence pays a daily dividend in my life and work. I feel nothing but pure joy and gratitude when I recount my days as a religious studies student.

I must admit, though, that those were hardly halcyon days in the midst of my learning experience. I felt constant anxiety over the amount of information I was challenged to absorb. My own personal viewpoints on history, culture, religion, spirituality, and the like were put to the fire on a daily basis. And my evenings were no picnic either. There were many nights I popped up in bed from a deep sleep only to begin parsing Greek verbs. And the futile attempt to weigh the amount of required reading neglects the sheer volume of re-reading I was forced to do in order to understand so many complex ideas. But such was the price for knowledge that delivered such a bounty.

Ultimately what I remember most are the relationships I had with my professors. Whenever I walked into class I was overcome with the feeling that I was in the presence of academic giants. And consequently, it was my job to do everything in my power to show that I was learning as much as possible from them. The irony is that all of my religious studies teachers were very approachable and willing to take whatever steps were necessary to insure my smooth travels through this branch of academia. Be it the dry, witty sense of humor of Dr. Mullin, the ever-present enthusiasm of Dr. Cunningham, the ease with which Dr. Adler could recall a particular verb in any number of dead languages, or Dr. Peterson's down-to-earth delivery, I always felt like I was in good hands, the hands of gentle giants.

Upon reflection, it's no wonder that studying religion at NC State is not so much a small piece of something I once did, but rather a large piece of who I am.



IN MEMORIAM: WILLIAM RANDOLPH CARTER, 1940-2010

With great sorrow, we report the death of Professor Emeritus William R. ("Randy") Carter, in Portland, Oregon on November 8, 2010.

Randy received his PhD from the University of Virginia in 1968. He joined the philosophy faculty at NC State in 1970 after holding faculty positions at St. Cloud State University and the University of Tennessee. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1975 and to Professor in 1980. He retired in 2004.

A dedicated and effective teacher, Randy inspired many of his students. He received an Outstanding Teacher Award and was inducted into the NC State Academy of Outstanding Teachers in 1978. He was named Alumni Distinguished Professor in 1982.

The enjoyment Randy took from philosophy was obvious, and the philosophy he loved most was metaphysics. His research interests included an impressive range of topics: modality, causation, personhood, mind, identity, and persistence. He published more than 40 journal articles and a popular textbook, *The Elements of Metaphysics* (McGraw-Hill, 1990). He also edited a companion anthology of readings, *The Way Things Are* (McGraw-Hill, 1998).

Whether partly a result of his own gentle character, or only of his immense respect for the discipline of philosophy, it is a challenge to find a categorical conclusion or pronouncement in Randy's work. What can be found are shrewdly revealed philosophical connections and a devotion to cautiously working out the consequences of those connections.

A great lover of the outdoors, music, and the visual arts, Randy began painting seriously in the last ten years. It turned out that he was extraordinarily talented and had begun to show his work publicly.

Randy was widely loved and admired. His friends and colleagues miss him very much.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY &
RELIGIOUS STUDIES
NC State University
Campus Box 8103
Raleigh, NC 27695-8103

Main Office: 340 Withers Hall
Phone: 919/515-3214
FAX: 919/513-4351
Email: phil_rel@ncsu.edu
<http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/phil/>