

THE STETSON GADFLY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SPRING 2007 NEWSLETTER

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Departmental Secretary, Nancy Randazzo (nrandazz@stetson.edu)

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

Summer time...And the living is easy! We were hopping like bunnies this spring preparing our eight (8) seniors for graduation day, a record number of Philosophy majors to date. Many of our majors, an eclectic and bright group, are headed to graduate school, law school, and even to the adventures of the Peace Corps. This year we welcomed two speakers to campus for the Lawson Lecture Series, Dr. Jewel Spears-Brooker, a Stetson alumna and Professor of Literature at Eckerd College and Dr. Michael Novak, a known theologian, author, and former US ambassador. The planning of next year's lecture is already underway and we're compiling a list of desirable speakers. The three Lawson scholars continue to thrive and remain duly involved in the hubbub of the lecture series. *Congratulations!* to Professor Susan Peppers-Bates who received tenure in March—an exciting time in a scholars career. We're also pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Joshua Rust to our department. He was selected from a pool over 100 in our search for a tenure-track Assistant Professor. Joshua received his PhD from UC-Riverside and specializes in philosophy of social science and metaphysics. In turn, we must say goodbye to Professor Richard Glatz. Dr. Glatz served the department well and will be missed by all who knew him, most especially his students. We wish him the very best of luck in his new position at Grinnell College! In January, Dr. Glatz hosted a campus-wide showing of *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore's riveting documentary on the effects of global warming. The film was followed with a discussion on the environment and the political debates it has inspired. And, Richard and I, along with several of our majors, enjoyed our annual trip to the Florida Philosophical Association meeting in February at USF in Tampa. A fun and safe summer to all!

THE LAWSON LECTURES AT STETSON UNIVERSITY

Fall Semester: October 18, 2006, Dr. Jewel Spears Brooker
'BOREDOM AND VIOLENCE IN MODERN LITERATURE'

Is Kierkegaard right in saying that boredom is the root of all evil? Is boredom basic to human nature? Have new and dangerous variations emerged in the last two centuries? Are these variations related to the disappearance of God, the triumph of political ideologies, and the force of technology? And what is the relation of spiritual emptiness to violence? These questions fascinated some of the most spiritually profound writers of the 19th and 20th centuries and were examined in this very intriguing lecture.

Spring Semester: February 7, 2007, Dr. Michael Novak
'DISCOVERING WASHINGTON'S GOD'

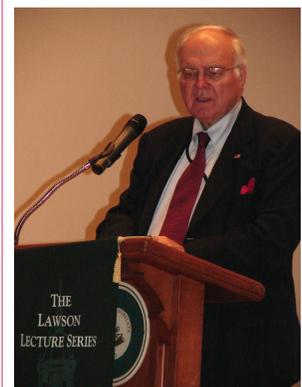
Biographers of our nation's first president paid little attention to Washington's religious thought. He was so private about his personal religious convictions and practices that the exact character of his religious beliefs is unclear. Michael Novak questioned these beliefs and their validity in his lecture based on his detective work with daughter Jana while writing *Washington's God*. The Novaks' exploration of Washington's faith and their conclusions left the audience with an important perspective on the current debate about the role of faith in government and challenged our thinking about the inner life of the father of our country.



The Lawson Scholars
with Mrs. Martha Apgar
Lawson Endowment Donor

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS ISSUE:

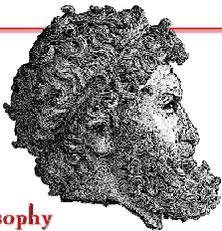
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Michael Novak



2007

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*"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)

NICOLE BELIAN *"Are We Obligated to Protect the Environment for Future Generations?: A Communitarian Approach to Intergenerational Justice."*

It is argued that future persons have a right to live in an environment that not only can sustain their basic needs to life, such as clean water and clean air, but also the aesthetic worth of nature. On the basis of a communitarian theory, it is argued that future generations have inherent value, and therefore present human beings have a moral obligation to preserve the environment.

MARY BERNARD *"Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Ethics of Freedom"*

Simone de Beauvoir helped create, in her work *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, an ethical system within existentialist philosophy founded on a two-level concept of freedom and demanding opposition to oppression. Often labeled a feminist, she has been marginalized from mainstream philosophy. A major claim of this thesis is that she ought to be recognized as a philosopher in her own right, and not only a feminist who borrowed her philosophy from Sartre.

