AGORA

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy



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BABIES 'R US

The Departmental family grew again last year. See pictures of the new additions!

Page 5

AND THE WINNER IS ...

See who won the Departmental awards this year! *Page 6*

PHILOSOPHY TODAY

Watch this year's talks on iTunesU! Page 11

Newsletter Editor Norvin Richards

Design Editors Seth Bordner Julianne Wilson

Innovation

BY H. SCOTT HESTEVOLD

Last year I reported grand news: during the yearlong departmental review, an external reviewer concluded that UA's Department of Philosophy "is arguably the best in the region." Though the Department's reputation is indeed a function of the impressive quality and quantity of its faculty research, it is also a function of classroom innovation.

THE PRE-LAW TRACK

During his term as chair, Dr. Norvin Richards began developing a sequence of philosophy of law courses for students planning a career in law. In addition to the seminar on classic problems in jurisprudence, Dr. Richards now teaches courses devoted to philosophical problems involving criminal law [Which objectionable behaviors should be made criminal? Assisted suicide? Panhandling?], civil law [What should count as causing harm? If one causes harm negligently, what counts as negligence?], and constitutional law [What limits, if any, should there be to the ways in which the government elicits confessions and employs electronic surveillance to combat terrorism?]. Our new philosopher, Dr.

Kenneth Ehrenberg, will begin assisting Dr. Richards with the Pre-Law Track.

THE MIND-BRAIN TRACK

Inspired by exciting findings in neuroscience and psychology, a range of undergraduates are interested in the human mind. These students include majors in philosophy, psychology, and anthropology, as well as certain engineering and computer science majors. Soon after joining the faculty, Dr. Chase Wrenn created the Mind-Brain Track to offer these students a series of rigorous philosophy courses that address the nature of mind and cognition vis-à-vis contemporary work in psychology, neuroscience, and computer science. In Spring 2012, Dr. Wrenn taught Philosophy of Cognitive Science, addressing competing models of cognition: How does thought arise from the interaction of brain, body, and world? Students experimented with robotics and then read Alvin Goldman's Simulating Minds, a defense of his "simulation theory" of how people acquire knowledge of others' mental states. While on campus for his Philosophy Today lecture, Dr. Goldman

KEEP READING INNOVATION ON PAGE 5

FALL 2012 ISSUE 10

NEWS OF THE DEPARTMENT

TORIN ALTER (Professor) reports that he "had papers



accepted by Mind and Journal of Consciousness Studies (the latter co-written with Yujin Nagasawa); Consciousness and the Mind-Body Problem: A Reader (co-edited with Robert J. Howell) came out on Oxford University Press; and OUP accepted a proposal (co-

written with Nagasawa) for a collection on Russellian Monism. I gave talks in England (Hertfordshire) and Seattle (APA). My twins turned 5 and continue to flourish, and the UA table tennis club I advise continues to improve. But the big news is ... I grew a beard."

SETH BORDNER (Assistant Professor) organized and



coached UA's first-ever Ethics
Bowl teams for competition at the
Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl
in St. Petersburg, FL where our
team finished with a winning 2-1
record. He continues to work on a
paper project in the philosophy of
science, and has two other papers

under review. A grant from UA's RGC will enable him to work this summer on four articles and a chapter in the forthcoming *Continuum Companion to Berkeley*. He was also the commencement speaker at the Virginia Tech Philosophy Department's departmental ceremony. "But by far my longest-term project started in January with the arrival of my daughter, Rowan. Michelle and I are very happy (and rather tired)."

SCOTT HESTEVOLD (Professor) Scott's paper on time and persistence is longer than it was a year ago. [So, does this imply that he is no longer working on the same paper?] Inspired by team-teaching "Physics and Metaphysics" with physicist Patrick LeClair, Scott has also finished a preliminary draft of a paper in which he

defends a Leibnizian theory of space. He looks forward to teaching seminars on Philosophy of Religion and on Metaphysics in 201213.

