

AGORA

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy

The Philosophy & Medicine Specialization



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Last fall the first class of 28 students enrolled in the McCollough Pre-medical Institute, an honors-type program named after Dr. Gaylon McCollough, for exceptional students who intend to become physicians. This program is housed in the college of Arts & Sciences, but its Director, Ted Poston, is starting his second year as a member of the Philosophy Department.

The integration of medicine and philosophy has a precedent in the Philosophy Department. For more than five years we have had a Philosophy and Medicine specialized major and a specialized minor - the first Medical Humanities programs in the state of Alabama. Required courses for these specializations include seminars in the Philosophy of Medicine, Philosophy of Mental Health, Advanced Seminar in Medical Ethics and Philosophy of Science.

As these course titles suggest, there are good reasons for medical professionals to engage in philosophy. The most obvious value of philosophy to medicine might be found in medical ethics and the ethical questions medicine forces upon us. How should we think about end-of-life decisions, for instance? This may involve philosophical analysis about when it is ap-

propriate and permissible to end treatments, the autonomy of the patient, and the appropriate role of partners, families and societies in these decisions. The debates over abortion and reproduction have generated impassioned debates about ethical principles for many years. And new technologies have raised questions about what are the best and most ethical policies regarding the use of physical and psychological enhancement technologies. Many of these topics are examined and discussed in our introductory Medical Ethics classes, as well as our advanced seminars in Medical Ethics, taught by Dr. Holly Kantin.

There are other philosophical issues central to the practice of medicine as well. One question is about how we should conceive health and disease. If we call something a disease, then isn't there an obligation to treat it? Shouldn't insurance companies and government agencies provide funding for treatment? But then are drug dependency, alcoholism and sex addiction diseases? Should depression and attention deficit disorders be treated as diseases? If so, should the medical profession then be given authority over these problems?

KEEP READING MEDICINE ON PAGE 7

FACULTY NEWS



**Dr. Torin
Alter**

Torin Alter
Professor

Dr. Alter gave talks at the University of Arizona, the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology annual meeting (Presidential Lecture), the American Philosophical Association central division meeting (colloquium), and the Mississippi Philosophical Association annual meeting. Two of his papers came out: a chapter in *Brute Facts* (Oxford University Press) and an overview of Russellian monism (co-written with Derk Pereboom) in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. *Nous* accepted “Russellian monism and mental causation” (co-written with Sam Coleman), and he continues to work on his book, *The Matter of Consciousness*. The UA table tennis club, which Dr. Alter advises, is thriving. Best of all, he got a pug puppy (Otter), who is Scout’s younger brother. (See page 7.)

Seth Bordner
Associate Professor

Dr. Bordner put his spring sabbatical to good use, writing the chapter “Berkeley on Common Sense” for the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Berkeley*, and “Why You Don’t Have to Choose Between Accuracy and Human Officiating (But You Might Want to Anyway)” for a special issue of *Philosophies*. He is collaborating with Dr. Wrenn on a paper developing a theoretical framework for making sense of when and why it’s appropriate to vacate (or erase) sporting records as a response to rules violations, an early version of which was presented at the Midsouth Philosophy Conference in Memphis in March 2019. In July, the Bordner family got to experience the 7.1 Ridgecrest earthquake while on vacation; it was the strongest earthquake in California in 20 years.



**Dr. Adam
Arico**



**Dr. Seth
Bordner**



**Dr. Tim
Butzer**

Tim Butzer
Instructor

Dr. Butzer published “Dodging the Perils of Dogmatism: A Response to Crispin Wright,” in *Dialectica* and awaits a final decision on a manuscript that received a “revise and resubmit” from *Erkenntnis*.

Scott Hestevold
Professor Emeritus

Dr. Hestevold spent the first 10 months of retirement secluded in Gallalee Hall finishing the first draft of his book (*Toward a Directionalist Theory of Location: On Going Nowhere*). He and Nita celebrated their 40th anniversary last August. In Fall 2019, he taught the Department’s advanced seminar on metaphysics, and he is teaching Introduction to Philosophy this spring.

Holly Kantin
Assistant Professor

Last year Dr. Kantin’s paper, “Giving Children a Say Without Giving them a Choice: Obtaining Affirmation of a Child’s Non-Dissent to Participation in Nonbeneficial Research” was accepted for publication in the *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*. In June she traveled to France to participate in the International Bioethics Retreat where she presented some of her work on physician-assisted dying.

