

THE STETSON GADFLY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER



Joshua Rust (jrust@stetson.edu), Ronald Hall (ronhall@stetson.edu), Susan Peppers-Bates (speppers@stetson.edu), Melinda Hall (mchall@stetson.edu)

Another Outstanding Year!

From the Chair:



Josh Rust, department chair, interrupted his “flight” to announce the establishment of our Philosophy Senior Research Fund, a major initiative launched by the Philosophy Department. It will support undergraduate philosophy research including, most especially, presentations at conferences.

In the spring we offered support for two philosophy majors to go to three conferences. We are especially grateful to former philosophy majors, Mary Bernard and Graham Ball, who generously contributed to this fund. If you are interested in donating please visit <http://stetso.nu/Wjpcy>. 100% of your contributions go to our philosophy majors.



Hats Off To Our Hatter Grads

2018 concluded with Stetson’s Philosophy Department proudly graduating the following philosophy majors:

Matthew Brogan

Psycho-Politics: Two Modes of Neoliberal Subjectification

Mary La Point

A Libertarian Approach to Civil Marriage

Ruel Mannette

Language of the Divine: The Ontology of Language in Wittgensteinian and Mīmāṃsā philosophy

Danny Meredith

Scheffler Death and the Afterlife

Elise Russell

Epistemic Injustice and the Sexual Assault Credibility Discount

Aliyah Stephens

Narrative Theory of Personal Identities Among Minority Groups

Daniel Tacker

Reality Affirmation: From Mahayana to Tiantai Buddhism

Hunter Yeago

Does Advertising Subvert Autonomy?

“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

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that Robert Lee Perkins, our friend and colleague, passed away March 20 2018. He lived a rewarding life of 87 years filled with teaching, writing, and traveling. He leaves behind his beloved wife, Sylvia, also a former colleague of Stetson's Philosophy Department. Bob was the son of the late John Marshall and Sara Davis Perkins of Jacksonville Florida. Better known as Bob, he was born June 23 1930.

After graduating from Stetson University in 1951 Bob attended the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville Kentucky where he was awarded a Bachelor of Divinity degree and later taught as a Visiting Professor. He received the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Indiana University and a Diploma from the Graduate School for Foreign Students at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Bob had a genuine love for his alma mater, Stetson, as well as his family, former colleagues, and students whose lives he touched. Bob, you will be deeply missed.



Great Expectations!



The Philosophy Department is pleased to announce an impending new “family member.” Dr. Melinda Hall and husband Steven Smallpage, a member of Stetson’s Political Science Department, are expecting their first child in September, thus adding another female to the ranks of the rising tide of influential women.

To welcome this new little one into our world Melinda will take a maternity leave this fall. Fortunately we have Amanda McMullen and David DeQuattro to fill Melinda’s absence. Melina and Steven, we wish you all the best and many years of happiness!

AMANDA McMULLEN



On the first day of class I usually invite students to share a bit about themselves including their major, what prompted them to take my course, and a “fun fact” or two about themselves. In turn, I engage the very same exercise. To my students, at least, some of these facts

aren’t terribly exciting.

I’m a graduate student at the University of Miami. I work primarily in the philosophy of language and mind, and especially in the intersection of these disciplines with social and political philosophy. For instance, I am interested in whether pejorative terms like slurs have meaning, and what accounts for their capacity to derogate their targets (the subject of my dissertation), as well as how certain rhetorical tropes, like synecdoche, can be used to degrade and dehumanize their targets in a distinctive way.

I also have an interest in projects with perhaps less practical import such as accounting for the se-

mantics of aesthetic predicates and explaining how there can be genuine disagreements among interlocutors on matters of taste.

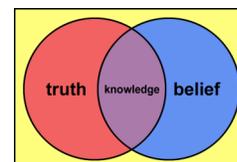
At this point--especially if I, imprudently, elaborate too much of the philosophical details of my project--most of the class has become (justifiably!) drowsy.

Their interest noticeably piques when I mention two other facts: I was an undergraduate at Stetson (*many years ago*: I was class of 64~~5~~) and, much to the incomprehension of many of my students, a philosophy major from my very first semester at Stetson, *and* that I moved back to Orlando last year to teach at my alma mater.

This revelation typically invites a number of characteristic responses, the most frequent of which is: why did you return to teach at *Stetson*? Why not go elsewhere? My replies, despite their sincerity tend to provoke a groan or an eye roll (if not induce nausea).

Of course, I’m emotionally attached to Stetson. It is where I first encountered a name for a activity in which I had been engaging before I knew it even had a name, and some of my fondest life experiences have been associated with the philosophical enterprise: wrestling with a difficult philosophical text, extracting and analyzing the arguments, concocting creative (if not always terribly plausible) solutions, and more generally--but perhaps most importantly--thinking independently, deciding questions of import *for myself*.