MAX HOCUTT (Professor Emeritus) published in the Independent Review a substantial piece critical of the doctrine of natural rights, submitted to another journal a shorter piece criticizing Ayn Rand's view of rights, and wrote a talk on moral theory that he has been invited to give to a convention of behaviorists in November in Santa Fe. He reports that "I'm also serving all of 2012 as Commodore (chief flunky--sort of like department chairman) of the Tuscaloosa Sailing Club."

MICHAEL HORTON (Instructor) defended his dissertation



Inflationary Truth-Theoretic Semantics and graduated from the University of Kentucky. He gave a talk at the Alabama Philosophical Society, "Metaphysically Open Alethic Functionalism and Uninterpretable Languages?" and his co-authored article titled

"Functionalism about Truth and the Metaphysics of Reduction" came out with *Acta Analytica*.

JEREMY KELLY (Instructor) has two papers appearing this



coming fall: "Toward a Humanized Theory of Truth," in a Festschrift for the Ghanian philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, and "Frege and Russell on Assertion," in *Logic, Epistemology and the Unity of Science* (Springer, 2012). Currently he is working on Frege's theory of functions.

JUSTIN KLOCKSIEM (Instructor) taught courses in introductory ethics and medical ethics, as well as a seminar on value theory. Last October, a paper of his on

NEWS OF THE DEPARTMENT



intrinsic value appeared in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*; later this fall one on the nature of harm and benefit will appear in *American Philosophical Quarterly*. "But the best news was that last September, my wife and I welcomed our son, Emmett, to the world. He's happy

and healthy and growing fast, and he loves to laugh and crawl and tackle the cats. Looking forward to another great year!"

REKHA NATH (Assistant Professor) gave talks in summer



2011 at the Australian National University and at the Australasian Association of Philosophy conference at the University of Otago (New Zealand). She also gave talks at the Alabama Philosophical Society; as part of the *Religion and Culture* lecture series

hosted by the UA Department of Religious Studies; and at Colby College for their lecture series on terrorism. She served as a faculty fellow in the UA Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility's service-learning program, and published articles in *The Monist* and in *Social Theory & Practice*.

 $\textbf{STUART RACHELS} \ (Associate \ Professor) \ put \ a \ fall-term$



sabbatical to great use, doing the seventh edition of *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* and the sixth edition of *The Right Thing to Do*, both of which are now out. He also says, "I think the intro ethics course I taught three sections of in the spring probably had the

best intellectual content of any course I've ever taught. I've now been here 13 years."

KEEP READING FACULTY ON PAGE 4

Our New Colleague

We are delighted to have Kenneth Ehrenberg join

us. Ken's specialties are in philosophy of law and moral philosophy. His BA (magna cum laude), MA, and PhD are all from Columbia, and his JD is from the Yale School of Law. His book, *The Functions of Law*, is under contract to Oxford



University Press. He comes to us from the University of Buffalo, where he was Assistant professor of Philosophy and Research Associate Professor of Law, and has also been an HLA Hart Visiting Fellow at Oxford University's Center for Ethics and Philosophy of Law. His wife, Hanako, is also an attorney, specializing in litigation involving Japanese car manufacturers and parts suppliers. They will be living in Birmingham, where they hope her specialty will be in demand, and would be glad to meet alums of the department who are in the area.

Selected Publications:

- "Joseph Raz's Theory of Authority," *Philosophy Compass*, 7 (2012): 884-894.
- "Critical Reception of Raz's Theory of Authority," *Philosophy Compass*, 7 (2012): 777-785.
- "The Anarchist Official: A Problem for Legal Positivism," Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy 36 (2011): 89-112.
- "Law is not (Best Considered) an Essentially Contested Concept," *International Journal of Law in Context* 7 (2011): 209-232.
- "Defending the Possibility of a Neutral Functional Theory of law," Oxford Journal of Legal Studies 29 (2009): 91-113.

NEWS OF THE DEPARTMENT

FACULTY

NORVIN RICHARDS (Professor) was an invited



speaker at a conference at the University of Zurich, reading a paper titled "What shall we tell the children?" He also gave talks this past year to the Blount Program and to the UA Pre-Law

Student Association.

