Greetings, friends of UW Philosophy! I hope this finds you all well with the holidays approaching. It has been an interesting year with new challenges, but we are up to the task. Other schools tried to take advantage of the much overstated flight impulses of the UW faculty, but no one has left for the so-called sunnier climes, though we have lost our long-time colleague Lester Hunt to a well deserved retirement.

We have more philosophy majors than we have in some time, despite the attempts of some to cast aspersions on the humanities. And with the help of our donors and supporters (thank you!), this all adds up to good health in the Philosophy department.

In May, we had our first Philosophy commencement (see p. 4), which we combined with our awards ceremony, and had a lovely turnout. Graduating seniors Adrian Rice ('16) and Maddie Turnquist ('16) gave eloquent testimony to what our majors can achieve, and Professor Harry Brighouse explained the value of a Philosophy education in fostering the skills that, according to Forbes magazine, employers are looking for. Inspirational and amusing!

The Socratic Society, under the continued leadership of Adrian Rice ('16) and Channi Ernstoff ('17), meet regularly for vigorous discussion of a wide variety of topics. These discussions have even been attracting many non-Philosophy majors. Graduate student Danielle Albrecht led a group of our undergraduates in participation in the Ethics Bowl, held at Northern Illinois University, where they performed well on a national stage. The intellectual atmosphere received extra stimulation from a couple of locally hosted conferences: In May, we had POBAM (Philosophy of Biology at Madison), under the leadership of Professor Elliott Sober, and in late September, Professors John Bengson and Mike Titelbaum organized this year’s meeting of the Midwest Epistemology Workshop, with an outstanding group of speakers. The keynote speaker, Paul Boghossian, also delivered a University Lecture arguing against moral relativism.

You may have heard of the passing of emeritus Professor Marcus Singer, longtime professor, renowned figure in ethics and an inspiration to many students over the years. Many sent lovely testimonies of his influence to his family and the department. Professor Singer was an important figure in putting the UW Philosophy department on the national map. Our sincere condolences go to his wife, Blanche, and children, Karen and Debra.

Finally, we have something exciting to look forward to next year: Professor Russ Shafer-Landau will be returning to the UW Philosophy department. Those of you who know Russ will understand how delighted we are to be getting him back. We are also very happy to welcome Cheryl Schutte to our office staff, as our new senior financial specialist.

We are very pleased to be weathering the financial challenges facing the entire university, thanks to the great attitude and diligent work of our faculty, staff and students — and thanks to our wonderful alumni and other donors. We are proud and grateful. Happy holidays, and a wonderful new year to all of you.

On, Wisconsin!

Alan Sidelle, Chair and Professor
asidelle@wisc.edu
Checking In: Charles Manthey Winter Scholarship recipient
Sam Pauley

Why did you decide to study philosophy?
I was interested in political philosophy and ideas of moral responsibility and justice. I was also aware of the unique benefits of a philosophical education that aren’t always easy to communicate: the analytical and critical thinking skills that are essential in any work setting, and the importance of these skills in living an inquisitive and engaging life. Also, I need to give a shout-out to Professors Martha Gibson and James Messina, both of whom were challenging, encouraging and always available to provide feedback.

What did you do with the Winter Award?
I received the Winter Award in the spring of 2013, and used it to focus on my legislative internship at the Wisconsin State Capitol. The generosity of Mr. Winter and the UW-Madison philosophy department facilitated my interest in politics and my decision to work in state legislative politics after graduation.

What did you do after graduation?
After graduation, I returned to my home state of Iowa to work for the Iowa Senate Majority Fund, and in the Iowa Legislature and for NARAL Pro-Choice Iowa in legislative and advocacy roles. I am currently pursuing a master's degree in Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago.

My philosophical education was integral to my success. My analytical skills helped me develop a campaign strategy, manage staff and conceptualize my role in the workplace. It was also a determining factor in returning to graduate school. When students engage with questions like what is justice or knowledge, they start to filter their lives through this contemplative orientation. I realized my place within politics was one step removed from the change I wanted to help enact. This realization was largely due to my education at UW-Madison.

The Charles Manthey Winter Philosophy Scholarship is given to a philosophy student who will graduate within the next four terms and has at least a 3.5 grade point average over the past two terms, and who can demonstrate financial need. 2014 philosophy and political science graduate Sam Pauley (pictured on the left) was the 2013 recipient. Story by Emily Fletcher.

