

# Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

# NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2014



*Sanem Soyarslan and Stephen Puryear, who were recently appointed as Assistant Professors of Philosophy (see this page), with Michael Pendlebury, Department Head, whose leadership was reviewed in Fall 2013 (see page 2).*

## NEW FACULTY IN PHILOSOPHY

Two new Assistant Professors, Stephen Puryear and Sanem Soyarslan, were appointed to the Department's tenure-track faculty in philosophy in Fall 2013.

Stephen has a long history at NC State. Born and raised in North Carolina, he came to State in the early 1990s to do a BS in Mechanical Engineering. His interest in philosophy developed later, during his four years as an engineer-in-training. So he signed up for the MA in Philosophy at Texas A&M University, and then went on to the PhD at the University of Pittsburgh. After completing his doctorate in 2006, he had a two-year stint as a post-doctoral fellow at Stanford.

Stephen first joined the Department as a Teaching Assistant Professor in Fall 2008. He published an impressive number of articles in top journals during his five years in this position, and also won the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Outstanding Lecturer Award in 2012. A specialist in early modern philosophy, Stephen has interests that include the German philosophical tradition (especially Leibniz, Kant, and Schopenhauer) and historical and contemporary work on metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy.

Stephen's recent work focuses on the philosophy of Leibniz, especially Leibniz's views on causation and the mind's contribution to our experience of the world. He has also published on Frege's philosophy of language. Stephen is

currently working on a book on Leibniz's metaphysics and on articles on Schopenhauer's ethics and the nature of events.

Sanem, a native of Istanbul, has increased the number of international scholars on the Department's faculty to seven. After completing a BA in Political Science at Bogaziçi University in 1999, Sanem proceeded to a *Diplôme Supérieur* in Political Science, the equivalent of an MA, at Paris II. She then took a job in social research in Istanbul, but soon discovered that she'd prefer an academic life. So she returned to Bogaziçi University to do an MA in Philosophy, and then went on to Duke University for her PhD, which she completed in 2011.

Sanem came to NC State from Boston University, where she was a Visiting Assistant Professor for two years. She specializes in the history of ethics and early modern philosophy, with a particular emphasis on the philosophy of Spinoza. She also has an ongoing interest in ethical theories, both ancient and modern.

Sanem's recent work focuses on Spinoza's distinction between reason and intuitive knowledge and its ethical implications. In her next major project, she plans to develop a detailed account of Spinoza's ethical thought by situating it in its historical context, giving special attention to both ancient philosophers, such as Aristotle and the Stoics, and Spinoza's near-contemporaries, especially Descartes.

## MAJOR ANNIVERSARIES

The 2013/14 academic year marked the 50th anniversary of the major in Philosophy and the 20th anniversary of the major in Religious Studies.

The introduction of the major in Philosophy was one of many consequences of the appointment of John Caldwell as Chancellor of NC State in 1959, when it was still North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering. By 1965, Caldwell had transformed State College into North Carolina State University. He created the School of Physical Sciences and Applied Mathematics in 1960 and the School of Liberal Arts in 1963. Both schools were authorized to offer degree programs.

The BA and BS in Philosophy were designed by a committee chaired by Paul A. Bredenberg, Professor of Philosophy, and approved in Spring 1964. The other members of the committee were W. Curtis Fitzgerald and William Kurylo of the Department of Philosophy and Religion, and William F. Edwards and Robert S. Metzger of the Department of Social Studies, who both contributed to the program. Metzger transferred into Philosophy and Religion in 1970.

The first cohort of 11 students signed on for the major in Philosophy in Fall 1964. In the past 50 years, about 470 NC State students have graduated with majors in Philosophy, including 80 during the past five years.

The BA in Religious Studies was approved in August 1993, replacing the BA in Philosophy with a Concentration in Religious Studies. (This concentration had been introduced in 1978 and it accounted for 38 of the students who have graduated with majors in Philosophy.) The new degree in Religious Studies was designed by a committee made up of the departmental faculty in the discipline: William Adler, Mary Kathleen Cunningham, Cynthia Miller, Robert Bruce Mullin, and Tony K. Stewart, who served as chair.