RICHARD RICHARDS (Professor) gave two talks



this fall at the University of California, Berkeley. One was for the Fossil Coffee series at the Museum of Natural History, on "The Essentialism Myth and Historical Species

Concepts"; the another was for the Bay Area Biosystematics meeting, on "The Species Problem: A Conceptual Problem?" In April, he gave a talk at Mississippi State University, also on "The Species Problem: A Conceptual Problem." He is currently working on a book titled *The Biology of Art*.

CHASE WRENN (Associate Professor) reports



that the main highlight of his year has been getting a contract with Polity Press to write a book on competing theories of truth. The working title is *TRUTH*, and he intends to have a

first draft finished by the end of 2012 and to have the book completely finished by the end of 2013.

INNOVATION

met with Dr. Wrenn's class to discuss his book and answer students' many questions. With growth of the Mind-Brain Track, the Department hopes to add to the faculty a philosopher of cognitive science.

COMPUTER-ASSISTED COURSES

Before Dr. Wrenn introduced computer-assisted logic instruction a decade ago, logic instructors routinely failed 50% of their students (regardless of which philosopher taught the class with a blackboard and a mountain of chalk). Today, beginning logic students report to a computer lab staffed with the professor and several undergraduate TAs. Between the course text and sophisticated instructional software that delivers progressive exercises and quizzes, the failure rate is well below 10% with no compromise of academic rigor!

Inspired by the success of computer-lab logic, Dr. Torin Alter worked with Dr. Wrenn to launch in 2010 a section of computer-assisted Introduction to Philosophy. This section has not offered students as many opportunities for philosophical discussion, but it has offered more structure for cultivating critical reading skills. By two measures, this section is a success: the average grade assigned was higher than in traditional sections of PHL 100; and more students in the computer-assisted section took a second philosophy class!

Yet a third computer-assisted course will appear this fall: introductory aesthetics. Dr. Richard Richards' students will divide their time between a classroom for guided discussion and a computer lab for access to various online resources. These resources may include music, photographs of great and not-sogreat works of art, movies, and clips of classic theater and ballet performances.

PHYSICS AND METAPHYSICS

Two years ago, after several conversations with physicist Patrick LeClair about Special Relativity and the nature of time, Dr. LeClair suggested that we teach together a course on the problems at the interface of physics and metaphysics. We launched the course Spring 2012 with a couple dozen brave students, a delightful mix of physics majors and philosophy majors. After addressing our disciplines' similarities and differences, we began study of space: Must space extend infinitely, or could it be bounded with a

KEEP READING INNOVATION ON PAGE 10



EMMETT ALLEN KLOCKSIEM

SEPTEMBER 23, 2011

9 lbs. 10 oz., 21 inches

ROWAN ELIZABETH BORDNER JANUARY 28, 2012

JANUARY 28, 2012 8 lbs. 1 oz., 21.5 inches

Babies

are such a nice way to start people.

~Don Herold

The Department's extended family grew by two this past year with the births of Emmett and Rowan.

Can you tell which of our faculty started out as these babies?

















Iop row (L to R); Scott Hestevold, Seth Bordner, Torm Alter, Bottom row (L to R); Norom Richards, Rekha North, Chase Wrem, Jeremy Kelly, Stuart Rachels



L to R: Hannah White, H. Scott Hestevold, Ross Boone, Hannah Hicks

AWARD WINNERS

MARTEN AND MARIE TEN HOOR
PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN PHILOSOPHY

Hannah White (1st place) Spencer Carter (2nd place)

IREDELL JENKINS ENDOWED

MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Hannah White (Ist place) James Bain and Amanda Buxton (2nd place)

The Norvin Richards Award in Philosophy and the Law

Ross Boone and Hannah Hicks

Hicks Wins Ramsey Award

In memory of a much-loved history professor, the John Fraser Ramsey Award is given annually to an outstanding junior with broad humanistic interests who has demonstrated selfless leadership and served as a role model for his or her contemporaries. In addition to a handsome cash stipend, the winner is provided the opportunity to take a Great Ideas European trip of his or her own devising. This year's winner is Hannah Hicks, a double major in philosophy and religious studies. Hannah is an honors student, a Blackburn Fellow, a teaching assistant in the Department of Philosophy, and an Ambassador for the College of Arts and Science. She is the executive director of cUltivAte Peer Mentors, and was herself a peer mentor in the University's first Freshmen



Hannah Hicks (center) with her parents.

