Greetings from the Chair
By David C.K. Curry

The Department of Philosophy spent the year adjusting to what it is led to believe is going to be the new normal – striving to provide a high quality educational program with inadequate staffing and resources. The College faces serious fiscal difficulties and our new President, Dr. Kristin Esterberg, projects that it will require five years, and overall increased enrollments, in order to overcome those difficulties.

Hence, the department continued to lean heavily on the services of our two adjunct instructors, Mark Munroe and Matt LaVine, who together taught four or five courses for us each semester this past year, 20-25% of the department’s offerings. We missed the vibrancy Dr. Fedock and NEH Scholar Dr. Secada brought to the department last year. We also, with the departure of Dr. Fedock, returned to the state of lacking an ethicist and social and political philosopher. Dr. DiGiovanna attempted to negotiate a retirement deal, but the administration’s refusal to agree to a full-time tenure track replacement scotched that deal. Dr. DiGiovanna returned to full time teaching from last year’s sabbatical and taught the Philosophy of the American Revolution class which he had designed during his sabbatical. On a more positive note, Dr. Murphy was easily and deservedly reappointed to another two year contract.

We had hoped to get permission to hire a tenure track ethicist, but were denied given the continuing financial difficulties at the college. The lack of an ethicist (not to mention our lack of expertise in feminism, environmental philosophy, continental and non-western philosophies) makes it very difficult for the department to offer the courses necessary for the major and minor programs, or to fulfill the department’s obligations to the General Education program.

Dr. Murphy successfully finished out his third year here and was easily reappointed for another two years. He has integrated wonderfully into the life of the department and assumes more duties with each passing month. Dr. Murphy taught two sections of his newly designed Philosophy of the Liberal Arts class in the fall, and plans are still afoot to make the course a cornerstone course for a Liberal Arts major. Dr. Murphy plans to develop an online version of the class over the next year. One of the main goals of the course is to introduce incoming students, particularly first and second year students, to the arguments for and against the value of studying the liberal arts and humanities.

The other major challenge that faced us this year was the necessity to improve our fiscal difficulties. We had hoped to get permission to hire a tenure track ethicist, but were denied given the continuing financial difficulties at the college. The lack of an ethicist (not to mention our lack of expertise in feminism, environmental philosophy, continental and non-western philosophies) makes it very difficult for the department to offer the courses necessary for the major and minor programs, or to fulfill the department’s obligations to the General Education program.

We have been under siege nationwide, even though the data, both qualitative and quantitative, strongly suggest that studying the ‘useless’ liberal arts may be a wiser long-term career and personal path. I’d be happy to share that data with anyone who might be interested. Some of the more popularized versions have been posted on the Philosophy Forum Facebook page, which we invite you all to join (https://www.facebook.com/groups/PhilosophyForum/).

As noted, Prof. Munroe and Prof. LaVine made important contributions to our course offerings this year, offering much needed General Education classes which helped free others to teach major courses. Both fully integrate into departmental life, regularly attending and presenting at Forum, informally advising students and interacting with the faculty. We are lucky to have two adjunct instructors who are willing to give of their time for the life of the department, since they most surely are not compensated to do so.

The department graduated only four majors this year, after having graduated three last year, ten in 2013 and a record fifteen in 2012. These figures mark a definitive end to those few years from 2008-2010 when the department was for the first time in twenty-five years adequately, though still minimally, staffed. This year we have grown back to nineteen majors in spite of our staffing challenges. The program could continue to grow with the restoration of an ethics line, but will otherwise likely increase numbers of majors very slowly.

