



College of Letters & Science  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

# PHILOSOPHY

Winter 2019 | For Alumni and Friends  
of the Department of Philosophy

WISCONSIN STYLE



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# PHILOSOPHY

## **Philosophy, Wisconsin Style**

is the alumni newsletter for the Department of Philosophy. This newsletter was printed using gifts from alumni and friends.

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## Letter from the Chair



**Greetings from the land of Philosophy! Our philosophical community on the shores of Lake Mendota continues to thrive.**

In August, I took over as Chair of UW–Madison’s Philosophy Department from Alan Sidelle, who is enjoying a much-earned sabbatical with his wife Louise somewhere in France.

Alan left our department in fine shape. This year we welcome two new tenure-track faculty—Bruno Whittle in the fall and Hayley Clatterbuck in the spring—and new staff member Rita Richter. (You’ll find profiles of each later in these pages.) And we have plans to continue growing. This year the university matriculated its largest first-year class ever: 7,550 students, roughly 10% larger than the previous year’s class! As a department that excels at instructing undergraduates and attracting them to our major, we expect to be teaching more students than ever in the future. (On the next page you can read about two undergraduate philosophy majors making their mark on the world in very different ways.)

The department continues to innovate and add to our program. We have a new lunchtime lecture series in the

history of philosophy. Hank Southgate, wearing two hats as a teacher of 19th-century continental philosophy and our in-house undergraduate career advisor, creates new events to help majors understand what comes after a philosophy degree. (You can read inside about our new alumni-student career social.) To strengthen our diversity, graduate students started a local chapter of the international organization Minorities and Philosophy. And our undergraduate majors created a new organization, UGAP, to enhance community among philosophy students.

At the same time, we continue to excel at the things we’ve always done well. Our faculty (and graduate students!) speak at conferences all over the world. We publish award-winning articles, and books with the most prestigious presses. We inform the community about pressing philosophical issues in society, as in Rob Streiffer’s public lecture on the ethics of human gene editing. And every semester we teach Wisconsin undergraduates to think more clearly and incisively about their world.

To learn more about everything we’re doing, I invite you to visit our website [philosophy.wisc.edu](http://philosophy.wisc.edu). We are grateful for all our alumni and friends of the department, and would love to hear from you. Or if you’re in Madison some time, feel free to visit us in Helen C. White Hall!

Best wishes for the start of a new decade,

Michael Titelbaum, Chair  
[titelbaum@wisc.edu](mailto:titelbaum@wisc.edu)

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## THANK YOU!



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## Undergraduate Student Profiles



**Avra Reddy** is a 19-year-old philosophy major from Greyslake, Illinois. She's the first woman in 26 years to represent District 8 on the city council in Madison. Reddy ran on a successful platform involving housing justice, improving local transit, and moving toward 100% renewable

energy. She served on the Landlord and Tenant Issues Committee, the Joint Campus Area Committee, the Committee on the Environment, and the Madison Food Policy Council, and she managed to balance all this work with a full courseload. Reddy was recently featured in *Glamour* magazine's "2019 College Women of the Year." She has broad philosophical interests, but is particularly fascinated by issues in moral philosophy, especially those having to do with justice and environmental ethics. After graduating from UW–Madison, Reddy plans to study law, with a focus on humanitarian issues.



**Jonathan Taylor** is a junior philosophy major who plays football for UW. He won the Doak Walker Award—the prize for the top running back in college football—in 2018, and is a contender for this year's Heisman Memorial Trophy, which is awarded to the most outstanding college football player in any

position. Taylor had offers from a number of universities across the country, including Harvard. As an honor roll student at Salem High School (New Jersey) and a star athlete in both track and football, Taylor had quite a menu of options. He decided to come to UW–Madison because of the strong athletics program, academic prestige, and the beauty of the campus. Taylor has broad philosophical interests and has enjoyed related classes in physics and other fields. He's flirting with the idea of pursuing a career in astrophysics, but he's wisely taking things one step at a time and focusing on what's at hand now—playing football for the Badgers and being a diligent and inquisitive student.