Learning Seminar on LGBT history. Her plan is to attend law school and become a civil rights attorney, promoting social justice in the American south.

Department Boasts Two Leadership Board Faculty Fellows

The College of Arts and Sciences is blessed with a Leadership Board of alumni and friends who support students and faculty in the college through their donations. Each year, the Board recognizes three faculty they judge to be the best in the college in all three dimensions of a professor's job: teaching, research, and service. Those who are selected Leadership Board Faculty Fellows receive \$3,000 annually for three years to support their work.

The Faculty Fellows for 2011–2014 include Professor Norvin Richards. The Fellows for 2012–2015 include Professor Richard Richards. The other seven are from outside our department, but no selection procedure is perfect.

New Team Bowling Over the Competition

FROM UA'S DESKTOP NEWS

For the first time in the College's history, a team of students competed in the Southeast Regional 8th Annual Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl. The students, under the leadership of Dr. Seth Bordner, an assistant professor in the Department of Philosophy, traveled to St. Petersburg, Fla. in November seeking to reach the last round of competition that would qualify them for national competition.

The team had a strong showing, and beat out Samford University, which is considered a top 10 contender in the southeastern ethics bowl circuit. Ethics Bowl in this region is highly competitive, Bordner explained, with both of the last two national champions coming from the Southeast.

Prior to the event, teams are given 15 cases to study that can be related to a wide array of issues, such as cheating or plagiarism, ethics in dating or personal relationships, professional ethics as in law or medicine, or social ethics such as free speech and gun control, to name a few. The teams study the cases and prepare to present an argument about them at competition.

Once at the competition, a moderator poses questions about a case and the team delivers an argument. Their opponent can respond to the argument and then there is a rebuttal period for both teams. Each round of competition involves what Bordner characterized as "an intense hour of reasoned conversation."

Judges evaluate each team's answer on intelligibility, its focus on ethically relevant considerations, avoidance of ethical irrelevance, and deliberative thoughtfulness.

Bordner said teams are not awarded points for their delivery style but, rather, the quality of their ideas.



Front row: Austin Lafferty, Hannah White, Damon Stanley, Trevor Gant. Seth Bordner

Middle row: Jelani Grace, Kayci Dennis, Anthony Rivera-Rodriguez Back row: Christian Smith, Ellen Coogan, Hollin Wakefield

At this year's event, the UA team won its morning cases against Georgia State University and Samford University, but later lost in a close debate with Eckerd College, last year's regional champion. Bordner said it was a remarkable showing for a first-time team, especially to knock off a top contender.

The College's team has been preparing since September. Bordner said the team is enthusiastic, and there are more students in the group than can compete. He hopes this will lead to a strong tradition of success at future Ethics Bowl competitions.

HOW IT WORKS ETHICS BOWL

- In September, 15 cases are distributed to teams nationwide.
- Each round has two halves. A coin flip determines which team goes first.
- The presenting team has 10 minutes to present their case.
 Their opponents then have 5 minutes to respond. The first team then has another 5 minutes to rebut. The judges have 10 minutes to ask questions of the presenting team.
- The second half of the round is the same as the first with the teams switching from presenting to responding.
- At the start of the round, teams don't know which case they'll be discussing or what question they'll be asked.

NEWS OF PHILOSOPHY ALUMS

John Harris (1972) hosted Hannah Hicks (2013), this year's winner of the Ramsay Award, as part of the Great Ideas Tour of Europe that the award affords. John arranged places for Hannah to say in Vienna, introduced her to the city, and took great pleasure in exchanging tales of the department he knew for tales of the one she does. Like all of us, he thought the world of Hannah.

Craig Alexander (1977), an attorney at Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell in Birmingham, taught Alabama Civil Practice and Procedure at our law school this

past Spring, to rave reviews from the students. Craig regularly does two sessions in our civil law course, so their enthusiasm was no surprise.