From L&S Dean Karl Scholz
I am always amazed by L&S alumni. Not only do you take your L&S experiences out into the world, becoming leaders and innovators and wonderful community members, but you also give back. The generous financial support from L&S alumni amplifies all that makes the College great. But what also touches me is your willingness to help our students.

To date, more than 300 L&S alumni are directly engaged in mentoring, networking and opening doors for L&S students as part of the ever-growing L&S Career Initiative, launched in 2012. Many serve as mentors for our Taking Initiative course (Inter-LS 210), which teaches students how to identify their unique talents and articulate their skills to employers. L&S alumnus Steve Pogorzelski (former president of Monster.com) has been a Taking Initiative mentor since the course was launched in fall 2015.

Why does he give back this way? Pogorzelski says he’s had many mentors over the years and is committed to providing guidance for others, whether it’s his two grown children, the boards on which he serves, his employees or UW students.

“I believe that coaching is a gift and one should give it and receive it in that spirit,” he has said. “I derive tremendous satisfaction from the whole process.”

I get this question a lot: “Dean Scholz, what can I do to help students map their future path?” Your financial support for the L&S Career Initiative is vitally important, of course. We are leading the way among public research universities with our focus on career success for liberal arts graduates, and the entire LSCI is funded by sponsors and donors. But there are so many ways to be involved! Here are just a few:

• Sign up for the new Badger Bridge online networking program, to connect with students exploring careers in your field (badgerbridge.com)
• Post an internship
• Offer job shadows
• Help students network

Visit careers.ls.wisc.edu for more information. And know that we are beyond grateful for your support.
Recent grads answer, “What can you do with a philosophy major?”

On May 12, 2016, the Philosophy Department hosted a commencement and honors ceremony for graduate and undergraduate award winners, and all our graduating seniors. Two seniors, Madigan Turnquist and Adrian Rice, were selected to present some of their thoughts on the occasion. Excerpts from their remarks are as follows.

Madigan Turnquist
(B.A.’16, Philosophy & Sociology)

I’m sure many of you are familiar with the look you receive when you tell people you are a philosophy major — perhaps confusion, a bit of pity or the question, “So what do you actually do? Just think about stuff?” But I will never understand why this idea of “just thinking about stuff” is so undervalued. Imagine all of the challenges and dilemmas that you will face in your life — challenges that are continuously new, unique and without clear answers; and unlike other students who have learned what to think, you will have learned how to think.

Philosophy has been both humbling and empowering. Not many majors will have you doubting whether you know anything at all and also convinced you have discovered the meaning of morality. It had me beating my head against my keyboard, questioning my existence and arguing with strangers in the wee hours of the night, and that’s how I know how much I grew from it. I hope you remember what you learned from philosophy — how to create ideas, how to argue and how to question — and when you look back on your time “just thinking about stuff,” you remember it as time well spent. I know I will.

Adrian Rice
(B.S.’16, Philosophy)

For me, the decision to major in philosophy was long and arduous. Yet it really only took one class to convince me: Sarah Paul’s Philosophy 101. I talked with Sarah several times during the semester about majoring in Philosophy, and when I finally made the decision, she was the first I informed. She told me, “Great! I hope you don’t come to regret it.”

While that may not sound inspirational, I have lessons from Philosophy that I don’t regret. First, you don’t have to find the answer in order to learn something. My friends would occasionally ask me, “So what have you learned in Philosophy?” My response was always, “I don’t really know what all the answers are, but I can tell you what all the possible answers are.” There would usually be a remark to the effect of: “Wait, these questions have been pondered by philosophers for thousands of years, and we still don’t know the answers?” I can only say that progress is not equivalent to finding the perfect answer to the central problems. Like any other discipline, it is a process of revision and refutation of earlier beliefs. My second lesson is that Philosophy majors are really good at knowing who is wrong in any situation. Note that this does not mean that we know who is right. It’s usually the case that we think almost everybody is wrong, but useful criticism is necessary to solving tough problems.

This brings me to my final hope. As we’re searching for jobs or further education, there is one interview question I hope to get. “Isn’t Philosophy inapplicable to the job we want you to do?” But this is just what we’ve been training for our whole undergraduate career. We simply tell them why they’re wrong.
Catching Up: An interview with Nishi Shah (B.S.'91, Philosophy)

After Nishiten (Nishi) Shah graduated from UW-Madison, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2001 and is now a full professor in the Philosophy Department at Amherst College. He specializes in the intersection between ethics, epistemology and the philosophy of mind.

