

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2016

TWO FACULTY WIN
TEACHING AWARDS

Two members of the Department's faculty received teacher awards during Spring 2016.

ANNA BIGELOW

Anna B. Bigelow, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, was presented with an Outstanding Teacher Award at the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty Awards Ceremony on April 27. She has also become a member of the NC State Academy of Outstanding Teachers.

Eight of the Department's faculty are now members of this Academy.

Anna's teaching includes courses on Islam, Islamic History to 1798, Islam in the Modern World, and Religion and Conflict.

"Understanding Islam as a religion in its historical context and in all its diversity," Anna says, "is profoundly important for students to be able to make sense of current events as well as to learn to appreciate diversity and prepare for a globalized economy."

Whatever their majors might be, many of Anna's students look forward to international careers or work in fields involving diverse populations. Beyond giving them knowledge, understanding, and skills that help them prepare for their careers, she also hopes to impart to students "the joy and vitality inherent in cultivating a creative and inquisitive mind."

Anna's students say that she "is a fantastic instructor," is "very receptive outside of class," "has an exceptional base of knowledge about a large number of religions," is "passionate about the material," "leads phenomenal discussions," and "has an improvisational style, which is ideal for students learning new and foreign ideas."

JOHN CARROLL

John W. Carroll was named as an Alumni Distinguished Undergraduate Professor at the Alumni Association Faculty Awards Ceremony on April 28. Only members of the NC State Academy of Outstanding Teachers can be nominated for this distinction. John has been a member of the Academy since 2009.

John currently teaches courses on Knowledge and Skepticism, Metaphysics, The Scientific Method, and an interdisciplinary course on Time Travel for the University Honors Program. He also deals with issues concerning time travel in his course on Metaphysics.

"Students," John says, "should know that philosophy is a living, breathing and unfinished discipline." In all aspects of his teaching, he



John Carroll, who has been named as an Alumni Distinguished Undergraduate Professor, and Anna Bigelow, who has won an Outstanding Teacher Award.

treats his students as active participants in a common endeavor of doing philosophy, rather than as passive recipients of information about philosophy.

John's collaborations with students in his courses have included two extraordinary research undertakings.

One is *A Time Travel Website* (<http://timetravelphilosophy.net>), which John and his students put together and continue to improve. This has been cited in scholarly publications and has averaged 3,000 page views per month since 2008.

The other is a dialogue that John and his

students co-authored over several years and then published as a book. *A Time Travel Dialogue* (Open Book Publishers, 2014) is available in paper, hardcover, and electronic editions, and can also be read free on-line at <http://www.openbookpublishers.com/reader/256#page/1/mode/2up>.

John's students describe him as "brilliant," "very enthusiastic and open to questions," "thoughtful, kind, and engaging," "quick to give helpful feedback," "dedicated and attentive to the class," "fantastic at moderating discussions," and "very engaging to listen to even when the material is dense and dry."

GENEROUS DONATION
HONORS FORMER HEAD

In July 2015, the family of Professor Robert S. Bryan, a distinguished former Head of the Department, made a generous gift to the NC State Philosophy and Religious Studies Student Awards Fund in honor of Professor Bryan.

The Bryan Family Gift made it possible to convert the Student Awards Fund into an income-earning endowment fund. This endowment will permanently secure NC State student awards in Philosophy and Religious Studies. These awards include the Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan.

The Bryan Prize was established in 2011 in recognition of the crucial role played by Professor Bryan in building an excellent department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at NC State during his tenure as Head, from 1966 to 1989.

Features and Newsbites

WORK IN PROGRESS: MCLAUGHLIN ON SOKA GAKKAI

In this article, Dr. Levi McLaughlin, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, describes his current work on Soka Gakkai, a major New Religion in Japan.

My work centers on religion in modern and contemporary Japan. I am particularly interested in so-called "New Religions." These are groups founded in the last two centuries that have, in some cases, emerged as Japan's largest-ever collectives of active participants.

I am now completing a book on Soka Gakkai, literally the "Value Creation Study Association," which rose after the Second World War to dominate Japan's religious landscape as the country's largest New Religion and, arguably, Japan's most successful religious export.