Benjamin Kozuch
Assistant Professor

Over the last year, Dr. Kozuch has continued to work on a number of issues. One of them concerns whether



**Dr. Stephen
Davey**



**Dr. Scott
Hestevold**

FACULTY NEWS



**Dr. Holly
Kantin**



**Dr. Benjamin
Kozuch**



**Dr. Rekha
Nath**



**Dr. Mark
Pickering**



**Dr. Ted
Poston**



**Dr. Stuart
Rachels**

self-awareness is required for consciousness, with Dr. Kozuch arguing that available brain lesion evidence shows this not to be the case. The second concerns whether visual consciousness has a role to play in skilled motor actions (such as catching a ball or hiking a rocky trail), with Dr. Kozuch arguing that the many dissociations that have been found between the two belies the idea that they are closely related. Dr. Kozuch also continues to race mountain bikes on occasion, and took first place in a 60 mile race in Sylacauga, Alabama this last spring. Lastly, over the summer, he also assembled and performed live with a blues band.

Rekha Nath

Associate Professor

Dr. Nath spent the 2018–19 academic year on sabbatical leave. She participated on a panel on the philosophy of immigration at the Florida Philosophical Association. Her article “The Injustice of Fat Stigma,” was published in *Bioethics* earlier this year, and her book chapter “Rawls on global economic justice: a critical examination,” will appear later this year in the edited collection *John Rawls: Debating the Major Questions* (Oxford University Press). Dr. Nath also made some progress on her book, tentatively entitled *Why It's OK to be Fat*, which will be published with Routledge Press. She was awarded a summer residency this past June at the National Humanities Center in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina. The residency was fantastic! Her days working in her study at the Center were punctuated with lively lunch-time conversations with the other fellows (a diverse group of around thirty scholars across the humanities), afternoon ping pong games, and nature walks in the serene woods in which the Center is nestled.



**Dr. Norvin
Richards**



**Dr. Richard
Richards**



**Dr. Chase
Wrenn**

Mark Pickering

Instructor

Dr. Pickering's papers “Kant's Transcendental Idealism as a Form of Ontological Phenomenalism” and “Against the Hybrid Interpretation of Kant's Theory of Punishment” are under review. He is also writing an additional paper on Kant's theory of criminal punishment, a paper on Kant's theory of property, and a paper on Berkeley's theory of ideas. Dr. Pickering continues to enjoy teaching courses in the jurisprudence specialization.

Ted Poston

Professor

Dr. Poston presented “Coherence is Confirmation” at St. Louis University, the University of Notre Dame, and the Southeastern Epistemology Conference. He also presented “Considerations on the Probability of Theism” at the annual conference for the Society of Philosophy of Religion at beautiful Hilton Head, SC. Together with Dr. Kevin McCain (UAB) he published “Dispelling the Disjunction Objection to Explanatory Inference” forthcoming at *Philosopher's Imprint*. He spent much of his

FACULTY NEWS

FACULTY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

time building the foundation for the launch of the McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars.

Stuart Rachels

Associate Professor

Dr. Rachels serves as the faculty sponsor of the UA Chess Club, the UA Bridge Club, and “The Organ Organization,” dedicated to getting people to sign up to be organ donors. Last summer, the 8th edition of *The Right Thing to Do: Essays in Moral Philosophy* was published. In the fall, he submitted *The Best I Saw in Chess: Games, Stories, and Instruction from an Alabama Prodigy Who Became U.S. Champion*.

Norvin Richards

Professor Emeritus

Dr. Richards did an interview for Fatherly.com concerning the ethics of posting pictures of one’s children on social media. He spends his mornings writing philosophy, most recently about touch as a form of intimacy between parents and their children. He also travels a good deal, most recently to Uganda and Rwanda to walk among the mountain gorillas.

Richard Richards

Professor

Dr. Richards is in his fifth year as department Chair. In Summer 2019 his book *The Biology of Art* was published by Cambridge University Press. His chapter for the *Cambridge History of Atheism*, on “Atheism and the Visual Arts,” is finished and will likely be published in the next year. He is now working on a book, under contract with Routledge Press, titled *Naturalized Aesthetics: A Scientific Framework for the Philosophy of Art*, to be finished early in 2021. In April 2019, he and his wife Rita Snyder, Associate Professor in Theatre and Dance, competed at USADance Nationals, and finished second in Championship 10-dance in their age group. In the summer of 2019, they traveled to Caorle, Italy to attend the Team Diablo ballroom training camp. His solo show of artwork, “Tinted Grounds,” was exhibited at the Dinah Washington Arts Center in Tuscaloosa for the month of February 2019.

Chase Wrenn

Professor

Dr. Wrenn’s main project is to complete his book, *The*

OUR NEW COLLEAGUE

Stephen Davey joined the philosophy department in the fall. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin in 2013, after which he taught ethics for several years at Auburn University. His research interests are primarily in metaethics and the philosophy of action. He likes to think about questions like “What does it mean to have a reason to act, and to act for that reason?” and “What conception of intentional action gives us the richest understanding of our place in the world?” His teaching interests are broad, and he is especially excited to be teaching courses in the department’s jurisprudence specialization. Outside of the classroom, he gets the most joy from family, food, film, and football.