**Why did you choose Philosophy as your major at UW?**

I was going to be pre-med, so the summer before my junior year I took organic chemistry. I did okay in it, but I realized that I had no interest in it whatsoever, and that if I kept going that route it would mean having a career I wasn’t interested in. I had been taking Philosophy classes for fun up to that point, but I didn’t think Philosophy was something I could do as a career — even though I had professors who were doing it, it still didn’t occur to me — so I just planned on going to law school so my parents wouldn’t freak out. After college I did go to law school for four weeks, then dropped out, came back to Madison and decided to pursue Philosophy. I realized that if I didn’t give it a try, I’d just be kicking myself, because that’s what I really wanted to do.

My interest came not only from the amazing things I was reading and thinking about, but also the amazing professors I had — I just got caught up in the excitement. I took a Philosophy of Language class with Alan Sidelle, and I still remember reading *Naming and Necessity* and hearing Alan lecture on that material and being completely mesmerized. I also remember classes with Elliott Sober and Berent Enç, who both became mentors and encouraged me to go to graduate school, and a fantastic Ethics class with Dan Hausman.

**What has your experience been teaching at a place like Amherst College?**

When I took this job, it was amazing partly because it offers the small-classroom teaching environment that I love, but also because it gave me ample time to do the research that I wanted. But over time, the student body at Amherst has radically changed, and it has required me to rethink my teaching quite a bit and tailor it more to the needs of the students I have now. When I came to Amherst, it was not a very diverse school, and especially in Philosophy classes the students were mostly white and male. In the last couple of years, the college has decided to really diversify and make this education available to a much more diverse group of students, both socioeconomically and in terms of racial diversity. I find the challenge gratifying, and because of the small classroom size there are probably a lot of things I can do here that I couldn’t do at a bigger university. For example, my students are required to come to my office with their written work and we talk through it very slowly. I’ve noticed that this more than anything else helps them to become better writers.

**What are you working on currently?**

Both at Wisconsin and in grad school, there is a huge tradition in analytic philosophy that I felt like I never really learned anything about: the ordinary language tradition that had its high point in Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin. So in the last few years I’ve been learning about it, both on my own and by sitting in on classes. The joy of discovering a completely different way of doing philosophy reminds me of what it was like to be a student — it’s been mind-blowing in the way that reading *Naming and Necessity* for the first time was. I’m now trying to think about how to incorporate the insights from that tradition into my own work. Austin’s work has incredibly impressive uses of humor — philosophically instructive uses of humor. It’s really hard to pull that off.

-- Interview by Sarah Paul

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Calling All Alumni!

More than 250 alumni have already posted to our Alumni Updates website. We and your fellow classmates want to hear from you. Thank you!

philosophy.wisc.edu/alumni/updates.php
Professor Lester Hunt retires

This past spring we said goodbye to Lester Hunt, who retired after a 32-year career as a member of the UW Philosophy Department. Lester taught and published on a wide variety of topics and in many areas of philosophy, including moral philosophy, political philosophy, philosophy of law and aesthetics.

Lester joined the department in 1984, after teaching at other schools for 10 years. “I have taught at every kind of college,” he notes, “public, private, small, large, secular and religious.” When asked how teaching UW-Madison compares with these other experiences, he emphasized the high caliber of the undergraduate students at UW. “Wisconsin students have a reputation around the country for being smart and hard working. I think that’s really true.”

Lester first became interested in philosophy when he was in high school in Reno, Nevada. He is the first person on either side of his family to attend college, and he was not exposed to philosophy at home, but he had a high school teacher who referred frequently Thomas Aquinas’ proofs for the existence of God. He became curious, and so he spent afternoons at the public library reading Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, and soon turned to Plato and Aristotle as well.

Lester is notable for his many interests outside of philosophy, but also for the extent to which his philosophical and non-philosophical interests intersect. He plays second violin in a symphony orchestra, and he has a strong interest in film and mass media, which both relate to his work in aesthetics. When challenged to come up with a hobby that does not have anything to do with philosophy, he mentions backpacking and off-road travel. After thinking for a moment, he points out, “Actually I have written on Thoreau’s *Walden*, so perhaps there’s a connection there, too.”

In addition to Thoreau, Lester has published work on other figures in the history of philosophy, including a book on Nietzsche. When asked about the value of studying the history of philosophy, he says that dead philosophers represent some of the best answers we have so far to the most general and important questions. “Plus, there’s actual wisdom of life to be gotten from reading them.”

Lester also points out some specific, practical ways in which students can benefit from studying philosophy. Philosophy prepares students to face questions in which there are no clear right or wrong answers. “There are many times in a student’s life when they will be asked to make a case for something. If you have spent your life dealing with questions that have rote answers, then you are not going to be very well prepared to do that.”