Two of this year’s graduates will enter graduate programs in the fall. Ellen Lehet will be attending Notre Dame to pursue a Ph.D. in philosophy (particularly, philosophical and mathematical logic). Notre Dame is one of the top ranked graduate schools in the nation, and we are gratified that Ellen was accepted into the program with full funding. Elizabeth Miraglia will be attending Syracuse University to pursue a Masters degree in linguistics, after which she plans to apply to Ph.D. programs in either philosophy or linguistics. John Coleman, while technically a Clarkson student (with a mathematics major) completed one philosophy course each semester at Potsdam and wrote his honors thesis on the nature and morality of cheating under my supervision, will start the Ph.D. program in philosophy at SUNY Buffalo in the fall. Mark Lyon is exploring holistic/integrative therapy programs and Daniel Pinto has been applying to teacher preparation programs.
It was another very active year for our Philosophy Forum (see list of events), sponsoring weekly activities ranging from social gatherings and movie discussions to presentations of papers by faculty and visiting professors and trips to undergraduate philosophy conferences. The Forum again sponsored a trip to the undergraduate philosophy conference at SUNY Oneonta at which two of our students, Ellen Lehet and Liz Miraglia, presented papers and two students commented on papers. Notable guest speakers this year included a return visit by Dr. Rachel Fedock, who presented on “The Care v. Justice Debate: Reconciled”; an outing to the Clarkson sponsored Science Café to hear Dr. Jeffery Maynes, SLU Philosophy on “What do you know when you know a language?”; Dr. Bryan Hudak, Classical Studies, SUNY Potsdam, speaking on “Anaxagoras and Athens”, jointly sponsored by the Classical Studies Minor Program; Dr. Amir Jaima, Visiting Asst. Professor of Philosophy at SLU, on "The New Philosophers: Morrison, Rawls, and the Ethico-Political Implications of the Philo-Literary”; Professor John Atytalla, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Ottawa, speaking on “Historical Animals: Finding a Place for Human Beings in the Natural World”; our own Professor Matt LaVine, SUNY Buffalo, on “The Analytic/Synthetic Distinction Today”; Dr. Bill Vitek, Professor of Philosophy, Clarkson University, on “What is a Philosopher to do?” and Joseph Andriano, J.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of Humanities and Business, Clarkson University, on "What is the Social Responsibility of Business". Ellen Lehet, Liz Miraglia and John Coleman all also presented recent work to the Forum (in John's case, a presentation of his Honors Thesis). The Philosophy Forum remains the most active SGA organization devoted to exclusively academic pursuits, and it is the contributions of you, our alumni, which enables us to fund our guest speaker program, among other student enriching activities.

We always welcome alumni who might want to present to the Forum. If you have something to say about how your training in philosophy has served you in your life and career, or if you are enrolled in a graduate program (philosophy or otherwise), would like to present some of your recent work, and would like to visit Potsdam, please let me know (currydc@potsdam.edu) for we would love to arrange for your return to campus.

We were blessed this year by numerous generous contributions to the department's Foundation account, which we rely upon more and more as State dollars dry up. Foundation dollars are used to support our guest speaker program, student travel to present and attend philosophy conferences, on occasion to help fund faculty travel to present their work at conferences, to help fund student awards and generally to support the intellectual life of the department.

A high point of the year was receiving a generous gift from James Berriman, class of 1980, to endow a philosophy scholarship. The James Berriman Scholarship in Philosophy will be awarded annually to a full-time undergraduate student in good academic standing who is entering their junior or senior year of study, has a declared major in philosophy and has demonstrated a passion and aptitude for the study of philosophy. Liz Miraglia was awarded the inaugural half-year scholarship and Katy Ebersole is the recipient for the 2015-16 academic year.

The department is still left with an unacceptable expertise gap in the central areas of ethics, social and political philosophy and the arguably less central but still important areas of continental philosophy, philosophy and feminism, and non-western philosophy. The Department budget has been constantly slashed and is barely capable of restocking the supply room, much less supporting student and faculty enrichment. We are hopeful that under the leadership of our new president, Dr. Kristin Esterberg, the college will get back on a firm financial footing and we will be able to rebuild the department and the college. Until then, as always, we will continue to provide the best possible programming for our students and to preserve the close bonds between students and faculty that have been our hallmark and our key to success over the years. The philosophy department has always managed to deliver a hand-crafted education in reality, and not just in its rhetoric, and we have continued to do this even in these trying times.

In summary, the year was another productive and successful one for the department in terms of teaching, scholarship, and in its contributions to student life and to the intellectual and administrative life of the college.

Suggestions???

Is there anything you would like to see in the next Newsletter? Send any suggestions, critiques, queries to Dr. Curry at currydc@potsdam.edu

Philosophers’ Corner

This summer my immediate family and a good sampling of my extended family (14 of us, all told) hiked one of the Camino routes in Northern Spain (the Camino Primitivo). Needless to say we were often in need of something to occupy the mind and distract from the aches of our bodies. Mid-way through the 14 day excursion my nephew raised the rather well-known Monty Hall Problem. Since we had no access to the web, we were on our own to grapple with the problem. We would like to challenge you to do the same before turning to the rich sources on the web for help or confirmation. Part of the challenge involves not just choosing the right answer, but in explaining why it is the right answer. So here goes:
Suppose you’re on a game show, and you’re given the choice of three doors: Behind one door is a car; behind the others, goats. You pick a door, say No. 1, and the host, who knows what’s behind the doors, opens another door, say No. 3, which has a goat. He then says to you, “Do you want to pick door No. 2?” Is it to your advantage to switch your choice?

