Hausparty: Celebrating Dan Hausman’s 65th birthday

Patty Winspur retires

Conversations with new faculty
Greetings from the Philosophy department!

It’s been another great year here on the 5th floor of Helen C. White Hall. We recently concluded two faculty searches and managed to hire the very best applicants in the world for our new posts. Look a few pages ahead to find profiles of our new colleagues Anat Schechtman and Farid Masrour.

Our students continue to flourish and to find rewarding, productive careers in a wide variety of fields, thanks in part to our wonderful career advisor, Karen Knipschild.

We have introduced new courses, such as a popular Meaning of Life class and a new introductory course in the Philosophy of Science taught by Vilas Professor Elliott Sober, widely recognized as the most prominent philosopher of biology in the world. We continue to play host to renowned visiting scholars who enrich our intellectual community with their presence.

This newsletter marks the last in which I’ll be writing to you from my post as department chair. As my 5-year tenure comes to a close, I’m delighted to report that our department remains one of the best in the nation, and has grown stronger in many ways. Most of the new initiatives we have managed these past few years—our undergraduate lounge, our public speaker series, new student scholarships, furniture updates and new computers for our grad student lounge, a wholly revamped website, greater faculty research funds, a professional newsletter (!), and so much more—are owing entirely to the generosity of the hundreds of our friends and alumni who have provided support for our mission.

Thank you—it’s been a great privilege to serve.

Russ Shafer-Landau, Chair shaferlandau@wisc.edu

Notes from the Chair

Charting a Path

Students in UW-Madison’s College of Letters & Science face challenges as they prepare for life after graduation. Competition for jobs is fierce and young Badgers need to articulate what they have learned at UW-Madison.

To help them learn how, Dean John Karl Scholz launched the Letters & Science Career Initiative (LSCI), which will engage students in personal and career development from the time they step on campus to graduation.

The initiative will spark students’ imaginations about career possibilities, help them find majors that align with their passions, connect them with strong alumni networks, and coach them to talk about the lessons and skills they learned at UW-Madison.

In addition, the LSCI will:

- recruit and hire more academic and career advisors
- launch a new second-year academic and career-planning course
- analyze alumni data to help students plan their career trajectories
- open doors to alumni mentors who can share tips and opportunities

You can help. Dean Scholz is looking for alumni, friends and parents who can share valuable insights about the job market, internships, career development and more.

To get involved, visit go.wisc.edu/lsci or email the LSCI team at careerinitiative@ls.wisc.edu.

You can also read more about the LSCI in this year’s L&S Annual Report at go.wisc.edu/annualreport.
A Vision for Society

**JD Stier** (‘04) served as National Outreach Coordinator for the Obama Administration in 2009-10, led the Raise Hope for Congo campaign with the Center for American Progress, is a recurring guest on MSNBC, has been published by Politico and the Huffington Post, and produces hip hop music to raise awareness of social justice and human rights issues.

**How did your philosophy degree prepare you for your work?**

[Philosophy grads] study ethics, practice the art of logic and argument, can debate with the best of them, and have a responsibility to share these skills with our communities. Income inequality lies at the center of myriad social crises, yet far too few of us maintain a vision for society after commencement.

**How did you get interested in Philosophy?**

I signed up for an intro course while serving a prison sentence for a marijuana conviction. It was clear early on that I had found the way in which I understood the world. But it wasn’t until I arrived in Madison two years later that I learned how to pronounce any philosophers’ names.

**What sparked your interest in Africa?**

My UW housemate, Kou Ayuen, fled South Sudan as a young boy. He invited me to join him for his first trip home. That experience, along with return trips to Africa, convinced me that Americans need to be better informed global citizens and leverage their voting and purchasing power accordingly. Addressing Congo’s conflict mineral crisis has been a focus. In conjunction with the UW’s Amnesty International group and Raise Hope for Congo, I invited Aaron Rodgers to campus last fall for a human rights rally. My strategy includes utilizing the media and student organizing to accelerate political change. We have seen significant supply chain reforms throughout the tech industry resulting from the Conflict-Free social movement.

**What were some of the highlights of your time here?**

The inspiring Helen C White views. The department creates a romantic, ideal learning environment where we are encouraged to challenge society, structures, and today’s prevailing arguments.

**How has your Philosophy training helped you?**

I am able to clearly communicate complex ideas to the public, articulate strategy to colleagues in order to gain their support, and transition seamlessly from discussing the logistics of a political rally with event staff to sharing a vision for a more equitable society with reporters and students.
**Hausparty!**

On May 22 and 23, 2015, colleagues and former graduate students of Professor Daniel M. Hausman will gather at UW-Madison for a conference celebrating his career.