Lester is currently working on a proposal for a book on film aesthetics, and after that he plans to write a book on political philosophy. “Retirement will be a super-duper research grant,” he says. He will definitely miss teaching, and he says it is hard to say how much. “I haven’t had to do without it for 40 years. It’s kind of hard to imagine.”

“

There are many times in a student’s life when they will be asked to make a case for something. If you have spent your life dealing with questions that have rote answers, then you are not going to be very well prepared to do that.

– Lester Hunt

– Story by Emily Fletcher
Welcoming Nina Akli

The Philosophy Department Front Office welcomed Nina Akli to the administrative team last spring.

Nina is the face that greets visitors and the voice you hear over the phone, but she is also in charge of much that goes on behind the scenes.

One of her favorite duties is piecing together the timetable for classes. “I think of it as a big jigsaw puzzle,” she says. “All the TAs and professors have different times when they’ll be teaching and you have to fit it all in and try to find rooms, which you’re competing with the whole campus to get.” Nina is also responsible for facilitating the undergraduate enrollment process and managing day-to-day department operations. “I really enjoy working with the faculty. Though if RSVP’s are needed for something, they’re always last-minute!” she jokes.

Born and raised in Madison, Nina graduated from Edgewood College with a degree in Sociology and a minor in Ethnic Studies. Her parents settled here after meeting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where her mother was serving in the Peace Corps. Nina met her husband, Hope Akli, while volunteering for an education-focused nonprofit in Ghana. They recently welcomed baby Alise Emefa Akli to the family — ‘Alise’ meaning ‘noble’ or ‘kind’ and ‘Emefa’ meaning ‘peaceful.’

“Her Ewe (the tribe where my husband is from) name is Abla,” Nina adds. “In Ewe culture, when a child is born they are given a name based on the day they were born. For example, if you are a girl born on a Tuesday your name would be Abla. If you were born on a Tuesday and you are a boy it would be Kobla. Since Alise is a girl born on a Tuesday, her Ewe name is Abla.”

In her spare time, Nina is currently reading The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management. This is not only because she is a voracious reader, but also because she and Hope aspire in the next few years to found a nonprofit to sponsor children in Ghana who could not otherwise afford to attend school. In the meantime, the Philosophy Department will benefit from her leadership and management.

— Interview by Sarah Paul

Faculty highlights

Each year, the board of the Philosopher’s Annual selects the best 10 articles published during the past year. Three members of the UW-Madison Philosophy Department were honored in 2015:

John Bengson,”The Intellectual Given” from Mind 124 (495): 707-760


We also had a 2014 winner:


Additional accomplishments:

Dan Hausman delivered the Wittgenstein Lectures at the University of Bayreuth.

Sarah Paul won a Templeton Grant for “The Philosophy and Science of Self-Control,” with Professor Jennifer Morton of CCNY. She also received a UW Vilas Fellowship and was awarded tenure.

Mike Titelbaum received a UW Romnes Award.

Peter Vranas was awarded an NEH summer fellowship for his project “New Foundations for Imperative Logic.”
MEW brings leading scholars to UW

This fall, on September 30 and October 1, the UW-Madison Philosophy Department hosted the 10th annual Midwest Epistemology Conference (MEW). Organized by Professors Mike Titelbaum and John Bengson, the conference gathered leading epistemologists, mostly from Midwestern universities, for a weekend of talks and vigorous discussion.

Keynote speaker Paul Boghossian of New York University presented a public lecture, “Should we be Moral Relativists?”

Philosophy, Wisconsin Style Crossword

Across
1. Skeptic about induction
3. Our expert on value and well-being
5. Gadfly of Athens
7. Not against
10. Introduced the veil of ignorance
12. C, in C.I. Lewis
13. Where to buy 8 down
14. The set with no members
16. Connects Library Mall & the Capitol
17. Ockham’s Razor promotes this
18. Great Lake of the North
20. The green and gold

Down
1. He wasn’t keen on life in the state of nature
2. Our Kant guru
3. He thought everything always changes
4. Where the mind is, for most materialists
6. What 5 across laid, for his interlocutors
8. Product of Babcock
9. UW Philosophy home
11. He’s the Badger!
15. System of Athens and the U.S.
19. Number of substances, says Spinoza

The first 12 correct answers sent to Nina Akli at the Philosophy Department will receive a prize. Answers can be checked at philosophy.wisc.edu/crossword after December 23, 2016.