William Harper (1978) has moved to Rome, Georgia, where he is in the process of latching on to an Adjunct position in one of several nearby philosophy departments.



a romantic comedy called "It's Not You, It's

Me." Another is on the cover of Call of

Duty: Black Ops II!

candidate for the Democratic nomination for District Judge of Hale County. She sent a gracious note returning a campaign donation sent by one of her former professors in the department, explaining that she believed a judge shouldn't accept financial support even from someone who might never appear before her in court. Vangi didn't win the nomination. The theory that this simply means she is too honest to be District Judge in Hale County is a base canard, so won't be advanced here.

Vangi Rose (1988) was a

Amy Henry (1998) is entering the graduate program in English

at UAB this coming fall.

Cole Mitchell (2002) finished his Ph.D. at Arizona, was an Instructor at Northern Arizona University, and will begin this fall as a Visiting Professor at UNC Chapel Hill. His areas of specialty are metaethics, ethical theory, early modern philosophy, and the history of ethics. His

This Year's Graduates

- James Bain will begin law school at Alabama this fall.
- **Daniel Bammerlin** has taken the LSAT, and is deciding between applying to law schools and seeking an MBA.
- **Jacob Black** graduated magna cum laude, but we do not know his plans.
- **Heather Callahan** graduated with a double major in philosophy and psychology, but we do not know her plans.
- **Spencer Carter** will begin a masters program in applied statistics this fall here at UA. He was admitted to UMSL's MA program in philosophy and is considering pursuing an advanced degree in philosophy at a later date.
- **Madison Crowe** will graduate in August, and hopes then to begin work toward a degree in veterinary medicine.
- **Chris Dominey** has no plans immediately following graduation. But, he intends to apply for graduate school

- sometime in the next year, programs focusing on international peace issues.
- **Jonathan Green** plans to spend a year working in a law office, then go to law school.
- **Christopher Murphy** graduated, but we do not know his plans.
- Austin Smith graduated with a double major in philosophy and English, but we do not know his plans.
- **Jeffrey Thompson** will begin law school at South Carolina this fall.
- **John Williams** has no plans, but "possibly graduate school in the future."
- **Preston Weaver** will be working with the Grad/Business school.

NEWS OF PHILOSOPHY ALUMS



Parker Sweet (2004) and Rebecca Garrelts were married April 28, in Mobile. Derek Tokaz (2005) and Brett Smith (2003) were groomsmen. Parker is an attorney with Crabtree and Sweet, and a Chapter 7 Panel Trustee at the United States Bankruptcy Court. Rebecca has just finished her residency at South Alabama.

dissertation and his current research concern semantic problems with descriptive accounts of normative evaluation.

Derek Tokaz (2005) is entering the MFA program in creative nonfiction at American University this coming fall.

Chase Espy (2007) is clerking for Senator Jeff Sessions, preparing at last report for a hearing on student loans.

Christopher Crotwell (2008) is living in Chicago, and has applied for the position of Program Assistant with the philosophy department at Northwestern.

Deborah Anderson (2009) is returning from Boston this fall to enter a Masters in Tax program in the College of Commerce and Business Administration.

John Cockrell (2009) is pursuing both a law degree and a Master's in Tax Law at Alabama, and is in fine fettle.

Ben Hohman (2010) spent the fall semester studying Latin and completing the equivalent of undergraduate major in theology at a Franciscan university in Indianapolis. He returned to China in the spring and hopes to begin graduate study in religion this coming fall.

Jonathan Cobb (2011) emailed from the Mountain of Attention Sanctuary, where he is "doing what I can to promote Adi Da's wisdom in the world. He has several dozen books, but his seminal book on world BRETT J. TALLEY

Brett Talley (2004) announced the release of his second book *The Void*: "In the deepest reaches of space, on a ship that no longer exists, six travelers stare into the abyss..."

Yikes, what happens next? There's a way to find out!

KEEP READING ALUMS ON PAGE 10



A new group of majors was inducted into Phi Sigma Tau International Honor Society for Philosophers in April. From left to right: Hannah White, Amanda Buxton, Amanda Crowe, Jonathan Eagerton, Hannah Hicks, John Copus, Adam Mills, Ross Boone, John Ross Massey, Austin Lafferty, and Paul Guenther. Not pictured: Tyler Brockett and John Lathan.