Soka Gakkai claims 8.27 million households in Japan and close to two million followers in 192 countries overseas, including hundreds of thousands in the United States. It is most famous in Japan for its affiliation with the political party Komeito, which it founded in 1964, and for courting controversy by challenging popular concerns with Japan's constitutional divide between religion and government and encouraging its adherents to take part in electioneering on behalf of Komeito.

Thanks to its political activism, a history of aggressive proselytizing, and members' reverence for its charismatic leader Ikeda Daisaku (1928-), Soka Gakkai has an overwhelmingly negative public image.

Other factors contribute to the enigma that surrounds the group: Soka Gakkai is a lay Buddhist organization that promotes the teachings of the medieval Japanese figure Nichiren (1222-1282). Yet its tremendous range of institutions—which include schools, museums, a media em-

pire based around a daily newspaper, a comprehensive modern bureaucracy, doctrinal instruction modeled on twentieth-century pedagogy, and a host of other subdivisions—indicate that the group cannot be easily summarized as a Buddhist group. Indeed, Soka Gakkai stands as a challenge to prevailing notions of what a "religion" should comprise.

Due to the group's reputation in Japan, it has remained under-researched. I am one of very few non-member researchers to have carried out a sustained investigation of Soka Gakkai. And I am the only one to have spent as long as I have—now more than sixteen years—with grassroots-level Soka Gakkai communities in different parts of Japan.

My book draws on my ethnographic investigations, combined with archival research, to shed light on why Soka Gakkai grew so big, what accounts for its distinctive combination of institutions and practices, and how these may lead to new understandings of what the term "religion" may include. To carry out my investigation, I lived with member families, undertook doctrinal training, interviewed more than two hundred adherents across the country, and played violin in one of Soka Gakkai's symphony orchestras.

My book, tentatively titled *Soka Gakkai: Buddhism and Romantic Heroism in Modern Japan*, reveals the appeal of Soka Gakkai's conflation of medieval Japanese Buddhism and modern Euro-American imports to millions of people in postwar Japan who sought to realize transcendent and this-worldly aspirations within the group. The book also considers Soka Gakkai's attempts to secure its future by appealing to a new generation that does not suffer the deprivations that drove its earliest converts.

FORMER FACULTY FEATURE: DR. JAMES H. MOORHEAD



James H. Moorhead

In Fall 1975, James H. Moorhead joined the Department as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies after completing the PhD at Yale University. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1980. He resigned in 1984 to accept an appointment as Professor of American Church History at Princeton Theological Seminary.

During his nine years at NC State, Jim taught many sections of core courses in Religious Studies, including Introduction to Religion, Religion in American Life, Religious Sects in America, and American Religion After Darwin. (The first three of these courses have been renamed; the material covered in the fourth has been redistributed to other courses.)

A specialist in the history of religion in America, Jim was—and still is—interested in the way in which religion interacts with culture, social issues, and politics. While at NC State, he published many articles and a well-regarded book, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860–1869* (Yale University Press, 1978). He was awarded the Frank S. and Elizabeth D. Brewer Prize of the American Society of Church History in 1976 and a Fellowship for Independent Study and Research from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1981/82.

"NC State," Jim says, "was a wonderful place to begin my career as a professor. Without exception, I found colleagues who were extraordinarily supportive; and teaching undergraduates was great fun."

Jim's recent research has concentrated chiefly on mainline Protestant denominations and their apparent decline. His numerous publications during his time at Princeton Seminary have included two sole-authored books and a co-edited book.

At present, Jim is serving on a task force appointed by Princeton Seminary's president to investigate ways in which the institution was involved with slavery in the nineteenth century.

Jim plans to retire from Princeton Seminary at the end of June 2017. He says: "My wife Cynthia and I hope to stay in Princeton because all three of our grown children, plus one grandchild, reside in the area. What good fortune is that!"