The conference is being organized by two of Professor Hausman’s former students, Hallie Liberto (Ph.D., ’11), Assistant Professor at the University of Connecticut, and Armin Schulz (Ph.D., ’10), Assistant Professor at University of Kansas, with Professor Hausman’s most notable interlocutors and co-authors presenting the conference papers.

Please contact frontoffice@philosophy.wisc.edu if you’d like to attend this event.

**Dan Hausman on life and work**

Hausman, a professor of the philosophy of economics, reflects on his UW-Madison career

“I grew up on the west side of Chicago. When I was very young, my father was struggling to build his business, but at the end of second grade we were able to move into River Forest, a more affluent suburb. I belonged to the only minority, Jews, who were not allowed to join the tennis club, putting an end to my tennis career before it began.

I started at Harvard College in 1965 as a biochemistry major. But the world seemed to be collapsing, and I felt that I needed to understand and contribute to the revolution that I and many others imagined. So I switched to English History and Literature. I thought an historical era was ending, just as in the 17th century, and that the current transformation could best be understood through that history and literature. Unfortunately, I had no particular talent for either, despite a life-long love of both. So I turned to philosophy, which I saw as, on the one hand, more analytical than history or literature and, on the other hand, more relevant than the sciences to understanding the social transformations I thought I was witnessing.

Economics has always been entangled with philosophy, although the connections are now much weaker. Economists, like philosophers, are concerned with ethical questions concerning human welfare and the equitable organization of economic life. Economics is also of special interest to philosophers of science, because it is a social science with many of the trappings of theories in the natural sciences but without the same level of consensus and success. The health economists and epidemiologists I have worked with here at UW-Madison, at the World Health Organization, and at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation have been very open to philosophical input; and I have had some significant influence on the tools they have used to measure population health.

UW-Madison and especially the philosophy department have been wonderful to me. My research has been generously funded, and sabbaticals have been crucial to completing my major projects. The best thing about UW-Madison, however, has been the people I have met and learned from. They are mainly colleagues and graduate students in the philosophy department, but I also owe a great deal to remarkable faculty in sociology, economics, population health, and medical history and bioethics. The trajectory of my research has been set by the challenges others have set, and virtually everything I have written bears the stamp of detailed and wise criticisms of colleagues.”
Saying Goodbye: Patty Winspur retires

Patty Winspur served as the department’s Graduate Coordinator from 1999-2014. During that time she helped hundreds of grad students navigate their way through the ups and downs of life in our program. She is a die-hard Packers fan and believes they will go to the Superbowl this year “without a doubt.”

Patty, you grew up in California. How did you arrive in Madison?

My husband Steven was hired by the UW-Madison French & Italian department. I instantly fell in love with this city. And after 25 years in Wisconsin, the winters don’t scare me anymore. People here help each other through the worst of it.

What prompted you to work in the Philosophy department?

I saw the ad for graduate coordinator in the Wisconsin State Journal (that was back when they advertised jobs in the newspaper, pages and pages of them.) Berent Enc interviewed me, and I thought he was so respectful and kind, he must be a dream boss. That turned out to be true.

What was it like working with a bunch of philosophers all day?

Philosophers are intellectually stimulating and entertaining—they approach everything with a fresh angle. I enjoyed the way faculty and students would launch into a debate on an issue (whether profound or silly) at the slightest provocation. I also loved the way they entered into the fun when Lori and I had our annual Halloween office decoration.

What I liked the least was seeing a graduate student struggle and not being able to help except to listen, and explain their options. But the best surprise was when a student turned their troubles around and succeeded.

How’s retirement?

Great! I enjoy my new lifestyle: swimming, reading, and going to the movies on a weekday afternoon. I also volunteer with the League of Women Voters, making sure that every citizen has the opportunity to vote, and the information they need to do so.

Make a gift to Philosophy

Over the past year, the incredible support of our alumni and friends made the following possible:

• More than $33,000 in awards, prizes and scholarships to our students.
• Continued support for the Socratic Society, our undergraduate philosophy club.
• Ongoing support for the UW Philosophers Tackle Contemporary Issues public lecture series.
• Travel funds for more than 30 graduate students to present their work at professional conferences.
• Research funds for faculty.
• Recruitment stipends for all first and second year graduate students.
• Continued support to our Women in Philosophy group.
• Funding for our outstanding colloquium series, which brings world-class speakers to campus.

Please consider adding your gift to enhance the life of the department.
The Mind’s Eye: Farid Masrour

Farid Masrour, a new Assistant Professor of Philosophy, was a practicing medical doctor in Iran before switching careers. A former Mind, Brain, Behavior Fellow at Harvard University, Masrour reveals a keen eye and ear for the particulars of his surroundings.

