Welcome Melinda Hall!

Congratulations to Dr. Peppers-Bates who launched the inaugural Dr. Todd Bates lecture series on October 26th at Bethune-Cookman University. A large crowd of students and professors enthusiastically received her paper, "The Satanic Nature of Racist Christianity".

Stetson is growing. Our Deland undergraduate student body is moving toward a goal of three thousand. And the faculty is growing also. This includes the Philosophy Department. We got the news last fall that we were clear to add a new line to our department in ethics, with a specialty in bio-medical ethics. We scurried to get a national search underway. This was a daunting task. By the time Christmas came we had received over one hundred applications. We narrowed this down to fifteen. At this point, Josh and I proceeded to Atlanta to the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association to interview these candidates in a two-day marathon. The on-campus visits came next. What an exciting time for us! And when it was all said and done, we were unanimous in our choice of Melinda Hall. We think she is a perfect fit for Stetson. I have asked her to introduce herself to you and this is what she has said:

Hello! My name is Melinda Hall, and I am thrilled to be joining the Philosophy faculty at Stetson in the fall. I received my Ph.D. in Philosophy from Vanderbilt University. My husband Steven and our dog Rudy have been busily preparing

“I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you.” -Socrates
for the move to DeLand (Rudy, in Minnesota for the last year, will be shocked to find himself suddenly rescued from snow drifts!). We are all digging out summer clothes and trying to find long-misplaced sandals and sunscreen.

At Vanderbilt, I taught a diverse group of classes, including writing-intensive Bioethics courses and Logic. My primary research area is Bioethics and I am keenly interested in philosophical issues connected with disability and disability rights advocacy. My other major areas of specialization are Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy, and Continental Philosophy. In my dissertation, “Transhumanist Utopias: Rethinking Enhancement and Disability,” I jumped into the debate regarding human enhancement technologies by taking a few stabs right at the source – transhumanist philosophers, who argue that we are morally obligated to enhance ourselves. I argue that transhumanist formulations of the importance of enhancement paint the lives of those with disabilities as not worth living.

At Stetson, I’d love to develop university-wide workshops on public health and teach in the honors program while also regularly offering courses in my major research areas. I’d also like to develop a course on human enhancement technologies and feminist, religious, and philosophical views of enhancement projects. And, I’d relish the opportunity to teach a class on the philosophy of horror – combining aesthetic theory, disability studies, and Stephen King. My current research projects involve continuing work on prenatal testing, horror, and in the arena of feminist disability studies. I’m presenting new research at two conferences in the summer of 2013: the Conference on Values in Medicine, Science, and Technology, to be held at UT Dallas, and the annual meeting of the Society for Disability Studies, to be held in Orlando. In the fall, my paper on Foucault and transhumanism from a feminist disability theory point of view, “Vile Sovereigns in Bioethical Debate,” will come out in the Disability Studies Quarterly.

When I’m not puzzling over how to brew the strongest possible coffee, I love going out to movies, reading fiction (especially Booker Prize winners!), and burning through seasons of Nurse Jackie with a bowl of popcorn. I can’t wait to get to know Stetson and be part of the university.

We volunteered to host the Florida Philosophical Association’s annual conference at Stetson in the Fall of 2013. We can’t wait to see the campus inundated with philosophers! When Dr Rust, who is the secretary/treasurer of the FPA, was trying to schedule this even we met with a very, very unusual problem: we had to make sure that we did not schedule this event in conflict with—yes—a Stetson football game.
Our Graduating Seniors!

Shannon Abelson
I’m thrilled to be attending Virginia Tech this fall for my master's degree in philosophy. I will be working as a graduate teaching assistant there as well. After that program, which is two years, I plan to apply to doctoral programs. I plan to continue my German studies as well and eventually want to complete a master's degree in German. I also have made it a personal mission to climb as many mountains in Virginia as physically possible.