The first cohort of Religious Studies majors, which also consisted of 11 students, started in Spring 1994. Since then, about 170 students have graduated from NC State with the BA in Religious Studies, including 55 during the past five years.

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Chris Pierce on campus in November 2013.

## CHRISTINE PIERCE RETIRES

Christine Pierce (PhD, Syracuse) retired from NC State on January 1, 2014, after almost 30 years on the philosophy faculty.

Taking a break from a position at SUNY Oswego, Chris first came to NC State to serve as a Visiting Associate Professor for the 1982/83 academic year. After a year back at Oswego, she returned to NC State and was appointed to the Department's permanent faculty in Fall 1984. She was promoted to Professor in Fall 1994.

During her time at NC State, Chris taught almost 5,000 students in 133 sections of various courses. These included departmental courses on ethics, business ethics, contemporary moral issues, philosophy and feminism, and history of ethics, as well as courses in the Women's and Gender Studies Program. Between 2011 and 2013, Chris also taught a course on ethics and gender in the University Honors Program.

Chris is the author of *Immovable Laws, Irresistible Rights: Natural Law, Moral Rights, and Feminist Ethics* (University Press of Kansas, 2000) and is co-editor of three books with Don VanDeVeer (see the Feature Emeritus article on page 3): *People, Penguins and Plastic Trees: Basic Issues in Environmental Ethics* (Wadsworth, 1986; 2nd edition, 1995); *AIDS: Ethics and Public Policy* (Wadsworth, 1989); and *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book: Philosophy, Ecology, Ethics* (Wadsworth, 1994; 2nd edition, 1998; 3rd edition, 2003). Her work with Don on environmental ethics has played a leading role in defining the field.

Chris's articles on ethics, feminism, and gay issues have appeared in numerous academic journals, including *The Monist*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Analysis*, *The Journal of Social Philosophy*, *Signs*, and *Hypatia*.

A strong advocate for women, gays, and lesbians at NC State, Chris served as Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program from August 2002 to May 2004 and again from January 2007 to May 2011.

Chris aims to continue writing and publishing in her retirement. At present, she has no plans to move from the Triangle, but this could change if NC Amendment 1 is not rescinded.

## WORK IN PROGRESS: LEVENBOOK ON THE CONTENT OF A LEGAL STATUTE

In this article, the fifth in a series on faculty scholarship, Barbara Levenbook, Associate Professor of Philosophy, describes her current work on the theory of statutory content.

Many statutes are directives for the activities of ordinary citizens. If you comply with a statute, you apply it to your own circumstances and behavior. Statutory application must be largely a matter of self-application; no legal system has the resources to police or adjudicate statutory application at every point.

Legislatures communicate the content of statutes by promulgating their texts. For this procedure to make sense, the content of a statute must be something that ordinary citizens can grasp by reading the text, drawing on their understanding of the language and relevant background information.

This ability is not adequately explained by the leading theory of statutory content, which claims that the content of a statute is whatever the legislature intended it to be, just as the content of a conversational remark is whatever the speaker intended it to be.

This theory treats statutes like remarks in a conversation, despite the fact that statutes have carefully formulated texts and are expected to endure well into the future. The theory also assumes that every statute has a special legislative intention that can be grasped in the remote future by citizens who are not informed

about legislative history and whose misunderstandings cannot be corrected by the legislature.

I am working on a theory that avoids the problems of this leading theory. My core idea is that the content of a statute is determined by what would be socially salient to those to whom it is addressed. That is how citizens can grasp its content.

All theories of statutory content must deal with the fact that statutes do some of their communicating implicitly. For example, a federal statute provides for stricter penalties for drug trafficking when the offender uses a firearm, but it does not state explicitly for what purpose. Most of us would say that what is implied is using a firearm as a *weapon*.

