

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2012

Feature Emeritus: Prof. W. Curtis Fitzgerald

Professor Walter Curtis Fitzgerald joined NC State in 1956 and retired in 1992 after 36 years of distinguished service.

After majoring in Political Science at Wake Forest College, Curtis did graduate work in Theology (at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Vanderbilt University) and Philosophy (at Vanderbilt). This breadth proved invaluable at a time when the Department had only four faculty members teaching a rapidly growing student body.

Curtis was the Department's pinch hitter. In addition to more than a half-dozen courses in Religious Studies, he taught the introductory philosophy course, the course on existentialism, and a seminar on Kierkegaard.

The 1960s saw the transformation of North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering into NC State University. Chancellor John T. Caldwell's commitment to building humanities departments worthy of the new university led to the appointment of Professor Robert S. Bryan as Department Head in 1966.

There followed a period of significant growth in both of the Department's disciplines. Curtis played an important role in recruiting distinguished faculty in Religious Studies. By the mid-seventies, Jim VanderKam and Jim Moorhead had joined the Department: the modern era was well on the way.

An outstanding academic citizen, Curtis served on many committees. He was a member and subsequent Chair of the University Courses and Curricula Committee, Chair of the Faculty in the School of Liberal Arts, a member of the NC State Faculty Senate, and a member of the UNC-system Faculty Assembly. He also held a number of important offices.

As Assistant Head of the Department from 1974 to 1985 and again from 1986 to 1990, Curtis made major contributions to department leadership. In the late 1970s, he was instrumental in introducing a BA in Philosophy with a Concentration in

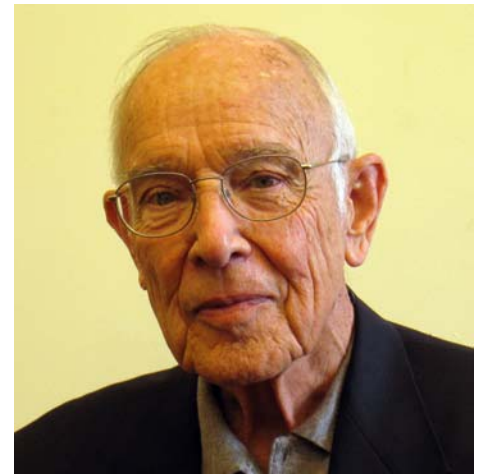
Religious Studies. As Curtis recently observed, "Few, if any, of our students arrived intending to major in Religious Studies; but after one course, and then another, they are enticed into the major by the quality of instruction." The pattern continues to this day. The concentration became a full-fledged BA in Religious Studies in 1994.

Curtis was Assistant Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences from 1986 until his retirement in 1992. Of course, when someone with Curtis's gifts retires, that's not the end of it. Post-retirement, he was called back to chair a search committee and to serve as Interim Associate Dean for Research.

Curtis's extension work contributed toward bringing the humanities to the people of North Carolina. He reached out to community colleges, helped create cable TV courses, and coordinated with law enforcement agencies to help provide college courses through extension. He also co-authored scripts for videotapes on "Religion in American Life" for Humanities

Extension Seminars and conducted 28 of these seminars at various locations in the state.

Somehow, Curtis also managed to become a skilled woodworker in his spare time — an appropriate hobby for someone who helped craft, shape, and balance the Department and the University.



Prof. W. Curtis Fitzgerald in February 2012.

STEPHEN PURYEAR WINS TEACHING AWARD

Dr. Stephen Puryear, who teaches courses on ancient and early modern philosophy, has won this year's College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS) Outstanding Lecturer Award. The award goes to an outstanding teacher on the College's short-term contract faculty.

Stephen majored in Mechanical Engineering at NC State in the early 1990s — without taking any courses in philosophy. He then worked for several years as a professional engineer before turning to philosophy. He completed the MA in Philosophy at Texas A&M in 2000 and went on to earn a PhD in Philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh in 2006.

Following two years as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Stanford, Stephen joined the Department as a Teaching Assistant

Professor in Fall 2008. He specializes in early modern philosophy and has been publishing a steady stream of excellent papers on Leibniz.

Many students who major in technical fields at NC State take philosophy courses mainly to satisfy general education requirements. Because of his background in engineering, Stephen understands the challenges that confront such students. And he is very good indeed at helping them to meet those challenges and recognize the value of studying philosophy.

Students appreciate Stephen's hard work, his sense of humor, his ability to make difficult material both accessible and interesting, and his exceptional skill at engaging classes in deep discussion and lively debate. He does us proud.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT REALIGNED

Large news organizations maintain obituaries on still-living notables, but take care to avoid premature publication of someone's demise.