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## Message from the Dean



**I**t is an honor to write to you as the interim dean of the College of Letters & Science. When I stepped into this role in August, it was with a sense of excitement and possibility. New buildings are going up—a new chemistry building and the new Hamel

Music Center. The college is growing and expanding, with fall enrollment, as well as faculty hiring, hitting record highs. It is indeed an exciting time to be at the helm of L&S.

A bit about me: Prior to assuming my role of interim dean, I served as deputy dean of the college, associate dean for research, and associate dean for the natural sciences. I have also served on the faculty of the astronomy department since 1995. I am a firm believer in the Wisconsin Idea: the notion that the benefits of the university should extend across all of Wisconsin, as well as beyond the borders of the state.

I am also deeply committed to inclusivity and diversity, and determined to improve the student experience for *all* Wisconsin liberal arts majors. These will be among my

top priorities in the coming year. My hope is that underrepresented students, as well as faculty, will receive the support they need to succeed at UW–Madison. A diverse faculty and student body strengthens the intellectual, cultural, and social life of this college, and creates a richer educational environment for all.

As alumni, you play a critical role in our success. As the year unfolds, I look forward to sharing our story with you and hearing from you, as well. Thank you for your support and advocacy on behalf of your department and the College of Letters & Science.

*On, Wisconsin!*

**Eric M. Wilcots**, Interim Dean,  
College of Letters & Science  
Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy

## The Owl of Minerva in Madison: A Chapter in the Department's History



In 1926, a philosopher arrived on campus who, in the words of *The Capital Times*, “literally startled the educational world.” Alexander Meiklejohn, who had just accepted the Thomas E. Brittingham Chair in the Philosophy Department, had come with a plan for a radical experiment in education. In one of his first philosophy lectures, he told his students: “I abominate lectures. The only way to really learn this subject is by having you talk; and if you won’t discuss we’ll just have to wait until somebody does talk.” Influenced by, among others, the views of Plato and Kant, Meiklejohn believed that education should aim at the development of rational insight or wisdom; that proper education could only work if it went together with freedom; and that the sort of radical democracy he found enshrined in the American constitution required a properly educated citizenry. He had come to Madison to put these ideals to the test, by constructing an “Experimental College.” Its purpose was nothing less than to create a “new way of life.”

Meiklejohn’s Experimental College accepted its first incoming class in 1927. It was a “college within a college,” completely unlike the rest of the university. There were no grades, no fixed schedules, and attendance in class was entirely optional. The students set their own rules and forms of government. The teachers at the college, dubbed “advisers,” lived among

the students (who were all male) at Adams Hall, with the exception of Meiklejohn himself. The curriculum consisted of the study of “Periclean Athens” in the first year and “Modern America” in the second year. The readings were extensive and included many philosophical writings, such as Plato’s *Republic*. In addition to the official curriculum, there were a number of discussion clubs, including a philosophy club that met each week at Meiklejohn’s house. At one especially memorable session, Meiklejohn offered a “penetrating exposition” of Kant’s idealism, which was received almost as enthusiastically as the “dialectical cookies” his wife had baked for the occasion. World-renowned thinkers, including the philosopher Bertrand Russell, gave talks for the benefit of the “Experimenters.”

It was not only their radically different educational experience that distinguished the Experimenters. They were more diverse demographically than their counterparts. And they looked, acted, and dressed differently. They tended to grow long hair and beards, affected an apathetic air, and wore dark blue college blazers embroidered with the Owl of Minerva. Many of them had a zest for provocation, expressed one time in a scandalous cross-dressing performance of Aristophanes’ already racy *Lysistrata*, and another time in a battle with “brawny members of the Wisconsin Club” that broke out at a communist rally in 1930.

Meiklejohn’s innovations in education garnered him—and UW–Madison—national and international attention. In 1928, he appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. Educators throughout the world were impatient to see the results of the experiment.

In some sense it was a failure: the Experimental College was closed in 1932. Its downfall was precipitated by various factors: financial (the Great Depression hurt enrollment); reputational (the Experimenters were thought to be uncouth); political (a number of administrators at UW–Madison disliked the Experimental College and Meiklejohn); personal (Meiklejohn’s son, a one-time PhD student in the Philosophy Department, had been expelled from the university for sexual improprieties); and metaphysical (empirical reality refused to realize Meiklejohn’s ideals).