The philosophy department is also an environment of which, although I realize this sounds saccharine and cliché, I am proud to be a part. Its members work cooperatively rather than in an adversarial manner, they welcome different approaches to philosophy, including ones disparaged by “mainstream” thinkers, and its members truly and genuinely care about the education of their students. Indeed, even in my own teaching, I strive to put these values into practice. I only hope that I may, as an instructor, approximate (however remotely) the way in which they inspired me as a student years ago.



ELISE RUSSELL

WINNER 2018 — RONALD L AND MARGARET S HALL PHILOSOPHY AWARD



Elise Russell was selected as the outstanding graduating philosophy major. Always a pleasure to have in our classes, Elise found her philosophical voice thanks to the inspiration of Dr. Melinda Hall and Dr. Susan Peppers-Bates.

Her exceptional senior thesis was in the area of feminist philosophy. The title, which she admirably defended before the philosophy faculty, was “Epistemic Injustice and the Sexual Assault Credibility Discount.”

After taking a year off Elise will apply to graduate school in philosophy with to pursue studies in feminist philosophy.

Congratulations Elise! *We expect great things from you.*



Philosophy Club News



Stetson’s Philosophy Club had another successful year thanks to the leadership of Club President Ruel Mannette. Thank you Ruel for your diligent efforts.

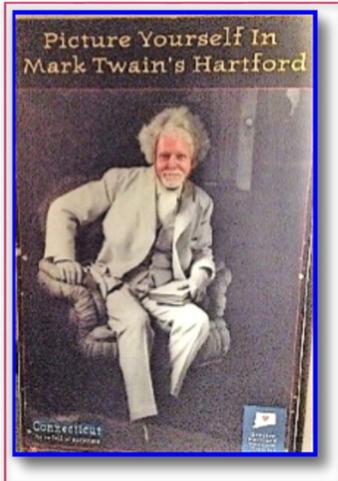
Next year Nick Murphy will serve as president and we expect an equally outstanding year!

At our first club meeting Dr. Paul Croce from Stetson’s American Studies program, discussed William James and his psychology. Croce focused on the issue of how James’ philosophy impacts American contemporary political climate.

The second meeting Dr. Louise Daoust from Eckert College addressed the question: “What is Color?” A “colorful” discussion followed her presentation.

Dr. Sam Houston from Stetson’s Religious Studies Department ended our year by giving a lecture and leading a discussion on Islamic philosophy and thought. The title of his presentation was “Polishing the Mirror: Philosophers, Saints, and Poets on the Soul in Islamic Thought.”

Socrates: *“The unexamined life is not worth living.”*



Some thoughts from Ron Hall's recent course in existentialism

In the early Heidegger, Dasein does not have a metaphysical essence, but it does have intrinsic factual (ontological) features: thrownness, anxiety, being with others, homelessness, and especially historical time. These are the underlying features of Being that underlies the being of Dasein: historical time, especially the future, is the ground for all of these other features.

The future is the realm of the possible. The past is associated with thrownness, the future with death, anxiety, contingency and vulnerability. The authentic person is aware that it is up to him or her to heed the call of conscience freely to actualize the possibilities that are possible for him or her. This is a call from ourselves to come home to ourselves. In resoluteness, we must seize what is possible (for us) and make it actual.

This is the task of authenticity; it prevents possibilities from overthrowing us; it takes our fatality in hand, we handle it. Dasein, in resoluteness, takes a kind of defiant control of possibilities, it heroically faces death, contingency and vulnerability; it becomes authentic. This is the courage to be, the courage to choose in the face of the terror of history. What it misses is that authenticity requires that the terror of future possibilities needs to be transformed into the conditions of authenticity, not obstacles to it.

Heidegger sees that to be authentic requires that we welcome our own possibilities as they are given to us by Being. In this openness to possibility, the future is seen as a call from Being, and as such as not simply threatening but as the gift of the very resources that authenticity requires. With Being, all things are possible. (Are we back to religion?) This realization is both threatening and liberating. This is what I might call the embrace of the full scope of historical actuality. Perhaps it was the genius of the late Heidegger to realize that authenticity-as-historical is both a gift to be received and a task to be accomplished.



Faculty Notes

Dr. Melinda Hall is working on two invited publications: An entry on "Critical Disability Studies" for the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* and a chapter on human enhancement/disability entitled "Second Thoughts on Enhancement and Disability" for the *Oxford Handbook on Philosophy and Disability*.

Dr. Joshua Rust published "On the Relation Between Institutional Statuses and Technical Artifacts" in *The International Journal of Philosophical Studies*. His summer project, to be taught this fall, is a First-Year Seminar entitled, "How to Philosophize with a Harpoon: Moby-Dick, Nietzsche, Plato, and Polytheism."

Dr. Ronald Hall spends a great deal of time as Editor-In-Chief of the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. This year he presented a paper at the Society for Philosophy of Religion in New Orleans entitled "On Being Known: God and the Private-I."