NEWSBITES

MALS SEMINARS: As a result of a recent agreement, a member of the departmental faculty is now teaching a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies ("MALS") seminar each fall semester. The first of these seminars, taught by Karey A. Harwood, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, in Fall 2015, was on *Ethics and the Ideology of Choice*. Levi McLaughlin, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, will be offering a MALS seminar on *Religion, Disaster, and Development* in Fall 2016.

PEER MENTORS: With support from the Provost's Professional Experience Program, the Department appointed Peer Mentors to assist students taking its courses during 2015/16. This was a new initiative. The mentors were Chris Becker (Philosophy, Fall 2015), Arianna Nasser (Philosophy, Spring 2016), and Hank Norfleet (Religious Studies, Fall 2015 and Spring 2016). Chris graduated in December 2015; Arianna and Hank graduated in May 2016.

SCHOLARLY REASSIGNMENT: John W. Carroll, Professor of Philosophy, was on scholarly reassignment for Spring 2016. John used the time for work on a book project on the concept of possibility and its applications in the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and epistemology.

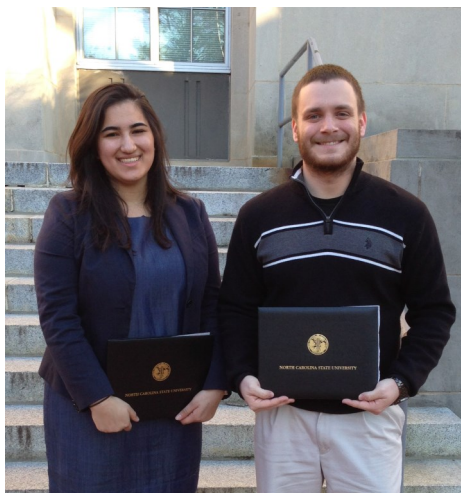
CAREER CONNECTIONS: On March 19, three departmental alumni participated in *Career Connections*, an event for first-year students organized by the NC State Exploratory Studies Program at which panels of alumni shared their knowledge and perspective about their professional fields and how their undergraduate majors helped to prepare them for work in those fields. The departmental alumni who participated were Katrina Lee (BA in Philosophy with a Concentration in Philosophy of Law '09), Tim Prudhomme (BA in Philosophy '13), and Brad Springer (BA in Religious Studies '05).

MAJOR ANNIVERSARIES: Two members of the Department's faculty in Philosophy celebrate significant long-term service anniversaries in 2016: Ronald P. Endicott, 15 years; and Timothy Hinton, 20 years.

BOWLING SMACKDOWN: In the closest result ever, the philosophy team defeated the religious studies team by only two points in our annual Bowling Smackdown in April 2016. The overall record in the series is: Philosophy 8, Religious Studies 7.

Department News

STUDENT AWARD WINNERS



Student award winners: Arianna Nasser (Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan) and Zane Vermette (Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald)

The Department celebrated the achievements of its top seniors at its annual Student Awards Reception on March 2, 2016. Two awards were presented by faculty members who had worked closely with the award winners.

The Philosophy Prize in Honor of Professor Robert S. Bryan was presented by Robert Mabrito, Associate Professor of Philosophy. The winner was Arianna Nasser. Arianna, a Park Scholar, graduated *magna cum laude* with a BS in Philosophy and a BS in Biomedical Engineering in May 2016. This coming fall, she will be entering the MD-MPH Program at the UNC School of Medicine.

The Religious Studies Prize in Honor of Professor W. Curtis Fitzgerald was presented by Jason Bivins, Professor of Religious Studies. The winner was Zane Vermette. Zane, who has a cumulative grade point average of 4.0, will be graduating with a BA in Religious Studies and a BA in History in December 2016. He is planning to go on to graduate school to pursue a PhD in either Religious Studies or History.

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

Arianna: "There are so many things that have come out of my experiences in the NC State program in Philosophy. It gave me the critical thinking skills I needed to develop and articulate my design project in Biomedical Engineering and ultimately file a provisional patent and pitch it to investors. It has also helped me become a much better teacher as I work with younger students in biochemistry and engineering, as well as middle- and high-school students interested in pursuing dual degrees in humanities and STEM fields. Ethics and logic, in particular, have helped me become a better student and teacher."