But if so, why? According to the leading theory, this is implied because it is what the legislature intended the statute to imply. According to my theory, it is implied because it is socially salient. This yields a better explanation of how ordinary citizens can grasp the implication.

As an important part of my project, I am developing an account of why such implications are salient, uncovering rules about implying something remotely. The use of these rules is the best way to explain why promulgating a statutory text to future citizens is rational when not everything can be made explicit within the text itself.

## LEADERSHIP REVIEW

In Fall 2013, Michael Pendlebury completed ten years as Head of the Department. As part of his second mandatory five-year review, Michael presented a report on October 25 about the overall direction of the Department under his leadership.

After recognizing the exceptional contribution staff members Ann Rives and Ken Peters make to the Department, Michael began his report by describing the Department's changing faculty profile. In Fall 2004, there were 23 full-time members of the Department. Between then and Fall 2013, seven faculty members resigned or retired and five new appointments were made, a net loss of two faculty. And the faculty as a whole had aged; a third of them were over sixty, and only a tenth under forty.

Michael showed how, despite the reduction in faculty numbers, enrollments in the Department's courses increased from 4,181 in the 2003/4 academic year to 4,796 in 2012/13. He also pointed out that there had been a major increase in the number of students that the department serves through Distance Education.

The Department's three speaker programs—the Philosophy Colloquium Series, the Religious Studies Colloquium Series, and the Logic and Cognitive Science Lecture Series—were flourishing. The Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative had introduced a biennial conference

and, during 2011, the Department had hosted a conference on time travel as well as a conference on the work of Tom Regan.

Michael drew attention to several awards received by faculty members between 2008 and 2013. These included six teaching awards, an outstanding research award, an outstanding extension service award, the College's Outstanding Junior Faculty Award, and the Holladay Medal, NC State's highest faculty honor. During the same period, members of the faculty produced over 180 publications, including nine books. They had also served on an amazing range of university committees.

As part of the review process, departmental faculty and staff completed a questionnaire on Michael's leadership, and the faculty had a meeting with the Dean of our College, Jeff Braden. Dean Braden reported that he had seldom seen such a resoundingly positive assessment of a department head by faculty and staff, and warmly commended Michael for his remarkable financial management in an extremely tight fiscal situation.

In short, Michael was judged to be doing an outstanding job as Department Head. He maintains high academic standards, and he manages the Department and its resources so that faculty can perform at their best.

— Timothy Hinton and David Auerbach

# Department News

## FEATURE EMERITUS: DR. DON VANDEVEER

After a year as a visiting faculty member at the University of Illinois, A. Donald VanDeVeer, PhD (Chicago), was appointed as Assistant Professor of Philosophy at NC State in 1969. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1974 and Professor in 1980. He retired in July 2000.

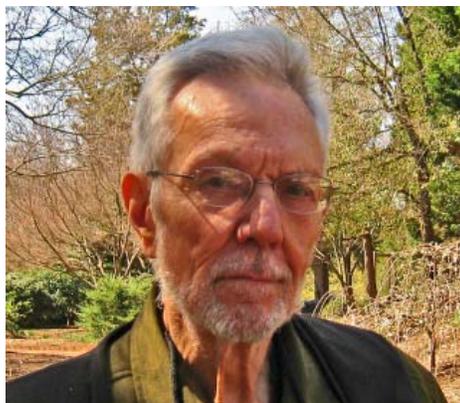
During his 31 years in the Department, Don taught over 5,000 students in 179 course-sections. His courses included "Problems and Types of Philosophy," the basic introduction to philosophy (of which he taught exactly 100 sections, starting in 1969 and ending in 1989), and courses on political philosophy, medical ethics, environmental ethics, contemporary moral issues, and special topics such as individual rights, pornography and censorship, and moral psychology.