Though the following assumptions might be implied, just to clarify, assume the following rules govern Monty’s behavior:

1) The host must always open a door that was not picked by the contestant.
2) The host must always open a door to reveal a goat and never the car.
3) The host must always offer the chance to switch between the originally chosen door and the remaining closed door.

We are quite interested in both your ‘intuitive’ responses and your more reasoned responses (or criticisms). The problem has generated interest not just in the mathematical community, but also in the community of cognitive psychologists, since even mathematicians (indeed, Nobel prize recipients) have gone to print vehemently defending the wrong solution. As one cognitive psychologist has said, even pigeons seem to learn to solve the problem faster than humans.

E-mail your responses to currydc@potsdam.edu and we will summarize the results and report out in the next newsletter. Have fun!

Solutions to Smullyan’s Isle of Dreams puzzles from the last newsletter:

The Puzzles:

The Isle of Dreams

I once dreamed that there was a certain island called the Isle of Dreams. The inhabitants of this island dream quite vividly; indeed, their thoughts while asleep are as vivid as while awake. Moreover, their dream life has the same continuity from night to night as their waking life has from day to day. As a result, some of the inhabitants sometimes have difficulty in knowing whether they are awake or asleep at a given time. Now it so happens that each inhabitant is one of two types: diurnal or nocturnal. A diurnal inhabitant is characterized by the fact that everything he believes while he is awake is true, and everything he believes while he is asleep is false. A nocturnal inhabitant is the opposite: everything a nocturnal person believes while asleep is true, and everything he believes while awake is false.

1) At one particular time, one of the inhabitants believed that he was of the diurnal type. Can it be determined whether his belief was correct? Can it be determined whether he was awake of asleep at the time?

2) On another occasion, one of the natives believed he was asleep at the time. Can it be determined whether his belief was correct? Can it be determined what type he is?

3) At one time, an inhabitant believed that she was either asleep or of the nocturnal type, or both. (Or means at least one or possibly both). Can it be determined whether she was awake or asleep at the time? Can it be determined what type she is?

The Solutions, right from the horse’s mouth:

Let us first observe that the following laws must hold:

Law 1: An inhabitant while awake believes he is diurnal.
Law 2: An inhabitant while asleep believes he is nocturnal.
Law 3: Diurnal inhabitants at all times believe they are awake.
Law 4: Nocturnal inhabitants at all times believe they are asleep.

To prove Law 1: Suppose X is an inhabitant who is awake at a given time. If X is diurnal, then he is both diurnal and awake; hence his beliefs at the time are correct; and he knows he is diurnal. On the other hand, suppose X is nocturnal.

Then, being nocturnal but awake at the time, his beliefs are wrong; hence he erroneously believes he is diurnal. In summary, if X is awake, then if he is diurnal, he (rightly) believes he is diurnal, and if he is nocturnal, he (wrongly) believes he is diurnal.

The proof of Law 2 is parallel: If X is asleep, then if he is nocturnal, he (rightly) believes he is nocturnal, and if he is diurnal, he (wrongly) believes he is nocturnal.

To prove Law 3, suppose X is diurnal. While awake, his beliefs are correct; hence he then knows he is awake. But while asleep, his beliefs are wrong; hence he then erroneously believes he is awake. So, while awake he (rightly) believes he is awake, and while asleep he (wrongly) believes he is awake.

The proof of Law 4 parallels the proof of Law 3, and is left to the reader.

Now, to solve Problem 1, it cannot be determined whether his belief was correct. But he must have been awake at the time, for had he been asleep, he would have believed himself nocturnal rather than diurnal (by Law 2).

As for Problem 2, again it cannot be determined if his belief was correct; but the native must have been nocturnal, for were he diurnal, he would have believed himself to be awake rather than asleep (by Law 3).