Meiklejohn left an indelible stamp on this university. The Integrated Liberal Studies (ILS) program—which resides appropriately in the Meiklejohn House—is a descendant of his Experimental College. Those interested in his legacy might consult Meiklejohn’s books on topics like free speech, democracy, and education (including his firsthand account of the Experimental College), as well as Adam R. Nelson’s, *Education and Democracy: The Meaning of Alexander Meiklejohn, 1872–1964*, which was a crucial source for this article.



## An Alumna in Journalism



Interview by **Larry Shapiro**

**Emily Hamer graduated from UW–Madison in 2018 with degrees in both philosophy and journalism. She spent the following year as an intern with the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (now Wisconsin Watch) where she worked on articles that were published in *U.S. News & World Report*, *AP News*, *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, *Star Tribune*, *Wisconsin State Journal*, and other outlets. For the past five months, Emily has been a general assignment news reporter for the *Wisconsin State Journal*, where she covers city government, science, religion, criminal justice, and higher education. I recently had the pleasure of re-connecting with Emily, who was a student in my Philosophy of Mind course during her senior year.**

**Why did you choose a career in journalism?**

I wanted my job to be something that mattered. Something where I was making a difference in the world, helping people or contributing to society. But I never really knew that I wanted to be a reporter. When I worked for *The Badger Herald*

newspaper—which I joined because I felt like I needed to do some sort of extra-curricular—I hated writing. But I loved interviewing people, learning new things, and telling people’s stories. I suppose my big career choice was when I applied for the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (WCIJ) internship. WCIJ is an amazing nonprofit that trains young reporters to do in-depth, months-long investigations. I like the idea of holding power to account, exposing wrongdoing, and telling the stories of vulnerable people to push for change, which is what WCIJ stands for.

**Do you find that your training in philosophy contributes to your work as a journalist? If so, in what ways?**

So much of journalism is hearing arguments, understanding the arguments, and then explaining them in fewer words. I’ve had to break down lawyers’ arguments into a couple of paragraphs, explain confusion about semantics in a city resolution, read then write a story about a 40-page lawsuit in about four hours, and listen to many, many people passionately explain their opinions.

A big part of why I’m good at reporting is because of the deep understanding of logic and argumentation

that philosophy gave me. Understanding arguments helps me achieve balance in my stories. When listening to hours of public comments at city meetings, the testimonies with the strongest logic stand out to me, rather than the ones that seem passionate and convincing but don’t actually make much sense. I can pick out the very best arguments and explain them clearly and convincingly—even if it is something I disagree with—just as I did in so many of my philosophy papers.

**Where do you see yourself in ten years?**

Working as an investigation journalist covering the criminal justice field at a major publication. One possibility is going to law school and then becoming a public defender for a while before going back to journalism. Then I would understand the problems in the criminal justice system in a lot more depth for my reporting.

**Do you have any career advice to offer to current philosophy majors?**

If you’re unsure of what you want to do for a career, just pick something—even if you’re not sure—and see if you like it. If you don’t like it, you can change it.

## New Faculty

Interviews by **Amanda Adie**



Assistant Professor Bruno Whittle joins us from Texas Tech, after holding previous positions at Glasgow, Yale, and Oxford.

### **What are your current research interests?**

I have been pursuing a number of projects that start from paradoxes (such as that involving the sentence ‘this very sentence is untrue’) and trace out the consequences that these have for a range of philosophical questions. Specifically, one project argues that a lesson we should draw from the paradoxes is that all (or almost all) logical rules have exceptions. That is, even in the case of a simple rule like *modus ponens* (from *p* and ‘if *p* then *q*’ infer *q*) there are cases where the premises of the rule are true, but the conclusion isn’t.

### **What can your students look forward to from you in the classroom?**

One kind of philosophy that I enjoy doing uses techniques and machinery from logic (often quite elementary, sometimes a little less so) to represent philosophical questions and ideas in a clear and precise way. I will try as a teacher to give students the skills and the confidence to pursue this kind of philosophy. An important part of this is helping students to develop the strongest possible versions of their ideas. I will also try to help students reflect on the way that they write. Aiming to develop a way of writing that suits them, and that they might even enjoy.