In March 2011, NC State, in an effort to appear transparent concerning its strategic realignment effort, announced a list of degree programs targeted for further evaluation. The Department's BA in Religious Studies was on that list. Media reports suggested that the programs listed had been targeted for elimination. Faculty, students, parents, and members of the public were understandably, though needlessly, alarmed.

Religious Studies' imminent demise was greatly exaggerated. The criteria used in generating the list of targeted programs were broad and inappropriate. Backpedaling from that premature evocation of program mortality, NC State created a diverse task force to develop better measures of program worth.

So instead of conducting hasty reviews of what many feared was a hit list of programs, the university decided to review *all* its programs on the basis of quality, efficiency, and the needs that those programs satisfy. The specific measures are now wide-ranging and include number of students taught, number and quality of majors, and the quality of faculty, as indicated by various measures of scholarly productivity. The task force also decided, quite appropriately, to consider our department as a whole, rather than each degree program in turn.

It will come as no surprise to graduates from Religious Studies that, given the task force's more refined and appropriate measures (or *metrics*, to use the latest buzz word), our department should more than measure up. Although we suffer a bit from not having numerous majors, we do well in measures that reflect efficiency. In other words, we educate students without using vast resources.

As to quality? Consider the following: over the last two years, two of our graduates have been university valedictorians, and a stunning 64 percent have graduated with Latin honors: 17 percent *Summa Cum Laude*, 28 percent *Magna Cum Laude*, and 19 percent *Cum Laude*.

During the past three years, our faculty have won ten awards: the Alexander Quarles Holladay Medal, the highest award NC State bestows on a faculty member; a university outstanding research award; six awards for outstanding teaching, including two university distinguished undergraduate professor awards; a college outstanding junior faculty award; and an outstanding extension service award. And in the past five years, enrollments in our classes

have grown by 16 percent.

During the same period, our faculty have published over forty scholarly papers, seven books and many book chapters, book reviews, encyclopedia entries and other articles.

What isn't captured by these metrics, but is crucial to any program evaluation, is the centrality of both our disciplines—Philosophy and Religious Studies—to a broad university education. May such an education live long and prosper.



FACES OF SUCCESS: Stephen Puryear (center), winner of the CHASS Outstanding Lecturer Award (see page 1), with Robert Mabrito (left) and Jason Bivins (right), who have been approved for promotion (see below).

FACULTY PROMOTIONS

Two members of the Department's faculty have been approved for promotion in August 2012.

Jason Bivins, PhD (Indiana), Associate Professor of Religious Studies, will be promoted to Professor. Jason joined the Department in 2000 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2004. He served as Associate Head of the Department from 2005 until 2011.

A specialist in American religions, Jason is the author of *The Fracture of Good Order: Christian Anti-Liberalism and the Challenge of Postwar American Politics* (UNC Press, 2003) and *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism* (OUP, 2008). He

is currently working on two major projects: *Embattled Majority* and *Spirits Rejoice: Jazz and American Religion*.

Robert Mabrito, PhD (Michigan), Assistant Professor of Philosophy, will be promoted to Associate Professor. He joined the Department in 2005. Robert specializes in ethical theory with a focus on metaethics, the field that deals with questions about the nature and objectivity of ethical judgments. His scholarly work has been published or accepted for publication in a number of forums, including *The Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, *The Journal of Philosophical Research*, and *Philosophical Studies*.

IN PRINT: Select Publications From the Past Two Years

William Adler, "Christians and the Public Archive," in Mason, *et al.* (editors), *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam* (Supplements to *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 153, Volume 2), Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012.

William A. Bauer, "Four Theories of Pure Dispositions," in Bird, Ellis, and Sankey (editors), *Properties, Powers and Structures: Issues in the Metaphysics of Realism*, London, Routledge, 2012.

Anna B. Bigelow, "Memory and Minority: Making Muslim Indians," *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 58, 2011.

Jason C. Bivins, "Religion and Politics," in Harvey and Blum (editors), *Columbia Guide to American Religion*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Marina B. Bykova, "The Self As the World Into Itself: Towards Fichte's Conception of Subjectivity," in Rockmore and Breazeale (editors), *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism (Fichte Studien Supplementa)*, New York: Rodopi, 2010.

John W. Carroll, "Self Visitation, Traveler Time and Compatible Properties," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 41, 2011.