As for Problem 3, you can solve this systematically by considering each of the four possibilities in turn: (1) she is nocturnal and asleep; (2) she is nocturnal and awake; (3) she is diurnal and asleep; (4) she is diurnal and awake. You can then see which of the possibilities is compatible with the given conditions. However, I prefer the following argument: First of all, could her belief be incorrect? If it is, then she is neither asleep nor nocturnal, which means she is awake and diurnal. However, this is a contradiction, since a person who is awake and diurnal cannot have an incorrect belief. Therefore, her belief cannot be incorrect; it must be correct. This means that she is asleep and nocturnal. (from Raymond Smullyan, The Lady or the Tiger?)
We were all devastated to learn in February of the premature passing of Daniel Morris Gross, Class of 2013. Dan was a very bright light, socially conscious and active—a kind soul who touched everyone he interacted with. He will be sorely missed. Since many of us were unable to attend memorial services in Albany, we helped to organize one on campus and were gratified by the number of people who showed up to pay their respects, including his immediate family. Music was played, memories shared, and I like to think that we successfully celebrated the life of a wonderful human being. Dan’s obituary can be found here: http://www.levinememorialchapel.com/tribute/details/1178/Daniel_Gross/obituary.html#content-start

Dan Gross (center) and fellow graduates, May 2013

Philosophy faculty would like to publicly express our sincere gratitude to the many former students who have so generously donated amounts ranging from $20 to $3000 over the past years to the SUNY Potsdam Philosophy Department Foundation Account. In particular, we want to acknowledge the generous gifts of Molly Clough, Esq., Mr. Timothy Eckle, Mr. Ben Guthrie and, of course, the very generous scholarship endowment by James Berriman, Esq. Your support overwhelms us and greatly contributes to our efforts. Thank you.

This past year your generous gifts were used to support student travel to conferences, student participation in intimate dinners with guest speakers, bringing those guest speakers to campus to interact with our students, on-campus lunch with HS students enrolled in a department sponsored Introduction to Philosophy class at Hermon-Dekalb Central School, some faculty travel to present work at professional conferences and an on campus memorial service to celebrate the life of Daniel Gross 13’. These are all things which help build the departmental community and which could not be supported without your help.

Don’t forget to tell us all of your news by submitting the Report of Alumni Form information on page 3 to currydc@potsdam.edu. Let us know where you are, what you are doing, and anything particularly memorable about your time here at Potsdam with the department and its faculty.

Fall 2013:
September 4 - Planning meeting
September 11 – Movie viewing and discussion: After the Dark
September 18 - Mixer
September 25 – Informal Discussion: Neuroscientific evidence against free will
October 2 – Informal Discussion: Must I be able to do otherwise in order for me to be morally responsible?
October 9 – Informal Presentation by Dr. Murphy: Why Study Philosophy?
October 22 – Outing to Science Café – Dr. Jeffery Maynes, SLU Philosophy on “What do you know when you know a language?”
October 29 – A Major Affair: Five Forum participants helped man the department’s table
October 30 – Social Night – Dinner at Sergi’s gathering at Maxfield’s
November 6 – Guest Speaker: Dr. Bryan Hudak, Classical Studies, SUNY Potsdam, “Anaxagoras and Athens w/ Classical Studies Minor Program
November 20 – Guest Speaker: Professor John Atytalla, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Ottawa, “Historical Animals: Finding a Place for Human Beings in the Natural World”
December 4 – Student Presentation: Liz Miraglia, “Contextual Values and Scientific Objectivity”
December 13– Departmental Holiday Gathering – Home of Dr. Murphy
Spring 2014:

January 22 – Planning Meeting
January 29 - Movie viewing and discussion: The Name of the Rose
February 5 – Mixer
February 12 – Informal Discussion: Civility on Campus
   Internship Presentation: Melanie Shank
February 19 – Guest Speaker: Prof. Matt LaVine, SUNY Buffalo, “The Analytic/Synthetic Distinction Today”
February 26 – Informal Presentation by Dr. Murphy: Should we fear AI?
March 12 – Guest Speaker: Dr. Bill Vitek, Professor of Philosophy, Clarkson University, “What is a Philosopher to do?”
March 19 – Informal Discussion: Intrinsic v. Extrinsic (Instrumental) Value
March 25 – Guest Speaker: Joseph Andriano, J.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of Humanities and Business, Clarkson University, "What is the Social Responsibility of Business”
April 2 – Informal Discussion: The Future of Philosophy
April 15 – Student Presentations: Liz Miraglia on Descartes and St. John of the Cross and Ellen Lehet on Boethius on Omniscience and Freedom of the will.
April 16-18 – 20th Annual Oneonta Undergraduate Philosophy Conference – Two students, Ellen Lehet and Liz Miraglia, presented papers. One student commented on a paper.
April 23 – Student Presentation: John Coleman, Clarkson Honors Program Thesis Presentation, “The Nature and Morality of Cheating”
April 24 – Department sponsored memorial service for Daniel Gross 13’ attended by family, alums and current students.
April 30 - Phi Sigma Tau (International Philosophy Honor Society) Induction Ceremony. 6 inductees
May 16 - Annual Departmental Spring Picnic