“I am interested in the nature of sensory experiences: seeing, hearing and touching. How are we able to have a sensory experience—do we need to have any prior knowledge of the environment? Does the brain form a representation that enables us to have experience? If so, what does it look like? Do our beliefs, hopes and desires influence our sensory experience of the world?

I became interested in philosophy in junior high, when I read Bertrand Russell’s On Education. But I never imagined one could make a living as a philosopher. I grew up during the early years after the Islamic revolution in Iran. The country was under economic embargo, and many middle class families put pressure on their kids to pursue degrees that would get them good-paying jobs. So I entered medical school. Soon after, I developed a serious interest in everything related to the mind. I followed the debate sparked by philosophers Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers, who argued that consciousness could not be explained in scientific terms. I wrote a paper on the topic that was accepted for a conference and sparked a two-year correspondence with Chalmers, which influenced me to leave medicine, move from Iran to the U.S., and pursue a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Arizona under Chalmers’ supervision.”
Deeper into Descartes: Anat Schechtman

Anat Schechtman, a new Professor of Philosophy, has research interests at the intersection of metaphysics and mathematics in the early modern period. She was recently awarded a prestigious American Council of Learned Societies Research Fellowship for her project, *Infinity in Modern Thought*.

“Though it was not always my plan to work on a particular figure, in the end I found myself writing my dissertation on Descartes, and I still find his work very interesting, despite various attempts that have been made to dismiss his ideas. I also find Spinoza and Leibniz compelling. But one of the reasons I find Descartes so fascinating is that he was a powerful thinker while being neither a systematic philosopher, like Spinoza, nor a very prolific one, like Leibniz. As a result, Descartes’ writings contain many insights, but also many loose ends. I find it intellectually stimulating and rewarding to treat these as invitations for creative investigation of some of the most fundamental issues in philosophy.

Here at UW-Madison, I look forward to having excellent colleagues and students, in the philosophy department and from outside of it. UW-Madison has one of the best groups of scholars in modern philosophy in the world, which is of course very exciting for me.”

Anat Schechtman has been awarded a prestigious American Council of Learned Societies Research Fellowship for her project, *Infinity in Modern Thought*.

Steve Nadler has been named an Evjue Bascom Professor, one of the highest honors that UW confers on its faculty.

Philosophy of Biology at Madison (POBAM) is a biennial forum for new work in the philosophy of biology organized by Elliott Sober. This year more than 80 of the world’s top scholars in philosophy of biology attended.

Alumni Updates

Mark Donahue (B.A. Philosophy and Economics, ’10) began working as a financial analyst at Merrill Lynch soon after graduation. He now lives in Atlanta, where he is employed as a senior manager in the big data analytics at AT&T. He has found that the critical thinking skills he gained in his philosophical education, along with philosophy’s welcoming embrace of competing viewpoints, have prepared him well for the complexity of decision-making in the business-world.

Macy Salzberger (B.A. Philosophy and History of Science, ‘13) recently began working towards her PhD in UNC-Chapel Hill’s prestigious philosophy program. Salzberger was the president of the undergraduate philosophy club, the Socratic Society.

We want to hear from you! Submit your updates at philosophy.wisc.edu/alumni/updates.php
Philosophy, Wisconsin Style Crossword

Are you a true philosopher? Try our new Philosophy Crossword. Be one of the first ten people to send the completed puzzle (with the correct answers) to us before 1/22/15, and we'll send you this mug from Soberfest '13, honoring Professor Elliott Sober.

Answers will be posted at philosophy.wisc.edu/crossword after 1/22/15

Across

6. The subject of a recent book by UW philosopher Elliott Sober.
7. The ________ of Aristotle’s Ethics, a recent book by UW philosopher Paula Gottlieb.
8. The ________ Argument for the existence of God focuses on first causes.
9. The owner of a ship that is slowly replaced over time.
10. The hill on campus that features a statue of Abraham Lincoln.
11. ________ ergo sum.
13. Where you’ll find XYZ in the local lake.
14. The larger of the two main Madison lakes.

Down

1. The __________ Imperative, in Kant’s ethics.
2. Phenomenon often thought to be incompatible with determinism.
4. A nuisance that can land in your upholstery, in an article by Thomson.
5. Babcock Hall ice cream flavor with caramel, peanut butter, and fudge.
12. Philosopher who created counter-examples to the Justified True Belief account of knowledge.
13. A place on the Wisconsin campus with iconic chairs.

How did you do? Check your answers after 1/22/15 at philosophy.wisc.edu/crossword