Jeffrey Klotz
I graduated with a double major in Biology and Philosophy. While I enjoy both disciplines, I would like to take one year to decide between medical school and completing a PhD in philosophy. I am currently looking for a one-year position as a biology lab assistant and/or hospital assistant to see if the medical profession is right for me. Further, during this year I will be writing both the MCAT and the GRE and applying to both medical school and philosophy PhD programs.

Stephanie MacInnes
I am currently applying to work at the Center for Women and Families in Louisville, Kentucky. I wanted to get some experience in my field before I continued on with any further education, as I intend to work with victims of sexual and domestic abuse as my career path. I am taking a year off before considering my options, which are currently going to law school, getting a graduate assistantship while getting a Masters in Women and Gender Studies, or going into the Peace Corps.

Kaleigh Pappas
I will be entering Stetson Law this fall with the hopes of eventually becoming a litigator of some kind. I have not yet chosen a specialty but would consider trial advocacy and international law to be personal areas of interest. I plan to pursue a degree in law school. I hope to be able to participate in Stetson Law's Mock Trial Team as well as the Stetson Law Review, and plan to become involved on campus as early as I can manage. I also look forward to continue competing (amicably!) with fellow Stetson undergraduate and now law school counterpart Jeremy Rill.

Jeremy Rill
Jeremy Rill graduated, cum laude, with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Political Science, with a minor in Business Law. Next fall, he will be starting classes as a law student at Stetson’s College of Law. This summer, he will be working as a Grocery Clerk at Public Supermarkets and trying to prepare himself for law school. Additionally, Jeremy recently got engaged and looks forward to planning a wedding with his fiancée.

Brianna Styles
I will be attending Barry College of Law this fall. I plan on focusing my studies on family law with my area of focus being domestic violence. I would like to also be involved in Guardian Ad Litem during my law school career. I am going into law not for the money, or to make a name for myself, but instead I am going into law to make the world a better place. One lawyer at a time, I feel a difference can be made.
Shannon Abelson: winner of 2013 Hall Award

Congratulations to Shannon Abelson for winning the 2013 Hall Award. This award is given to the most outstanding graduate majoring in philosophy. Shannon has had a distinguished career at Stetson. She carried a second major in German and traveled to Germany. She did a senior thesis on Wittgenstein and Simon Weil. In addition, she was the recipient of a SURE grant where she raised questions regarding Nagel’s famous claim that we cannot know what it is like to be a bat. In this study, Shannon managed to apply Wittgenstein’s vision of language in creative ways. In this case, the issue was other minds, including the minds of animals. Although she was accepted for a master’s degree at Chicago, she has decided to accept a very handsome Teaching Assistantship at Virginia Tech. And yes, there is a professor there who specializes in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. We all expect great things form Shannon; perhaps she can help revive a languishing interest in ordinary language philosophy as a new generation of philosophers emerges.

Philosophy Club news
By Shannon Abelson

This was a busy year in philosophy club as we discussed a wide array of topics, ranging from the treatment of women in philosophy to animal minds. We had the privilege of having one of our recent graduates, Kameron St. Clare, return from graduate school and present his master’s thesis to the club. This year was also a year of novelty, as we held two events that the club had not yet seen. We had the first ever Sushi Symposium, wherein all of our majors, minors, and casual philosophers were invited to discuss their own philosophical interests and ideas over sushi. We also had the privilege of organizing the final meeting of the year around a musical performance by Tatiana Lyne and a celebration of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s and Soren Kierkegaard’s respective birthdays. Next year’s president and vice president have also been selected: Congratulations to President Joel Mateo and Vice President Allen Love!