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<tr>
<td align="left">Ellen Lehet (and MA Mathematics and Computer Science Minor)</td>
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<td align="left">Mark Lyon (and Psychology major and Fitness Minor)</td>
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<td align="left">Liz Miraglia</td>
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<td align="left">Daniel Pinto (and English Literature Major)</td>
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<td align="left">John Coleman (and Mathematics major)*</td>
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<td align="left">Philosophy Minors</td>
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<td align="left">Latasha Surles (and Psychology major)</td>
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*John was a Clarkson University Student who also completed a philosophy major at Potsdam, in addition to writing an Honors Thesis under Dr. Curry’s supervision

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2015 Distinguished Leadership Award

| Ellen Lehet |
| Elizabeth Miraglia |
| Daniel Pinto |

College Wide Honors

2015 Philosophy Distinguished Achievement Award

| Ellen Lehet |
| Elizabeth Miraglia |

2015 Excellence in Philosophy Award

| Mark Lyon |
| Daniel Pinto |

Classical Studies Signum Laudis Award for Excellence in Classical Studies

| Travis Hanson |
| Christopher Meagher |

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<td>Kevin Bertolero</td>
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<td>School of Arts &amp; Sciences Honors</td>
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<td>James Berriman Scholarship in Philosophy</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Miraglia (Spring 2015)</td>
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<td>Kathryn Ebersole (2015-16)</td>
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Alumni Reports

We heard from Dan Skamperle ’92 (Political Science & Philosophy) last fall. Dan certainly manages to keep busy, currently employed by Massena High School as a history teacher, but also serving as an Ogdensburg City Councilor, a Political Action Coordinator for NYSUT in the Potsdam Regional Office, and managing 3 side businesses: Dan Skamperle Construction, Skamp’s Pressure Wash, and Skamperle Property Management. He adds, “I’m also a husband and father of 3, coach little league football, and sit on the board of a few of the many clubs and regional development teams to which I belong. I continue building my home, and every once in a while I stop to wet a line on the St Lawrence or sit in the woods and enjoy some peace and tranquility.”

We also heard from Scott Krupp ’13’, who had just gotten a promotion at his workplace (though he is now working for SUNY Ulster as a Program Assistant). Scott noted that “I like to think that my training in philosophy helped me nail the interviews. The training to present one’s self with confidence, clear diction and a well-thought out argument is what got me the job. So, perhaps you can take that to the incoming students from an alumnus of the program? A real-life example of how philosophy helped them succeed.” Indeed, Scott, I will. Thanks!

We enjoy hearing from all our graduates as they move through their lives, particularly about how their time in the department has helped them navigate those lives, both professionally and personally. Send your own story to currydc@potsdam.edu and we will include it in the next newsletter (with your permission, of course). You can use the handy form below, or just drop us an e-mail, free-style.
Philosophy Students Need Your Help!

Please consider supporting our students’ philosophical activities by making a contribution to the SUNY Philosophy Department Foundation Account. You can send a check with a note stating that your donation is for the Philosophy Department to SUNY Potsdam College Foundation, Attn: Lisa A. Murphy, 44 Pierrepont Avenue, Potsdam, NY 13676-2294, or complete the College Foundation’s Online Giving Form on the SUNY Potsdam website at https://secure.potsdam.edu/giving. You may even indicate the specific purpose your gift is to serve; for example, students’ undergraduate conference trip expenses, book purchases, or small scholarships. No amount is too small and all contributions will be greatly appreciated by our students and faculty.

Philosophy Department Faculty (Current & Emeritus)

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Please complete this form and return to Dr. David C. K. Curry, SUNY Potsdam, 44 Pierrepont Avenue, Potsdam, NY 13676; or fax to 315/267-2656; or e-mail to currydc@potsdam.edu

Thanks!