Eric K. Carter, "Vagueness and Subjective Attitudes," *Tampa Papers in Linguistics* 2, 2011.

Gary L. Comstock (editor), *Life Science Ethics*, Second Edition, Dordrecht: Springer, 2010.

Catherine M. Driscoll, "Fatal Attraction: Do Sperber's Attractors Prevent Cumulative Cultural Evolution?" *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 62, 2011.

Ronald P. Endicott, "Flat versus Dimensioned: The What and How of Functional Realization," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 36, 2011.

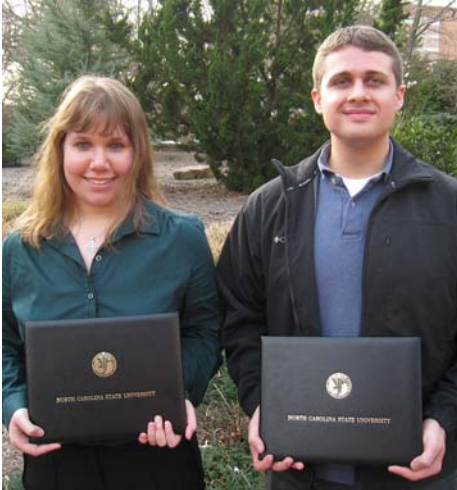
Timothy Hinton, "Naturalism and Authority," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 41, 2010.

Barbara B. Levenbook, "The Retroactivity Problem," in Campbell, O'Rourke, and Silverstein (editors), *Time and Identity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010.

Michael Pendlebury, "Objectivism versus Realism," *Philosophical Forum* 42, 2011.

Stephen Puryear, "Monadic Interaction," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 18, 2010.

Christine Pierce, "Heteronormativity and (Sartre on) Anti-Semitism," in Halwani, Quinn, and Wible (editors), *Queer Philosophy*, New York: Rodopi, 2012.



Student Award Winners Allison DeLargy (Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald) and Daniel Rowe (Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan).

STUDENT AWARDS

Two outstanding seniors received awards at the Department's second annual Student Awards Reception on February 29. The event not only serves the purpose of rewarding and celebrating the academic achievements of our top students, but also provides an ideal opportunity for the Department's students, faculty, former faculty, alumni, and other friends to meet informally and discuss common interests.

The Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan was presented by Dr. David Auerbach, a member of the philosophy faculty who overlapped with Professor Bryan for twelve years. The winner was Daniel C. Rowe.

Daniel, who graduated *Summa Cum Laude* with a BA in Philosophy in May, is moving on to the Duke University School of Law. His main legal interests are in corporate law, including contracts, mergers, and acquisitions. "Studying Philosophy at NC State," he says, "was crucial for developing the critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills necessary for success in any career, especially one in the law."

The Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald was presented by Professor Fitzgerald. The winner was Allison Aurora DeLargy.

Allison graduated *Summa Cum Laude* with a BA in Religious Studies in May. She was a University Valedictorian and received the Department's Highest Scholastic Achievement Award. Allison will continue her studies at the Duke University School of Divinity. Her greatest interests are in theology and biblical exegesis. "My studies in Religious Studies," she says, "have taught me how to think critically and be open to new ways of looking at the Bible, Christian tradition and other religious traditions."

The Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative Award, which goes to an outstanding senior taking the BS in Philosophy with a Concentration in Logic, Representation and Reasoning, was not awarded in 2012.

WORK IN PROGRESS: HINTON ON JUSTICE AND MORALITY

In this article, the third in a series on faculty scholarship and research, Timothy Hinton, Associate Professor of Philosophy, gives an overview of his work.

Most of my published work has been in political philosophy, where I have spent a good deal of time thinking and writing about distributive justice. In particular, I have focused on the question of how the resources of the external world can most fairly be distributed between people. In several articles, I have developed a conception of justice that draws on the natural rights tradition, according to which all human beings own the resources of the world in common.

This means that external resources need to be distributed in accordance with principles that each co-owner of the world could reasonably accept. I have argued that this implies that each co-owner has rights of reasonable access to the world's resources and that no co-owner may take unfair advantage of others in using resources. This in turn implies, I believe, that we have an obligation to ensure that no one in the world is unnecessarily badly off.

More recently, I have begun writing about the foundations of morality. One issue that really interests me concerns the rational authority of morals. The question could be expressed like this: How can we make best sense of the suggestion that when we have a moral reason *not* to do something, that reason is more weighty or important for us than our other reasons in favor of doing that thing?