A productive scholar with a national reputation, Don published mainly in ethics. His most important work, a 450-page scholarly monograph on *Paternalistic Intervention: The Moral Bounds on Benevolence* (Princeton University Press, 1986), was widely recognized for its contributions to the field. It also won him NC State's Alumni Association Outstanding Research Award in 1989.

Don also published over two dozen scholarly articles and co-edited five anthologies on important topics in ethics with department colleagues. With Tom Regan, he published *And Justice for All* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1982) and *Health Care Ethics* (Temple University Press, 1987). With Christine Pierce (see article on page 2), he published the first philosophy collection on the ethics of AIDS in 1989 and two collections on environmental ethics, the first editions of which appeared in 1986 and 1994.

Don's fondest memories are of his early years in the Department, when he was so exhilarated by his participation in the building of a good department and a valuable new program that he felt little need for downtime. So absorbed in philosophy and his work, he did not take a vacation for the first ten or twelve years.

Don still lives in Raleigh. What he likes most about retirement is the extra time. To discuss culture, politics, dogs, food, and architecture with friends. To travel. To remodel his house and landscape. To trade stocks. To lean into the wind.



Don VanDeVeer on campus in March 2014.

## STUDENT AWARD WINNERS

The Department celebrated the achievements of its top seniors at its annual Student Awards Reception on March 5. Two prizes were presented by the faculty members who had worked most closely with the prizewinners.

The Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan was presented by John Carroll, Professor of Philosophy. The winner was Wilson Gray Maddrey.

Gray, who graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BS in Philosophy with Honors in May, will begin the PhD program in Philosophy at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Fall 2014.

The Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald was presented by Bill Adler, Distinguished University Professor of Religious Studies. The winner was Hunter Houston Ross. Hunter had to miss the reception because he was on Study Abroad at the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. The prize was accepted on his behalf by his sister, Stephanie Ross, a graduate of NC State (BA in Arts Applications 2012).

Hunter is expecting to graduate with a BA in Religious Studies in May 2015. He then plans to move on to a Masters of Divinity.

Asked how they have benefitted from their departmental majors, here's what our award winners said.

Gray: "We are sense-making beings in what might be a nonsensical world. Studying

philosophy at NC State has fostered in me the confidence and the skills one requires to face head-on the philosophical problems that pervade human life; and for that I shall be richer."

Hunter: "Among other things, the NC State major in Religious Studies has helped me to explore the many ways people read religious texts, to situate these texts in their proper context, and to engage them without the bias of culture or personal interest."



Student award winners (from left to right): Gray Maddrey (Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan) and Hunter Ross (Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald).

## NEWSBITES

**30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY:** William Adler, Distinguished University Professor of Religious Studies, celebrated thirty years of service in the Department this year. Six members of the Department's faculty and staff are now 30-year veterans.

**AROUND THE WORLD:** During the 2013/14 academic year, departmental faculty gave scholarly presentations at conferences and universities in fourteen states and nine foreign countries (Austria, Azerbaijan, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, and the United Kingdom).

**SCHOLARLY REASSIGNMENTS:** Two members of the Department's faculty were awarded scholarly reassignments for Spring 2014. Marina F. Bykova, Professor of Philosophy, spent the semester in Germany working on Fichte and Hegel. Barbara B. Levenbook, Associate Professor of Philosophy, was based in Raleigh, where she worked on a project concerning the linguistic content of legal statutes (see her work-in-progress article on page 2).

**APPOINTMENT TO U.S.-JAPAN POLICY PROGRAM:** Levi McLaughlin, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, has been appointed to the Mansfield Foundation's U.S.-Japan Network for the Future Program for two years in recognition of his expertise in Japanese religions. The program aims to build and enhance a network of Japan specialists that can bring diverse expertise and perspectives to the bilateral policy-making process in the mid- and long-term.

**BY THE NUMBERS:** 5,325 students registered for the Department's courses during the 2013/14 academic year. This is an all-time record. It is also 8% above 2012/13 enrollments (4,930), and 21.8% above 2008/9 enrollments (4,372).