KENAN GORDON *"Karl Marx: Morality and Capitalism"*

It is argued that the debates concerning Marx's moral stance on capitalism are not necessary. Over time Marx's style of writing changes from ideological to concrete and pragmatic. He talks less about moral issues because he saw morality as a creation of capitalism, and concepts of morality would not need to exist in a socialist society.

IAN HALL *"Resurrecting Moral Relativism—Approaching an Ethic Fit for Human Beings"*

While many ethical theories champion the universal, ethical relativism is a theory that addresses the needs of the individual human being in the concrete context of his or her actual life projects. While naïve relativism is rejected, this thesis argues that the contextual element of ethical relativism is worth preserving. (December 2006)

SONAL PATEL *"A Philosophical Investigation of Sex Selective Abortion in India"*

Using the thought of Nussbaum and Sen, it is argued that sex selective abortion, as this is practiced in India today in some places, is not morally defensible.

JOHN O'KEEFE *"Aesthetic Pursuits: Reflections on Art, Morality, and Language"*

In Part I, it is argued that aesthetic pursuits have an intrinsic value that is independent of moral value. In Part II, it is argued that an aesthetic medium, music in particular, is a language.

IAN WASSER *"Nietzsche's Doctrine of the Will to Power: An Analysis and Critique"*

Different interpretations of Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' are considered and it is argued that the best interpretation is that it is a mythological doctrine. This myth provided for Nietzsche a means for breaking away from a narrowly moralized conception of will, that is, from a notion of it as simply a choice between good and evil. For him, will to power is broader and deeper than this and its embrace is an affirmation of all of life, including its most basic desires and emotions.

KEVIN WINCHELL *"Taking Rights for Granted: An Examination of Social Reality and its Influence on the Allocation of Morality"*

It is argued that human rights are granted by human agreement, but nevertheless have an objective grounding. This grounding is analogous to the grounding of linguistic facts and social facts, as opposed to the grounding of the sort that physical facts have. As well, it is argued that the granting of rights that are analogous to human rights can be legitimately extended to non-human beings, but only to the extent and to the degree that non-human beings are connected to the human form of life.

CHANTEL WONDER *"The Philosophical Grounding of Human Rights in a Pluralistic World"*

It is argued that human rights have an objective grounding in nothing more or less than human agreement and that this agreement is of the same sort that, according to Wittgenstein, underlies human language. This thesis is opposed to a realist theory which would ground human rights in nature or god, and it is also it is also opposed to an idealist theory that human rights have no objective grounding at all.

HAPPENINGS

Kevin Winchell will serve as Coordinator of Bonner Leadership and Community Outreach Initiatives here at Stetson next year. In this position, he will coordinate community-service programs while building relationships with community partners to advance causes of social justice, leadership, and empowerment. *GO KEVIN, GO KEVIN....*

Sonal Patel (Right) was a Capitol Hill intern for Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL) where she worked on public policy issues, the US-India Nuclear Deal, and Women's reproductive rights issues. *NICE PICTURE!!*



Pres. Candidate
Hillary Clinton &
Sonal Patel

Mary Bernard and Chantel Wonder (Right) were honored at the Senior Honors Banquet in April for their outstanding academic performance. *WE'RE SO PROUD!!*

ALUMNI UPDATES....

Jennifer Hodge (class of 2002) is currently working as a teacher in the DC metro area at New Horizons Computer Learning Center, where adults are taught how to use the computer. She is considering a masters in Philosophy from George Mason University, a medical ethics program at Georgetown, or possibly a social philosophy program at George Washington University.



Senior Honors Banquet

Rob van Kaam (class of 2004) was accepted to study at the University of Chicago Divinity School where he will join alum classmate Wes Sun in the study of theology. *Way to go Rob!!!*

THE STETSON UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY CLUB

(Prof. Peppers-Bates,
Mary Bernard, Chantel
Wonder, Prof. Hall)

The Philosophy Club was popular this year thanks to our motivated President, Chantel Wonder, who kept ideas and plans flowing! New recruit, Derek Stottlemeyer will assume the presidency in 2007-08.