Zane: "The Religious Studies Program has benefitted me by opening up a whole new world that I barely even knew existed before coming to college. Also, the program has helped me develop the ability to think critically about the world and to look below surface appearances. The religious studies instructors were great, and each influenced me in different ways."

DAVID AUERBACH RETIRES

After almost 41 years on the NC State philosophy faculty, David Auerbach retired in January 2016. He was appointed to the Department in 1975, completed his PhD (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in 1978, and received tenure in 1986.

During his time in the Department, he taught over 7,000 students in 261 sections of various courses and helped recruit many talented students to the major in Philosophy.

David's main scholarly interests are in Philosophy of Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy of Language. His work on the philosophical implications of the Gödel Incompleteness Theorems has often been cited.

David played a key role in establishing the Department's sequence of logic courses, designed the philosophy of language course, and helped initiate the teaching of research ethics on campus. He recently established a new introductory philosophy course called *Representation, Reason & Reality*, which is based on puzzles and paradoxes and appeals to students from STEM disciplines.

During the past ten years, David has contributed significantly to university governance. He has served on the Council on Undergraduate Education, the University Courses and Curricula Committee (which he chaired in 2014/15), the Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. His retirement did not prevent him from completing his third two-year term on the Faculty Senate in Spring 2016, and he has even been re-elected for a further two-year term.

In recognition of his many contributions to NC State, David has been appointed to the University's emeritus faculty.

Viewing retirement as a time of opportunity, David has already cleaned and organized his home office. He plans to finish reading many articles that he previously started but did not have the time to complete; to bake more breads (and chickens) in his wood-fired oven; to digitize his music collection; and to finish a textbook that's been gathering digital dust for a while. His other projects include reading *Das Kapital* and re-reading *Middlemarch*.



David Auerbach in March 2012

BIG EVENTS

The Department hosts many events every year, such as the Philosophy and Religious Studies Student Awards Reception and several talks in the Philosophy Colloquium Series, the Religious Studies Colloquium Series, and the Logic and Cognitive Science Lecture Series. In addition to these regular events, we hosted three major events during the 2015/16 academic year.

CONFERENCE ON PERCEPTION

The Department's Logic and Cognitive Science Initiative ("LACSI") held its fourth biennial conference on September 25–26, 2015. At each LACSI conference, leading national and international experts are invited to present current work on a selected topic.

The 2015 conference was devoted to the philosophy of perception. The speakers were Berit Brogaard (University of Miami), Alex Byrne (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Jonathan Cohen (University of California, San Diego), Harold Langsam (University of Virginia), Mohan Matthen (University of Toronto), and Michelle Montague (University of Texas at Austin).

Previous LACSI conferences have been on *Ontology* (September 2009), *Meaning in Context* (September 2011), and *Concepts* (September 2013).

WORLD PHILOSOPHY DAY LECTURE

Officially proclaimed by UNESCO in 2005, World Philosophy Day has been celebrated internationally on the third Thursday of November since 2002. With the support of funds from Alumni Annual Giving, the Department hosted NC State's first World Philosophy Day Lecture on November 19, 2015. This is slated to become an annual event.

Our World Philosophy Day lecturer in 2015 was Dr. Kenneth A. Taylor, Henry Waldgrave Stuart Professor of Philosophy at Stanford University and co-host of the nationally syndicated radio show *Philosophy Talk*. His topic was "Religion and Gay Marriage: Why Democracy is Good for Religion even if Religion is Uncomfortable for Democracy."

Taylor focused on the challenge to democracy presented by the fact that democratic citizens hold radically different views on topics like gay marriage. He argued that political philosophy should not avoid these disagreements and discussed ways in which it could address them.

IMPACT OF RELIGION FORUM

A new annual series on the Impact of Religion was inaugurated on April 14, 2016. The series will explore intersections between religion and politics in the modern world. The topic of the inaugural forum was *Religion and Politics in America and Across the Globe: Perspectives from Leading Analysts*.