**SHORT-TERM CONTRACT FACULTY:** Because of ongoing budget cuts, the Department must rely heavily on short-term contract faculty to provide NC State's students with courses that they need. During 2013/14, we employed eight high-quality faculty on short-term contracts to teach sections of Introduction to Philosophy, Issues in Business Ethics, Contemporary Moral Issues, Thinking Logically, Existentialism, Bio-Medical Ethics, Religious Traditions of the World, Old Testament, and New Testament. These faculty, all of whom have PhDs, taught 32 classroom sections and nine distance-education sections of the Department's courses during the regular academic year.

**BOWLING SMACKDOWN:** The philosophy team defeated the religious studies team in our annual Bowling Smackdown in April 2014. The philosophy team consisted of students and faculty in philosophy; the religious studies team of students and faculty in religious studies along with the Department's administrative staff - because Ann Rives is a religious studies alum and Ken Peters serves as adviser to new religious studies majors. The overall record in the Smackdown series is: Philosophy 7, Religious Studies 6.

## THE WAY IT WAS

**Jeb Bishop, BA in Philosophy '89**, became a graduate student in philosophy at the University of Arizona, the Catholic University of Louvain, and Loyola of Chicago, where he completed the MA in 1993. He went on to a flourishing career as a jazz trombonist, first in Chicago and now in Raleigh. An article on his musicianship is featured in the NC State Alumni Magazine of Spring 2014. Jeb reminisces here about his time as a philosophy student at NC State.

In 1982 I had decided to get off the track I'd been following towards a career as a professional orchestral musician. So, after two years of classical music studies at Northwestern University, I returned to my home town of Raleigh, and declared an engineering major at NC State.

In retrospect, it is not hard to see that this moment of practicality was not destined to last. I still thought of myself as a musician, and in fact it was only at this time that I started to explore the musical areas that now constitute my musical identity much more than my past classical studies. Academically, an encounter with Descartes at DH Hill, when I should have been doing physics homework, was enough to derail my half-hearted foray into engineering.

Studying philosophy turned out to be an extended detour for me rather than the path to a career I once thought it might be, but I was very lucky to have encountered the teachers and classes I had at NC State. Looking back, one thing that stands out for me now is the generosity that my teachers showed in being willing to discuss questions with me outside the

classroom—I became a pretty frequent visitor during office hours and easily learned as much from those discussions, and extra reading they led me to, as from coursework.

Donald VanDeVeer, Randy Carter, and Robert Hambourger all provided challenging and stimulating dialogues that gave me a wonderful model of philosophical inquiry through the interaction of minds. I especially want to thank Hal Levin, not only for two fascinating semesters of mathematical logic, but also for taking me on for a year of independent study during which I tried to acquire the beginnings of a knowledge of Prolog, which is used in natural language processing, as an oblique way of approaching philosophical issues in artificial intelligence. I also have to mention two history of science courses I had at NC State with Professor Edith Sylla, a wonderful scholar and teacher who helped me discover an interest in the development of concepts of force and matter in the thought of Descartes and Newton.

After graduating from NC State, my four years of graduate study in philosophy were so "peripatetic" (I didn't manage to spend two consecutive years in the same place—come to think of it, that was nearly also true of my undergraduate career) that I finally had to conclude that I didn't really want to become an academic. Anyway, by the end of that time I found myself pursuing music again. But I believe that the habits of thought I acquired have served me well, and the experience of pursuing the issues and questions of philosophy that so attracted me was a great and enriching one.

## ALUMNI NEWS

**Andrew S. Chilton, BA in Philosophy '92**, JD (Lewis & Clark Law School '97), practiced appellate law in Portland, OR for many years. In 2010, he left the practice of law to divide his time between working as a political consultant on ballot measure issues and pursuing a writing career. His logic-themed middle grades novel *The Goblin's Puzzle: Being the Adventures of a Boy With No Name and Two Girls Called Alice* is slated to be published by Knopf in the Spring of 2016. He lives in Chapel Hill, NC, but his political work often has him on the West Coast.