Dr. Stephen Davey

True and the Good. He’s made great progress in the past year. He has also recently finished four new articles, including one collaboration with Dr. Bordner on the philosophical issues involved when the NCAA vacates a team’s wins for recruiting violations. The others are an article on the logic of truth-theories, one on the virtue of wanting to believe the truth, and one on the relationship between true beliefs and successful action. He was invited to participate at a special workshop at the University of South Dakota on populism and intellectual virtue in September 2019.

DID YOU KNOW?

**11 of our 13
'20 graduates are
double-majors**

ALUMNI NOTES

Ashley Ruggles Stanley

(2015) graduated from Harvard Law in 2018. She married Maclen Stanley, the first person she met in law school, in August 2019. She is now living Los Angeles where she works at O'Melveny & Myers as an entertainments, sports, and media attorney.



Trevor Gant (2013) is pursuing a Ph.D. in mathematics at the University of Alabama, Huntsville.

Greg Sikes-Mitchell (2014), U.S. Army soldier, was promoted from Specialist to Sergeant on January 1, 2020. He is currently deployed overseas and is expected to return stateside in July 2020.

Zachary McCann (2014) received his Masters of Public Administration from UA in 2017, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in Medical Sociology at UAB. He studies the role social capital and social networks play in protecting community health in various contexts.

Alexandra Harris (2015) lives in New Haven, CT, and is working as a project lead for the Yale Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CORE), which is a leading outcome measures developer for Medicare and Medicaid programs. She is also applying to Ph.D. programs in health policy and health services research for the fall 2020.

Ben Lucy (2015) will graduate from the University of Virginia in May with both a J.D. and M.B.A. He will begin a two-year stint as a judicial clerk on the Delaware Court of Chancery in August.

to go into the sports law industry.

Caroline Cumbest will be returning to UA in the fall to pursue a Master's degree in Higher Education Administration with the long-term goal of working in a college athletic department.

Adam Holzhauer is planning to go to law school for environmental law, but has not yet committed to a specific school.

Ben Karczewski will be pursuing a Master's degree in Applied Spanish Linguistics at either UA or the University of Colorado.

Julie Jackson will be attending UA Law with an eye toward practicing real estate and property law.

Vincent West is likely taking a gap year before potentially pursuing graduate school.

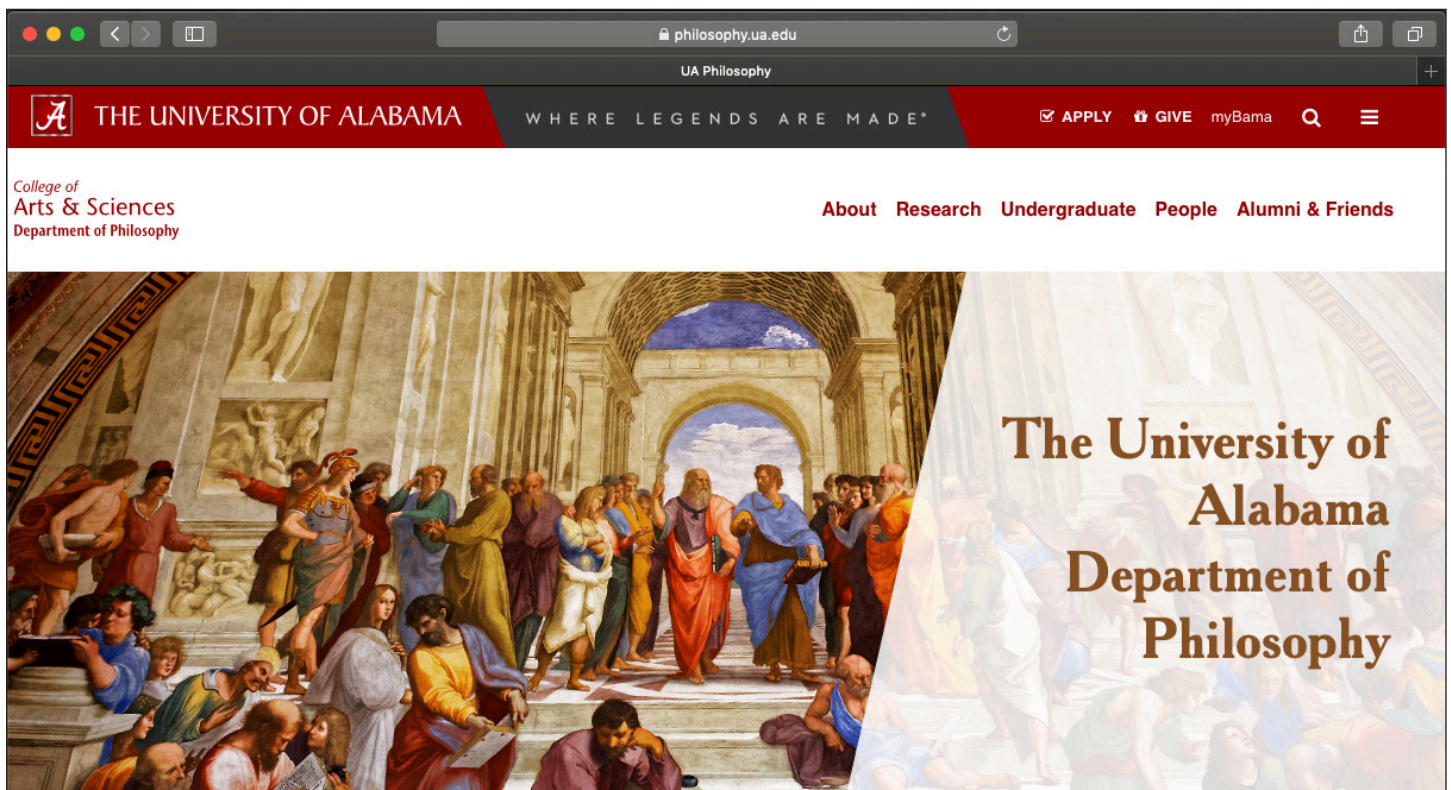
Giovanni Below, Tanner Boyzuick, Ally Bryant, Walter Castillo, Ryan Tumbleson, Eleanor Troupis, and Maxwell Ware also graduate in 2020, but we do not yet know their plans.