### **When you’re not philosophizing, what sorts of things do you enjoy?**

I am interested in visual art, and I like movies, too. I spend more time that I

care to admit listening to people talk about soccer. I love exploring new cities. Occasionally I run.

### **Why are you excited to join the department at UW–Madison?**

Before I visited in the spring, I knew of course that this was an outstanding philosophy department. But when I actually spent some time here (polar vortex and all), I was really blown away by how vital the place felt. Everyone I met seemed full of interesting ideas, and curious about any question that came up. I knew it was somewhere that I wanted to be part of, and I am excited (if, of course, slightly daunted) now to have the chance to try to live up to those standards.



Assistant Professor Hayley Clatterbuck joins us from Rochester, after earning her PhD at UW–Madison.

### **What are your current research interests?**

I typically have active projects in both philosophy of biology and philosophy of cognitive science (pro tip: having several active projects really helps with structured procrastination!). Currently, I’m working on a project about Darwin’s shifting views about the compatibility of evolutionary theory and God’s creative role in the universe, in part as these views developed in conversation with Asa Gray. In cognitive science, I’m working on a paper that uses insights from machine learning to shed light on how humans can learn radically new concepts, concepts that cannot be fully expressed in terms of the concepts that they had at the start.

### **What can your students look forward to from you in the classroom?**

My courses tend to be centered around argument reconstructions, which allows us to keep discussion organized and allows us to practice a skill that makes philosophical writing much easier. I also like to teach and to learn through analogies, looking at arguments in different domains that nevertheless have similar structures, and asking whether tools that have been used in one domain can be used to make headway in the other. My classes tend to be very participatory, a bit freewheeling, and full of very bad jokes.

### **When you’re not philosophizing, what sorts of things do you enjoy?**

When I’m not philosophizing, I’m usually outside running, hiking, biking, or snowshoeing. I also love to garden and look forward to reclaiming the huge community garden plot that I had when I was in graduate school.

### **Why are you excited to join the department at UW–Madison?**

I’m tremendously excited—and honestly, still a little shocked—to be re-joining the department at UW–Madison four years after receiving my PhD here. I’m extremely grateful for the education, mentorship, and support that I received from the Wisconsin department, and I can only hope to repay some of that debt by contributing to the department as a professor.

On November 13, Professor Rob Streiffer delivered a public lecture in our UW Philosophers @ Work series entitled, “Understanding the Ethical Landscape of Human Genome Editing.” Almost 200 people attended! Video of the lecture will appear on Wisconsin Public Television, and then on our website, [philosophy.wisc.edu](http://philosophy.wisc.edu).



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## Alumni-Student Career Social

by **Hank Southgate**



This spring, the Philosophy Department hosted its first Alumni-Student Career Social. The event invited UW–Madison philosophy alumni from a variety of career fields (sociology, community relations, project management, technology, social work, medicine, law, politics, media) to talk with undergrads about how philosophy relates to their life and work, and to share general career-building pointers, too.

After a half hour of mingling with students over a light dinner, our alumni gave a panel presentation about the professional relevance of philosophy. Writing and logical reasoning were unanimously cited as benefits of philosophical training. Alexandra Cohn put it succinctly: “Philosophy teaches you how to think, whatever you want to think about.” David Arbeláez noted that learning to identify arguments and distinguish normative from descriptive claims was useful not only in sociological research, but also in meetings and collaborations with colleagues. Karl Locher and Elizabeth Kunze said philosophy helps with social work by teaching one to inhabit different points of view in order to understand different perspectives. Moreover, they suggested that by teaching one to be more reflective and thoughtful about goals and motivations, philosophy not only is a useful professional tool, but also makes one

a better person. Drawing on their more formal philosophical training, Will Conley testified to the utility of Bayesian epistemology in project management, while Lindzey Kobiske described how philosophical reasoning advanced her project proposals at Epic.