**Jonathan "Doc" Bradley, BA in Religious Studies '05**, currently a PhD student in Political Science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, is celebrating his first publication: "Abortion Opinion in Emerging Democracies: Latin America and Central Europe," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 2 (2014), 52-65.

**Kristin Sullivan, BA in Religious Studies '07**, successfully defended her doctoral dissertation earlier this year and graduated with a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Maryland, College Park, where she had received her Master of Applied Anthropology degree in 2010. Her research interests focus on vernacular art and the performance and management of cultural and natural heritage in touristic locales. Kristin has conducted research in cooperation with the National Park Service (Chesapeake Bay area and Assateague Island). She recently began a new career as Curator and Folklorist at the Ward Museum, Salisbury University (in Salisbury, MD).

**Nick F. Palmer, BA in Philosophy '10 and BA in Political Science '11**, got a part-time job with Harris Teeter upon graduation, but was soon promoted to a management position. Wanting to serve his country and fulfill a life-long obsession with the movie *Top Gun*, Nick is joining the U.S. Navy in July to pursue a commission as a Naval Flight Officer. He will be spending three months in Rhode Island, followed by another two years in flight school in Pensacola, FL. As for philosophy, he is currently reading *Anti-Oedipus* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari with reasonable success.

**Etaf Rum, BA in English '10, BA in Philosophy '12, and MA in English '12**, is currently on the English faculty at Nash Community College, where she is also co-advisor of Phi Theta Kappa and a yoga instructor. Although Etaf primarily teaches courses in expository writing and literature, her teaching relies on her philosophical training. She teaches her students how to think in a way that is clear, rational, and open-minded, how to evaluate information conceptually and analytically, how to distinguish sound reasoning from empty rhetoric, and how to communicate effectively through writing and speech. At first her students find her philosophical emphasis "obsessive," but they come to recognize its value by around the middle of the semester.

## LOOKING BACK: Department News from the Past

**2003/04:** Douglas Jesseph, Professor of Philosophy, is Interim Department Head for the fall. Michael Pendlebury (PhD, Indiana) is appointed as Professor of Philosophy and Department Head in January 2004 after 20 years at the University of the Witwatersrand. Tariq al-Jamil (PhD candidate, Princeton) and Anna Bigelow (PhD candidate, University of California, Santa Barbara) are appointed as Instructors in Religious Studies. Both complete their PhDs and are promoted to Assistant Professor in 2004. Al-Jamil leaves for Swarthmore in 2006. Bigelow is promoted to Associate Professor in 2010.

**1993/94:** The new BA in Religious Studies is approved (see page 1). William Adler, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, spends the year as a Senior Research Fellow at the Dumbarton Oaks Institute; Douglas Jesseph, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, spends the year as a Fellow at the National Humanities Center.

**1983/84:** Tom Regan publishes *The Case for Animal Rights* (University of California Press,

1983) and James VanderKam publishes *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 1994). Other faculty publications include anthologies on environmental ethics and business ethics edited by Regan, twenty articles in journals and books, and several book reviews.

**1973/74:** Richard Nagel (PhD candidate, MIT) is appointed as Instructor in Philosophy and William Randolph ("Randy") Carter (PhD, Virginia) as Assistant Professor of Philosophy. Nagel leaves NC State in 1980 to pursue a career in the food and beverage industry. Carter is promoted to Associate Professor in 1975 and Professor in 1980; he retires in 2004.

**1963/64:** The new BA and BS in Philosophy are approved (see page 1). William Norwood ("Red") Hicks II, Head of the Department, completes his 36<sup>th</sup> year on the faculty at NC State. Including the 1963 Summer Sessions, the Department teaches 62 course-sections with an average section size of 21 students.

### DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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