INNOVATION

definitive shape? Is it possible that space is curved? Is there such a thing as space? (Newton, "Yes;" Leibniz, "No"!) We explored together time and Relativity, and the course culminated with a study of the bizarre physics and metaphysical implications of quantum mechanics. If the students learned as much as their instructors, the course was a smashing success.

SERVICE-LEARNING: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN PRACTICE

Until political philosopher Rekha Nath joined the Department, the philosophy faculty had resisted service-learning courses, skeptical that a university should offer academic credit for community volunteer work. With the unanimous support of her colleagues, Dr. Nath will launch a service-learning course in Spring 2013. Students enrolled in her Introduction to Political Philosophy will have the option of enrolling concurrently in her one-hour service-learning course, "Social Justice in Practice." In addition to completing the course requirements for Political Philosophy, the service-learning students will have an additional one-hour weekly class, write a philosophical essay on a relevant problem in political or social philosophy, and complete several hours/week of volunteer work for a local relief agency (e.g. a soup kitchen or community food bank). For select students, this will be a rewarding and academically rigorous program of study.

Would you like to have a look at one of our classes? You have a standing invitation. Just let us know when you plan a return to campus.

ALUMS

peace and social justice is decidedly NOT the kind of esoteric and lofty (although completely ecstatic and beautiful) stuff that can be found in his other books, and is meant to be relatable to people with even no interest in spiritual life. Whereas his other books read something like poetry, Not-Two Is Peace reads like a philosophical treatise (and a damn good one)... The book can be read for free online at http://www.dapeace.org/read-book/. Each chapter is a stand-alone essay, so you can skip around and read ones that look interesting to you."

Jordan Berry (2012) has worked for the past year in Montgomery as a math tutor at Huntington Learning Center and Alabama Christian Academy. In the fall, he will begin studies toward a law degree at Jones University.

Emily Brait (2012) has completed a year teaching English in China, and will now pursue an LLM in international law at the Chinese University of Political Science and Law in Beijing with the support of a full scholarship from the University.

Jon Thompson (2012) has completed his internship in Cambridge with Christian Heritage, and has applied to several English universities for graduate study. At last report, he'd be choosing between an MA program in philosophy at Leeds and one in philosophy and religion at Heythrop College University of London.

Let us know how you're doing! Send your updates to nrichard@tenhoor.as.ua.edu

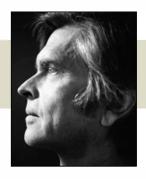




What Rights May We Defend by Means of War?

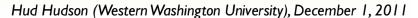
"Killing somebody in response to a threat that they pose to you may be an excessive response relative to the magnitude of the threat."

Jeff McMahan (Rutgers University), September 27, 2011



The Rabbit in the Garden — A Skeptical Theist's Tale

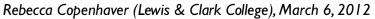
"I don't want to confuse the true thesis—that some intrinsic evils are also extrinsic goods—with the false thesis that there aren't any evils to begin with."





Anti-Intellectualism and the Academy in American Life

"This rhetoric has real consequences, and real costs. The main upshot of all this rhetoric is to make possible the massive and nationwide defunding of public higher education."





Knowledge and Democracy: How Social Epistemology Bears on the Success of our Democracy

"Is what makes democracy good by way of a political institution that it's good in an epistemic way? I'm going to answer 'No'."

Alvin Goldman (Rutgers University), April 26, 2012



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For more information, contact Dr. H. Scott Hestevold at 205-348-1912



CALENDAR:

SEPTEMBER 25

Philosophy Today: Simon Keller

OCTOBER 21-27

Homecoming

NOVEMBER 10

Southeast Regional Ethics Bowl

MARCH 23-31

Spring Break

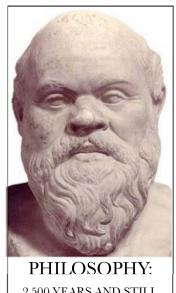
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