THE CLASS OF 2020

Madison Bedder will be attending law school and aims

Let us know how you are doing! Reach out by phone, email, or on Facebook.

Check out our new digital home!



**WHY STUDY
PHILOSOPHY?**



**JURISPRUDENCE
TRACK**



**MIND-BRAIN
TRACK**



**PHILOSOPHY &
MEDICINE TRACK**

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Philosophy Department pugs Otter (left) and Scout (right).



Photos courtesy of Rekha Nath

Fun Pug Facts

- A group of pugs is called a "grumble." In Holland, the pug is called a mopshond, which comes from the Dutch for "to grumble."
- The pug is the official dog of the House of Orange. Pugs accompanied William and Mary at their 1689 coronation.
- In 2009, a pug named Chester Ludlow received an online graduate degree from Rochville University. He finished with a 3.19 GPA despite never attending a class. Not surprisingly, Rochville University is not accredited.

Source: Mental Floss

MEDICINE CONTINUED FROM PAGE I

Or should we just regard them as behavioral problems "in living" to be dealt with in other ways - perhaps through education or the modification of social contexts? Lurking here are questions about the relation between physical and mental illness. Are they the same kinds of things? We might also wonder about the psychological and social implications of calling something a disease. What special status or stigma do patients acquire when diagnosed with a disease? What are the consequences of having that status? These and other questions are addressed in our Philosophy of Medicine and Philosophy of Mental Health seminars.

There are many philosophical questions in medical epistemology - the study of the grounds and nature of medical knowledge. Recently there has been much concern over the reproducibility

crisis, that many of the studies we have taken to be authoritative cannot be reproduced. And some analyses suggest that many of our established medical practices lack evidence for their effectiveness. One way of thinking, known as "evidence based medicine," surely seems to be the right approach. Don't we all want our medicine to be based on evidence? But evidence based medicine is usually understood in such a way that it prioritizes randomized control trials and observational studies, and is generally dismissive of basic research into causal mechanisms and the hard won knowledge gained by experience in treating patients. Many treatments of disease are now being evaluated on the basis of randomized control trials, which may have their own limitations in terms of design, size, and composition of the control and intervention groups. What

if this evidence from randomized control trials conflicts with clinical experience or what we think we know about causal mechanisms? This debate raises questions that have been long discussed in the philosophy of science literature about the nature of evidence and scientific methodology. If we really want our medicine based on the best evidence we need to understand the nature of evidence, and what counts as the best evidence. These concerns engage subjects addressed in our Philosophy of Medicine and Philosophy of Science seminars.

The complexity and life significance of medicine demand that we think carefully about its practice. It is becoming increasingly clear that a medical education can use some help from philosophy. The philosophy department is well positioned to provide this help.

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**Transformation of the Self
Through Discovery and Revelation**

L.A. Paul
Yale University
Nov. 14, 2019

**Bodies of Stone and Steel:
An Aesthetics of
Monuments and Memorials**

Sandra Lynne Shapshay
Hunter College and
the Graduate Center, CUNY

March 26, 2020



**The
Indispensability
of Metaphysics**

Jessica Wilson
University of Toronto
Dec. 5, 2019

2019–2020
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View past lectures online by
visiting www.philosophy.ua.edu

**Being Grateful for
Grief**

Michael Cholbi
University of Edinburgh
April 16, 2020