The Club discussed a wide array of world-worthy topics this year such as Sex Selective Abortion, the practice of aborting a fetus after a determination the fetus is of an undesired sex; Simone de Beauvoir's Freedom-Based Ethics, a discussion regarding an ethical system within existentialist philosophy founded on a two-level concept of freedom and demanding opposition to oppression; **AND**, Taking Rights for Granted, a topic that delved into the argument that human rights are granted by human agreement, but nevertheless have an objective grounding. Clubbers also sponsored a film showing of *I Heart Huckabee's*, an intelligent and offbeat comedy of a married couple who run an existential detective agency where they sift through the lives of their clients in order to discover the source of their own angst. *A HIT WITH OUR AUDIENCE!!*



Seniors Night Out!

Many laughs were had at our end-of-year dinner at Main Street Grill in downtown DeLand

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 Chantel C. Wonder —Hall Award recipient 2007!

(Past Recipients) - Brendan J. Rogers (2006); Wesley Sun (2005); Robert D. van Kaam (2004);
- Steven L. Green (2003); Jennifer L. Hodge (2002); Brian J. Mistler (2001)



2007 Hall Award Recipient
Chantel C. Wonder

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://helmet.stetson.edu/artsci/philosophy>

Goodbye and Good Luck Richard!

Visiting Assistant Professor Richard Glatz heads to middle America for a Visiting Professorship at Grinnell College, a small liberal arts college in Grinnell, Iowa. While at Stetson, Dr. Glatz was involved in the Philosophy Club and hosted a campus-wide showing of *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore's documentary on the effects of global warming. He led a discussion on the environment and the political debates instigated (according to some) by its bleak outlook. He accompanied Professor Hall and several of our majors to the Florida Philosophical Association meeting in February at USF in Tampa and has just been notified that his paper titled "The (Near) Necessity of Alternate Possibilities for Moral Responsibility" has been accepted for publication in the journal *Philosophical Studies*.



Welcome Joshua Rust!

New Assistant Professor Joshua Rust comes to Stetson from the Metropolitan State College in Denver and will be teaching courses in ancient philosophy and epistemology this fall. Receiving his PhD from UC-Riverside, Dr. Rust specializes in the philosophy of social science and metaphysics and has recently signed a contract with Continuum Press to write a second book on John Searle's work.



FACULTY NEWS

From Ron Hall: Mission Accomplished! Seriously, this one really is. We now have completed our search for a tenure track Assistant Professor. We welcome Joshua Rust to our department. We are a small department at Stetson, but somehow we managed to set a record of eight (8) students graduating with philosophy majors. That is 8 senior theses to supervise; Susan and I are exhausted. I continue to serve on the Editorial Board of *The International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* and to serve on the Program Committee of the Society for the Philosophy of Religion. I presented a commentary at the SPR's annual meeting this year entitled: "In God We Trust: Abraham vs. W." in response to "Fallibility and Faith: The Religious Logic of Liberal Autonomy" by Derek Malone-France (George Washington University). Thanks to my colleagues in Florida for electing me Vice President of the Florida Philosophical Association. I look forward to serving as the Program Chair for our next meeting which will be in November in Tallahassee.

From Susan Peppers-Bates: I am delighted to be tenured and thus a permanent member of the Stetson family. It has been a hectic year, as I have juggled teaching, my duties as faculty senate secretary, faculty advisor to the Vagina Monologues, advising multiple senior theses, and chasing after a very energetic toddler! I accepted an invitation from the series editor from Continuum Publishing to submit a monograph proposal for publications, based on my dissertation, and I also plan to revise and resubmit my article "Challenging Divine Command Ethics" for *Sophia*, so it should be a very busy summer. I look forward to welcoming Dr. Joshua Rust, whose enthusiasm and on-going research projects will add zing to the department.

From Bob and Sylvia Perkins: In his capacity as editor of the series *International Kierkegaard Commentary*, Bob Perkins published the volumes on Kierkegaard's Prefaces, Three Discourses on Imagined Occasions, and Without Authority since the last edition of *The Gadfly*. He was selected to give the first annual "Julia Watkin Memorial Lecture" at the Hong Kierkegaard Library at St. Olaf College in November 2006. Sylvia Perkins's translation of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, published in Cambridge University Press for their texts in History of Philosophy Series, appeared in July 2006. She is working on the book on Kierkegaard's theology, titled *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode*, for Oxford University press. Sylvia's book *Living Christianly: Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Christian Existence* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2005) was the subject of a panel discussion in the Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Group at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in 2006.