

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER

THE STETSON GADFLY

SPRING 2005

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THE LAWSON LECTURE SERIES AT STETSON

The Lawson Lecture series began with a presentation by Roger Kimball, a nationally known conservative journalist and cultural critic. The topic of Kimball's lecture was "Faith, Enlightenment, and Utopia." Sponsored by the Lawson Endowment Program, the lecture was presented on February 21, 2005 to a large and diverse audience of persons from the university and local community. In the lecture, Kimball explored the roles of faith and reason in the life of the educated person. His most contentious claim was that the university has tended to err in its unbridled embrace of the Enlightenment's apotheosis of reason. In holding to reason as the sole source of authority in the formation of our intellectual and value commitments, university-endorsed liberalism has tended to short-change faith as a legitimate source of authority. In point of fact, Kimball suggested that the irony of the university's systematic undermining of faith is that it leads to the destruction of both truth and value. Much of the lecture was devoted to showing how this is so, as evidenced by the exemplary philosophical positions of two of the most influential contemporary philosophers, Richard Rorty and Jacques Derrida.

Roger Kimball is Managing Editor of *The New Criterion*, an art critic for the *London Spectator* and *National Review*, and a book and cultural critic for Bloomberg Muse, an on line service of Bloomberg News. He has published several books, the most recent entitled *Lengthened Shadows: America and Its Institutions in the 21st Century*. His latest major books are *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art* and *Lives of the Mind: The Use and Abuse of Intelligence from Hegel to Wodehouse*. Mr. Kimball has authored several other works, including:

Art's Prospect: The Challenge of Tradition in an Age of Celebrity (Ivan R. Dee, 2003)

Experiments Against Reality: The Fate of Culture in the Postmodern Era (Ivan R. Dee, 2000)

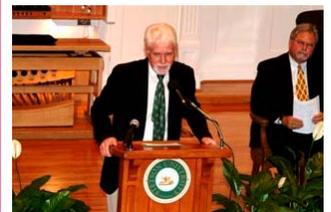
A graduate of Bennington College, Mr. Kimball holds two masters degrees from Yale University, one in Philosophy and the other in Classical Greek.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Cheers alumni and friends! It's hard to believe another year has passed at Stetson and in the Department of Philosophy. 2004-05 will certainly be remembered for its unsettling start as we felt the fury of hurricanes Charley, Jeanne, and Frances—3 names not soon forgotten! One syllabus amendment after another was as stressful for faculty as it was for students. But, we did make it through. The Lawson Endowment Dedication was held in November and, in February we welcomed Lawson lecturer Roger Kimball to campus and awarded Lawson scholarships to two exceptional students, Damaris Del Valle and Michael Riggs. Renovations to The Lawson Seminar and Reading Room are complete and its cozy Victorian charm is all that we envisioned. We bid farewell to our talented group of graduating majors, success to all! Not soon will we forget our spirited Philosophy Club discussions or our group's trip to the FPA's annual meeting at Jacksonville University. As well, Susan and I had the pleasure of working with Gwynn Markle this year. Gwynn is a Visiting Assistant Professor in Philosophy specializing in social and political philosophy and 19th century idealism. In the fall, we will conduct a nationwide search for a tenure-track faculty member. And, joyfully, we welcomed a new addition to our extended philosophy family, Anne-Marie Genevieve Bates, born to Susan Peppers-Bates and Todd Bates on March 6, 2005. All are doing well and Susan returns to teaching in the fall. Until next time....

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS ISSUE:

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Chair Ron Hall
Lawson Endowment
Program Dedication
November 9, 2004

2004-2005 GRADUATES



To infinity and beyond!...

Wesley S. Sun (December 2004) is a double major in Philosophy and Religious Studies and the 2005 Hall Award recipient. His senior thesis "Happiness and Autonomy in Kant's Ethical System" argued that Kant's introduction of happiness, by way of what he calls the highest good, undermined his deontology. Wes lent his support this spring as co-teacher for the Honors Program in Foundations of Knowledge and Understanding II. He was awarded a scholarship to attend the University of Chicago Divinity School in the fall.

Danielle J. Pepin (December 2004) offered a defense on "Self-Interest in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," and argued that self-interest plays an important role in Aristotle's ethics as that is developed in his work *Nicomachean Ethics*. Concentrating on a discussion of the moral virtues of justice and magnanimity, and on the role of friendship in the good life, Pepin argued that these goods are not only inconsistent with the pursuit of self-interest, but required as a uniting concept in Aristotle's teleological ethical theory.