Two national experts on religion and society who work at the highest level as advisers to government agencies, private companies and other power holders addressed a packed lecture hall and then participated in a panel discussion.

Robert P. Jones, CEO of the Public Religion Research Institute, spoke on religion's changing impact on American politics. Douglas M. Padgett, the Middle East unit leader in the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom, discussed strategies for preventing and countering violent religious extremism in the Middle East.

Time Flies

THE WAY IT WAS

Rufus Rankin, BA Philosophy '99, is a portfolio manager and the Director of Research at Equinox Institutional Asset Management, a boutique investment firm based in Princeton, NJ. He completed an MIS degree at NC State in 2004 and earned a Doctorate of Business Administration at Grenoble Ecole de Management in 2013, and has published a book entitled Multi-Dimensional Diversification: Improving Portfolio Selection Using Principal Component Analysis.

From the time I was a kid I wanted to pursue philosophy or be a professional investor, but after years as a professional investor it is clear to me that one can do both. Furthermore, it is apparent to me that a background in philosophy has been a key factor in any modest level of success I might claim.

Metaphysics, epistemology and logic were all fascinating for me, and over the years have translated into a few questions: "What do I know about the world and how it works?" "How do I know these things and how do I have confidence in this knowledge?" "What do I want to accomplish, and what is the best way to do that given what I know about the world and how I know these things?"

These questions have helped me a great deal, and they are a distillation of the process of studying philosophy over a few years and then continuing to think about it for many more years.

Rather than a particular class or professor that crystalized some deep wisdom for me, it was the **process** of engaging with philosophers and professors that had the greatest impact on me and in a sense is still core to what I do now as an investment manager and finance researcher.

One of the great parts of my job is that I get to spend time with a diverse array of smart people with backgrounds in physics, statistics, economics, engineering and other fields. People in quantitative finance typically come from the hard sciences. Rather than feeling at a disadvantage, I actually feel better equipped than most to interact with and even understand the investment theories and programs that these clever people design.

Several faculty members had a strong impact on me. Reggie Savage made philosophy a living, breathing, real-world endeavor. I don't think I'll ever forget one of my early classes with him, when he related a reading in Aristotle to the lyrics from the Talking Heads song "Once in a Lifetime." John Carroll did his best to clean up my sloppy writing (and therefore thinking) in Philosophy of Language. Doug Jesseph's senior writing seminar was as enjoyable as it was difficult, and it was probably also the best preparation possible for the challenge of writing my dissertation years later. My time as a philosophy major was indeed well spent and I appreciate it more every year.

LOOKING BACK: Department News from the Past

2005/06: Robert A. Mabrito (PhD, Michigan) is appointed as Assistant Professor of Philosophy. He is promoted to Associate Professor in 2012. The Department takes over the administration of the interdisciplinary minor in Health, Medicine, and Human Values. Enrollments in the Department's courses are 4,672 during the academic year. Twenty-nine students complete departmental degree programs: eighteen in Philosophy and eleven in Religious Studies. Three of the twenty-nine graduate *sum cum laude*, two *magna cum laude*, and five *cum laude*.

1995/96: In Summer 1995, Edwin A. Martin, Jr. steps down as Department Head after six years in this position. Tom Regan takes over as Interim Head, and becomes Head in Summer 1996. John W. Carroll (PhD, Arizona) is appointed as Assistant Professor of Philosophy. He is promoted to Associate Professor in 1998 and Professor in 2005. The Department constructs its first website.

1985/86: R. Bruce Mullin (PhD, Yale) is appointed as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. He is promoted to Associate Professor in 1991 and Professor in 1997; he moves on to the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church in 1998. Paul A. Bredenberg, Professor of Philosophy, retires after 36 years' service, and

W. Lawrence Highfill, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, retires after 30 years' service. Enrollments in departmental courses reach a new high of 3,737 during the academic year, and 71 students are registered for departmental majors.