The problem is clearest in cases involving a conflict between self-interest and morality. For instance, if someone were to offer us ten

thousand dollars to break the legs of a stranger's child, I suspect that most of us would reject the offer as abhorrent. The trick is to find a satisfying philosophical explanation of or justification for that response (and I simply take for granted that that response *has to be* the right one). I'm not satisfied with either of the two main philosophical strategies that are on offer here.

The first is basically Plato's view that it's always in our interests to avoid doing evil because having a worthwhile life just *is* living a morally good life. That makes the answer more-or-less true by definition, which is precisely why I'm unsatisfied: I'd like to dig a little deeper.

The other strategy is basically Hobbes's view that our lives tend, on the whole, to go better when we behave morally. If each one restrains their self-interest, we all live safer and more enjoyable lives. Hobbes thereby makes moral behavior into a form of enlightened self-interest. This time I'm unsatisfied because one can always imagine cases in which crime – even rather nasty crime – would pay. But even if no one ever discovered some deeply immoral thing I'd done to serve my own interests, I still think I would have a compelling reason not to do it.

The view I'm working on aims to develop a conception of the task of being human that reveals how being moral is a core component of that project. Consider some of the basic human capacities that morality draws on: our ability to empathize with others and our power to engage in shared reasoning about what to do. I hope to be able to show that if one lacks these capacities, one falls radically short of being human.

NEWSBITES

CONFERENCE ON MEANING IN CONTEXT: The Department's Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative (LACSI) hosted its second conference on September 23-24, 2011. The topic, *Meaning in Context*, is of fundamental importance to work in semantics in both philosophy of language and linguistics. The speakers included Robert Stalnaker of MIT, one of the most distinguished philosophers in the field, and Angelika Kratzer of the University of Massachusetts, one of the most distinguished linguists in the field. The first LACSI conference, on *Ontology*, took place in September 2009.

INVITED TALKS BY DEPARTMENT FACULTY: Department faculty gave fifteen invited research presentations during the 2011/12 academic year. These included presentations by Bill Adler at the Free University of Berlin, Anna Bigelow at the *Conference on Sacred Space* in Rome, Marina Bykova at the Russian Academy of Science's History of Philosophy Colloquium in Moscow, and Eric Carter at the Northern Institute of Philosophy in Aberdeen, Scotland; and keynote addresses by Jason Bivins at the Midwest Conference of the American Academy of Religion and John Carroll at the University of South Florida's Graduate Philosophy Conference.

A CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATION: David Austin, Associate Professor of Philosophy, replaced Jason Bivins as Associate Head of the Department in January 2012. David previously served as Assistant Head (the same job with a different title) from 1993 to 1997.

STUDENT AWARDS FUND: The prizes named in honor of Emeritus Professors Bryan and Fitzgerald (see the accompanying article on Student Awards) are currently funded one year at a time from Alumni Giving. At our first Student Awards Reception in March 2011, we launched our Student Awards Fund with the goal of building an income-paying endowment of \$25,000 that will support these prizes in perpetuity. Our initial target is \$15,000, the level at which the fund can be converted to an endowment that can grow on its own by earning interest, even though we cannot draw on the interest before reaching \$25,000. We are now almost halfway to our initial target. Please help us reach it as soon as possible. For information on how to make a contribution, see our web page on Giving (<http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/philo/giving.html>).

THE WAY IT WAS

Dale Lichtblau, BA in Philosophy '68, U.S. Army ('69-'72, Honorable Discharge), MA and PhD in Philosophy (Ohio State '73 and '76), MS in Information Systems (George Mason '88), lives in Reston, VA. He has just retired from a 35-year career in information systems, the last 22 in the Institute for Defense Analyses. His philosophical focus was always logic and analytical philosophy. The Department of Defense's recent interests in semantic interoperability and "ontologies" provided a welcome opportunity to put his philosophical interests to practical use in support of national security. Dale reminisces here about his time as a philosophy student at NC State.

I transferred to NC State in 1966 after a year as a chemistry major at the York, PA community college (now the York College of Pennsylvania) and decided to major in philosophy because I thought girls might find it intriguing. They didn't. I had also been inclined to philosophy since high school, where I read Marx, Thoreau, Leibniz, and Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy* independently. But I still had only the vaguest idea what philosophy was. I chose State because my brother had attended its School of Design, and after visiting him there once, I fell in love with the "never sleep" character of a large university.