Damaris Del Valle (May 2005) is a Lawson scholar and double major in Philosophy and History. Her senior thesis "The Evolution of Evil: Hannah Arendt's Concept of Evil from *The Origins* to *Eichmann*" develops the thesis that Hannah Arendt's concept of evil underwent an important change from her earlier idea of it as radical (in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*) to her idea of it as banal (in her later book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*). This latter book was based on her infamous coverage of the trial of Adolph Eichmann for his role in the Holocaust. Damaris will be attending The University of Cincinnati School of Law in the fall.

Kenneth J. Matthews (May 2005) is a double major in Philosophy and Religious Studies. His senior project was entitled "The Impersonal Ethic." He claims that there is no contradiction in embracing both to the moral teaching of Buddhism and its metaphysical doctrine of emptiness. According to the metaphysics of emptiness, the moral agent, that is, the self or the ego has no positive reality. To make his case for the impersonal ethic, he relies on the thought of the contemporary analytic philosopher Derek Parfit.

Amielee Farrell (May 2005) argues that David Hume is not just a skeptic in "David Hume: Skeptic or Agnostic?" Amy distinguishes the epistemic from the ontological skeptic. She labels Hume an epistemic skeptic as he claims there are limits to the things we can know and an ontological agnostic in his belief to suspend judgment on matters of the nature of being, i.e., existence.

Christina M. Crespo (May 2005) offered a senior project on the ways in which Ralph Waldo Emerson and Benjamin Franklin have been influenced by the ethical theories of Bentham and Mill in "The Principle of Utility as Seen by Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Essays and Lectures* and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and *Dissertation on Pain and Pleasure*. Christina graduates a double major in Philosophy and English.

BABY NEWS... IT'S A GIRL!

Best wishes to Susan and Todd! Adorable Anne-Marie Genevieve Bates made her debut on March 6, 2005, weighing in at 5 lbs., 12 oz., and measuring 18 1/2" long. Mother and daughter are doing well, though sleeplessness abounds.

Many thanks to Drs. Robert Perkins and R. Taylor Scott, and to Karen Cole for assuming Susan's classes at such a critical point in the semester! Susan is looking forward to getting back to teaching and especially to the Department Seminar on God and Time, which she will teach this fall.

The Department Seminar at Stetson University is a required course for all of our majors and our custom is to invite all of our faculty to participate. The seminar is kept small and has the luxury of meeting in the Lawson Seminar and Reading Room. And, thanks to the donor, the room has recently been furnished with six new chairs to go around the seminar table.



SENIOR HONORS BANQUET

April 22, 2005

Ken Matthews, Prof. Hall,
and Damaris Del Valle



*"Every baby born into
the world is a finer one
than the last"*

- Charles Dickens

HAPPENINGS

NEW POSITION IN PHILOSOPHY...

In the fall we will launch a nationwide search for the tenure track position of Assistant Professor of Philosophy. In December, members of the Search Committee will interview candidates in New York at the annual American Philosophical Association meeting. We hope to make an appointment sometime in March.

ROAD TRIP TO THE FPA...



In November, Profs. Hall and Markle took seven philosophy majors to the annual meeting of the Florida Philosophical Association in Jacksonville. At the meeting, the students received a good dose of academic philosophy and, not surprisingly, some of our majors came away from the meeting inspired and some a bit bewildered by the technical arguments of high-powered philosophical reflection.

WELL DONE! Brendan Rogers and Chantel Wonder on being selected to participate in a highly competitive study abroad program at Oxford University this fall. Lots of people applied and only four campus-wide were selected, two of those being Philosophy majors— way to go guys!



THE STETSON UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY CLUB

The Philosophy Club continues to attract students with a steadfast interest in philosophy. Members come together in the casual surroundings of their professor's home for discussion. A student convener sets the agenda and distributes texts for conversation. There are usually six meetings a year and a new president is elected annually. Next year the president will be Greg Nolan.

Many thanks to Damaris Del Valle for doing a great job as president this year and for her efforts in appealing to the Student Government Association for club recognition and funding. Though busy writing her senior thesis, she helped advise first time conveners in their selection of discussion topics. Thanks Damaris!