1975/6: David D. Auerbach and Alan W. Sparer (both PhD candidates at MIT) are appointed as Instructors in Philosophy; Obie Wright, Jr. (PhD candidate, Harvard) is appointed as Instructor in Religious Studies; and James H. Moorhead (PhD, Yale) is appointed as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. Auerbach completes his PhD and becomes an Assistant Professor in 1978; he retires in January 2016 (see page 3). Sparer completes his PhD and becomes an Assistant Professor in 1976; he resigns to study law in 1979. Wright leaves for Howard University in 1976. Moorhead is promoted to Associate Professor in 1980; he moves on to the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1984 (see page 2).

1965/66: Over 1,300 students enroll in departmental courses (including 1965 summer sessions) and twenty students are registered for the philosophy major. William Norwood Hicks II, popularly known as "Red," retires in the summer of 1966 after thirty-eight years as Department Head.

ALUMNI NEWS

Bill Shefte, BA in Philosophy '77 and BA in Political Science '77, went on to law school at Samford University. He is currently President of the Investment Brokerage firm *Gold Leaf Financial* which is located in Charlotte, NC with a partner office in the Washington, DC area. The company specializes in various strategies of retirement and long range financial planning with the goal of maintaining balanced accounts that include a segment focusing on preservation of the client's initial investment. The company is currently looking for representatives with a high track record of client service. Bill's daughter, Whitney Shefte, works at the *Washington Post*. She has won four Emmys and the Peabody Award, and was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize.

Russell Brownell, BA in Psychology '73 and BA in Philosophy '84, retired from the NC Employment Security Commission in July 2013. (The ESC has since been replaced by an agency under the Department of Commerce.) Russ had over 37 years of active service with the State and worked as a Business and Technology Applications Analyst from March 1993 until his retirement. He currently uses some of his free time for non-credit classes and bus trips through NC State's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, which he joined shortly after retirement. He is also a member of the RTP chapter of the American Association of Individual Investors, which has a monthly investment seminar in Cary. Email: russell_brownell@yahoo.com

Brian Harbour, BS in Philosophy with minor in Mechanical Engineering '87, earned a JD at the UNC School of Law. After practicing law in NC for several years, he returned to UNC-Chapel Hill, where he earned his MA and PhD in Political Science. He went on to teach American Government and Constitutional Law at several universities in NC and Georgia, including NC State. For the past 18 years he has owned and operated Carwashes and Laundromats in central NC. He lives in Pittsboro, NC with his wife Laurie and their multiple cats that are all named from 1960s icons (Sidney Poitier, Petula Clark, Georgie Girl) and a Maltese named Bubba.

Nathan Sasser, BA in Philosophy and BA in English '02, received a Master of Divinity degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in 2005 before entering the PhD program in Philosophy at the University of South Carolina. In May he defended his dissertation, entitled *Hume's Practical Conciliation of Science and Skepticism*. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, and this fall he will teach at Furman University. Married since 2007, Nathan and his wife Patricia have one child.

Timothy Ferreira, BA in Philosophy '03, is the Director of Quality & Compliance and serves on the Leadership Team for the Autism Society of NC, a statewide organization providing support and promoting opportunities for individuals with autism and their families. After graduating, he received a certificate in Nonprofit Management from Duke and completed the Advancing Strong Leadership in I/DD program through the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware. He is a member of the American Society for Quality. He lives in Wake Forest, NC with his partner and a small menagerie.

Philip Schreiber, BA in Philosophy '03 and Lean Healthcare Project Certification '13, received the MBA from Pfeiffer University in 2013 and became a certified Growth-U 45 Day Challenge Advisor. In addition to advising on personal growth and leadership transformations through Growth-U, he has spent over 10 years working as a HR consultant, currently for a large healthcare system in the Carolinas. In his current role, he coaches leadership on performance management, drives organizational strategy around culture and teammate engagement, and is responsible for education and training on topics ranging from general HR to change management. Linkedln: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/philipschreiber>

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

NC State University
Campus Box 8103
Raleigh, NC 27695-8103

<http://www.ncsu.edu/chass/philol/>

Main Office: 340 Withers Hall
Phone: 919/515-3214 FAX: 919/513-4351
Email: phil_rel@ncsu.edu