Prof. Fitzgerald was my academic advisor. My first State philosophy course was Dr. Bredenberg's Introduction to the Problems of Philosophy, in which we worked through the Beardslays' *Philosophical Thinking, an Introduction*. I was often surprised at how Dr. Bredenberg could find objections to what I thought were unassailable arguments. During my final year at State I remember Dr. Bredenberg making his way across "the brick yard" in the late afternoon once or twice a week to the Erdahl-Cloyd Student Union, usually with a cigar in hand, and sitting down for a cup of ice cream. On a couple of occasions, I summoned the courage to approach him for some brief conversation.

All my philosophy courses met in Harrelson Hall. I was impressed with the unusual architecture of the building, but the smaller classrooms were *small*, with the seats tightly packed and bolted down. So if the class was full, it was cramped. The senior seminar met in a genuine seminar room and was always the highlight of the week. The history of philosophy courses I took met in the evening. That's where I met one of my favorite fellow students, Betty Weidhuner, an older student who had returned to school to finish a degree. Betty invited my other best philosophy friend, Maurice Stanley, and



NC State philosophy faculty and students from the late 1960s at a reunion in 2002. From left to right (F=faculty): Paul Bredenberg (F), Maurice Stanley, Robert Bryan (F), Betty Pettersen (previously Weidhuner), Tom Regan (F), Judy Auld (previously Andrews), Curtis Fitzgerald (F), Gary Helms, Dale Lichtblau, and Robert Metzger (F).

me to her little house on a couple of occasions for steak teriyaki with wild rice and red wine. This made for the most enjoyable philosophical discussions – *in vino veritas*. At one memorable get-together, we took turns reading parts of Plato's *Symposium*.

When Dr. Bryan arrived in my junior year, my interest in philosophy took a quantum leap forward. I think I took his first ethics course and his two-semester seminar in metaphysics. I was so impressed with his style, his vocabulary, his enthusiasm, and his professionalism that I told Maurice that he just *had* to take a course from this new professor. Maurice later earned a philosophy PhD from Chapel Hill and taught at UNC Wilmington for many years.

Dr. Tom Regan joined the department in my final year and became my senior thesis advisor. And I was thrilled to be asked by Dr. Bryan to "assist"—and earn a small paycheck—in his large introductory course my final semester. I had to attend the lectures, hold office hours for students needing help, and grade the assigned papers. Dr. Bryan graded the final exam.

A philosophy club was established during my senior year. I served as president and Dr. Bryan delivered the inaugural paper. Our first invited speaker was Peter Heath, Chair of the Philosophy Department at UVA and author of the inimitable article on "Nothing" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. In the spring, Anthony Wozzley, also of UVA, gave a talk on a fascinating issue in philosophy of law. We met in a cozy parlor-like room at the far east side of the campus. It was a novel experience that encouraged our interest in "professional" philosophy.

All in all, those years at State, particularly my senior year, were the most rewarding and memorable of my life. I owe whatever success I've had in my life to the Platonic and Aristotelian lessons I learned from Dr. Bryan and his colleagues and those two fellow students—Maurice and Betty—with whom I am grateful to have stayed in regular contact.

LOOKING BACK Department News from the Past

2002: Jason Bivins, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, wins the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Outstanding Junior Faculty Award; Timothy Hinton is promoted to Associate Professor of Philosophy; William Adler, Professor of Religious Studies, publishes *The Chronography of George Synkellos* (Oxford University Press) with Paul Tuffin of Adelaide.

1992: Enrollments in the Department's courses in 1991/92 peak at 4,696, a level not surpassed until 2009/10; Mary Kath Cunningham, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, wins a College Outstanding Teacher Award; Tony Stewart returns from a Fulbright Research Fellowship in Bangladesh and is promoted to Associate Professor of Religious Studies.

1982: William R. ("Randy") Carter, Professor of Philosophy, is named Alumni Distinguished Professor; James VanderKam, Professor of Religious Studies, is awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship; Tom Regan, Professor of Philosophy, publishes *All That Dwell Therein: Essays on Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics* (University of California Press).

1972: The Department introduces five new courses: PHI 330, Metaphysics, PHI 331, Philosophy of Language, PHI 402, Advanced Logic, PHI 403, Foundations & Philosophy of Language, and REL 325, Religion & the Modern Literary Imagination. PHI 330 and 331 are still offered; the other courses introduced in 1972 have been superseded.

1962: William Kurylo is appointed as an Instructor in Philosophy. He remains in the Department until 1971, teaching Problems & Types of Philosophy, Logic, Symbolic Logic, and courses in the history of philosophy.

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/philol/>

This newsletter was prepared by David Auerbach, Michael Pendlebury, Ken Peters and Ann Rives.