Recent topics have been:

- The Giving Tree —Shel Silverstein's message on selflessness
- Kierkegaard's The Concept of Anxiety—Selections
- Truth or Happiness: Is Ignorance Really Bliss?—from "Love and It's Consequences" a course offered by the Humanities Department

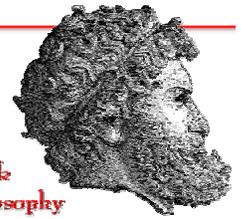
THE HALL AWARD

The Ronald L. and Margaret Smith Hall Philosophy Award was established in 2001 by Prof. Ron Hall and his wife Maggi to honor and recognize the most outstanding graduating senior in the Department of Philosophy. Given at the annual Honors Convocation each spring, a recipient is chosen on the basis of grade point average, quality of senior thesis, and intention to continue philosophical studies at the graduate level. In addition to its monetary component, the recipient receives an award certificate and has his or her name engraved on a plaque listing previous winners. The plaque is honorably displayed on a wall outside the Philosophy Department offices.

Congratulations Wes Sun—Hall Award recipient 2005!

(Past Recipients)

- Robert D. van Kaam (2004)
- Steven L. Green (2003)
- Jennifer L. Hodge (2002)
- Brian J. Mistler (2001)



Greek
Philosophy

"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)



Philosophy Club



2005 Hall Award Recipient

Wesley S. Sun

STAY IN TOUCH ...

We'd love to hear from you and include you in our Alumni News! To update personal information or to change your mailing address, email nrandazz@stetson.edu.

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<http://www.stetson.edu/artsci/philosophy>

Dr. Gwynn Markle Visiting Assistant Professor

Professor Gwynn Markle studied fine art at California State University in Long Beach before completing his M.A. in Philosophy in 1995. Early graduate studies focused on 20th Century continental philosophy, especially philosophy of art and the hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur and Martin Heidegger.

Later graduate studies concentrated on political theory and German Idealism at Fordham University. During his tenure as a Fulbright Fellow in Frankfurt (2001-2002) Germany, Markle studied early Frankfurt School and Critical Theory with Dr. Axel Honneth. His current philosophical interests are in contemporary social and political philosophy (especially theories of recognition, critical theory, and political liberalism) as well as German philosophy. Before coming to Stetson, Gwynn was a teaching fellow and teaching associate at Fordham University and a lecturer at Loyola University in Los Angeles.

Dr. Markle happily pursues his interests in teaching, travel, and the German culture this summer when he returns to Germany as part of Stetson's study abroad program, faculty exchange. He will teach Contemporary Philosophy at Padagogische Hochschule in Frieberg.



 to Stetson, Gwynn!!

FACULTY NEWS

From Ron Hall: Well my friends, all's well that ends well! This year's furious start has finally come to its more familiar and successful conclusion. In the fall, as Faculty Coordinator for the Lawson Endowment Program, I spent much time preparing for the inaugural Lawson lecture. It was time well spent as Roger Kimball's visit to campus in February was a success! Speakers for next fall are currently under review. In November, I took seven philosophy majors to the Florida Philosophical Association meeting in Jacksonville and in February, I presented a paper at the annual Conference on Literature and Film at FSU entitled "Movies, Dreams, and Skepticism." In April, I was invited to be one of 25 participants in a weekend colloquium on the scholarly work of Maynard Adams at UNC-Chapel. I am also hard at work progressing several papers toward publication and continue to benefit greatly as faculty adviser to our ever-growing Philosophy Club. As always, it is my great pleasure to be part of Stetson and the city I love.

From Susan Peppers-Bates: Wow! What a year—Todd and I were thrilled by the birth our daughter Anne-Marie in March. Undeniably, the blessed event has been both frenzied and blissful, forever altering our sense of the ordinary. I look forward to teaching again in the fall and send my gratitude to the many students, faculty, and friends for their warm wishes and support. In January, my article "Does Malebranche Need Efficacious Ideas?" was published in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, and I have completed work on "Malebranche on Divine Command Ethics." My writing continues on "Malebranchean Natural Theodicy" and I anticipate its submission to several journals for review. Also forthcoming, is my book review on *Malebranche* by Andrew Pyle, solicited by the editors of *The European Journal of Philosophy*. And, in March, I presented a paper "Hick and Religious Pluralism" at the Society of the Philosophy of Religion's annual meeting. Last but certainly not least, I continue to enjoy my role as faculty adviser to the Philosophy Club and to the Canterbury Club, a student Episcopal group.

From Bob and Sylvia Perkins: Though retired for several years now, the Drs. Perkins' remain hard at work ...

*Published: The sixteenth volume of a planned twenty-four volume project by an international group of scholars of the *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Practice in Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2004). This volume contained Dr. Perkins's refereed essay, "Kierkegaard's Anti-Climacus in His Social and Political Environment," pp. 275-302.

*Published: *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005) by Sylvia Walsh-Perkins. Sylvia continues her work on the translation of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* for Cambridge University Press. Both Bob and Sylvia presented papers at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Antonio in November, 2004.