Shannon Abelson, President
Jeffrey Klotz, Vice President
Senior Research

Fall 2012

Klotz, Jeffrey  “Lex Non Scripta—A Canadian Tradition” (Rust)
Rill, Jeremy  "Political Liberalism and Marriage Law: An Argument (Rust)
Pappas, Kaleigh  “The Segregation Paradox” (Rust):

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MacInnes, Stephanie  “Understanding America’s Rape Culture through Iris Marion Young’s Five Faces of Oppression in Justice and the Politics of Difference” (Peppers-Bates)
Stiles, Brianna  “The Capabilities Approach and India” (Peppers-Bates)
Wright, Ryan  “The Limitations of Liberty: Reconciling the Egalitarian Ends of Libertarian Thought with Real World Structural Inequalities.” (Peppers-Bates)
Paul Bella:  “The Uniqueness of Computer-related Ethical Issues, and the necessity for computer

Chinatown: A Surreal Experience

A SURREAL HAUNTED HOUSE STORY SET ON THE lonely streets of an aban-
doned immigrant community, Chinatown blends strong elements of magical real-
ism, trippy psychological horror and kung-fu films”

This is the way Wesley Sun ‘04 describes his new graphic novel Chinatown.

The plot thickens when a girl goes missing, and the community where she lives
begins to fall apart. “Ghostly things happen,” Sun says, “And stranger and more
bizarre incidents begin to take place.”

Wesley worked on the graphic novel with his brother, Brad, who co-wrote and
illustrated the book, and both integrated elements of their education and child-
hood experiences into the work.

“We kicked it around as kids. My brother and I loved kung-fu movies as children,” Wesley recalls. “In essence, my
brother and I began this project while growing up in Orlando. The magic and horror parts came a little later.”

The son of Chinese immigrants from Malaysia, Wesley learned from personal experience the tightknit culture of an
Asian community. These memories, along with his Stetson education, inform his and his brother’s new novel.

While at Stetson, Wesley majored in both religion and philosophy. He was also editor-in-chief of the Reporter, the
university’s student newspaper.

“I went to Hong Kong for a semester, and it opened my eyes to the culture and the feel of the language and the
streets.”

Along with his study-abroad experience, he mixed in elements from his religious studies classes and injected into
the novel a bit of philosophy to create another world, another universe where monsters live. In short, his Stetson
liberal arts education paid off in unimagined ways.

The brothers crowd-funded the project through Kickstarter, an Internet site where creators can launce their ideas.
They raised more than $25,000 from the marketing campaign and received seed money from people all over the
world.

The book is doing quite well and has garnered positive reviews from the Chicago media.

For example, comicsgrinder.com hails the novel as “a unique ghost story with a lot of heart and character. It’s an
enchanting look at old and new. It mixes the everyday with the supernatural. And it has a distinctive vision.” This
Faculty News

From Ronald Hall: Professor Hall devotes much of his scholarship to reviewing the scholarship of his colleagues in the philosophy of religion from around the world. He is the Editor-in-Chief of International Journal for Philosophy of Religion. In this capacity, he writes an Editorial Preface for each of the 6 issues per year of the journal. He also keeps updating the Logic text that he wrote and the department uses in its beginning course in logic course. We are so delighted to be adding a fourth full-time tenure track faculty to the department. Well what’s one more Hall at Stetson when most of the buildings are named for us anyway? Welcome Melinda Hall! Even though we are growing, our department is still small enough for robust intra-faculty conversation and collegiality.


From Joshua Rust: Welcome to the world baby Brynn! Our second child was born April 14th, 2013—the very day I received my letter indicating that I received tenure at Stetson. What a great year! I was also granted a sabbatical for in the spring of 2014. Looking for summer reading? Be sure to read the paper Dr Peppers-Bates and I co-authored: "House-Elves, Hogwarts, and Friendship: Casting Away the Institutions which Made Voldemort’s Rise Possible" at http://goo.gl/wBmo

From Sylvia Walsh Perkins: I recently presented a paper on the topic of “Kierkegaard vs. Frankfort on Self-Love, Redoubling, and Self-Denial” at the Jubilee Congress in Copenhagen celebrating the 200th birthday of Kierkegaard on May 5, 2013.

From Robert L. Perkins: Robert L. Perkins, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, presented a paper, “Kierkegaard’s Political Theology” at the Kierkegaard Bicentennial held at the University of Copenhagen on 5 August 2013.