After their presentations, the alumni fielded questions from students. They shared their experiences defending their choice of a philosophy major in job interviews, with many saying philosophy gave them a leg up in fielding interviewers’ questions. Alumni also chatted with students and each other about UW classes they found especially enjoyable or useful. (Evidently, Mike Titelbaum is a genius whose classes everyone needs to take, and you need to study Aristotle with Paula Gottlieb so you can learn why Aristotle was right.) Alumni also reported that, even with their busy professional lives, they still take the time to explore philosophy and reread their college texts due to how much they continue to enjoy them. “How many business majors go back to read their old textbooks?” Will Conley mused. And addressing the ominous question ubiquitously confronting undergraduates—what am I going to do after college?—our alumni were sanguine: you don’t need to have it all figured out right now, because you’re able to change directions and you know how to think.

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## New Staff Profile



After working at another state agency for several years, Rita Richter decided she wanted to take her career in a different direction and when she did, she found her way to UW–Madison and this department!

Working in an educational environment seemed like a good fit, given Rita’s love for education and lifelong learning. She attended Edgewood College where she earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration with an English composition minor. She has also earned an associate degree in finance and a paralegal post baccalaureate certificate from Madison College. She even fondly recalls taking a couple philosophy courses as an undergraduate in rhetoric, logic, and philosophy of the person.

Rita said the environment on this campus is very different from her other state position. The campus is progressive and fosters a learning environment. She added that the professors and administrative team are respectful and she feels fortunate to be working in this atmosphere.

As a financial specialist, she works with faculty, students, and guest speakers, booking travel to attend various conferences/workshops and processing the related expense reimbursement. She also assists faculty with purchasing research supplies. Rita is involved in all facets of event planning for various department workshops, seminars, and events held on campus.

When she’s not in the office, you can find her taking a walk with her two golden retrievers, George and Reggie, brothers from the same litter. She also loves to work in her yard and spend time with her family.



# EVENING OF PHILOSOPHY



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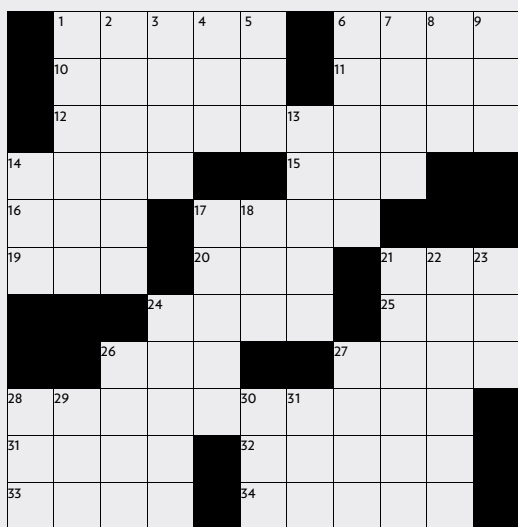


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## Philosophy Crossword



### Across

1. Philosopher of science Longino
6. It follows a bunch of premises
10. Put forth effort
11. Gets reduced to MMKE
12. Among its topics: Is morality is objective?
14. What tachs tell
15. Reel's partner
16. Banking business: Abbr.
17. Romantic love, for Plato
19. Key to another function?
20. It's useful when lost
21. Physician's org.
24. He's been infallible since July 18, 1870
25. Pascal bet on him
26. Part of a coordinate: Abbr.
27. Area in Hawaii known for its coffee
28. Known through experience, with 'a'
31. Up North scourge
32. \_\_\_\_ Mujeres
33. Lawyer: Abbr.
34. One separates the north and south rims

### Down

1. He developed D-N explanation
2. Not obliged
3. Net infractions
4. Introduced in 1923 yet still unratified: Abbr.
5. Contractor's concern: Abbr.
6. The beliefs of a culture
7. A common sense Scot
8. Vehicle with the power to get the job done: Abbr.
9. They occur in an OR
13. It's particular, yet abstract
14. Label advice: Abbr.
17. What a Stoic should never do
18. False accusations get you a bad one
21. Hangouts for Greek philosophers
22. Alternative to dualism
23. Early computer scientist Lovelace
24. Neurophilosopher Churchland, to Paul
26. Future lawyer's hurdle: Abbr.
27. A caffeinated nut
28. Org. that sponsors The Masters
29. You'll find Toronto here: Abbr.
30. Code for a VA airport
31. Sorta