

THE STETSON GADFLY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY PHILOSOPHY JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER



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Congratulations to Derek Stottlemeyer, winner of the 2009 Hall Award! Derek will be attending the London School of Economics next year. Derek also received, along with Michael Simpson, an Outstanding Graduating senior Award. We'll miss you Derek! Good luck!

After graduating, Derek wrote the faculty of the philosophy department a very kind letter:

Dear Philosophy Faculty:

Even though I didn't get to see you all after graduation, I want to express my sincere gratitude to this department for your outstanding teaching, mentoring, and friendship over the years. I remember taking Ancient Philosophy with Dr. Glatz during my second year and being hooked. Thankfully, each course I took from that semester on was equally stimulating and formative in my intellectual development. Furthermore, serving as the President of the Philosophy Club was a great opportunity to explore more topics in greater detail as well as fostering a more intimate environment among students and faculty. It was a great and meaningful experience to me. Finally, thanks for honoring me as the Hall Award winner in philosophy. There are so many talented students in the department and to be selected as the winner was a deep honor. The monetary component will help finance my future studies at LSE. Thank you so much!

Beyond my enjoyment of the philosophy courses, the best part of the department was the outside activities such as the Lawson Dinners and Lectures and the one-on-one conversations we had. I was always honored and thankful to be included in on the lectures and dinners that took place. The conversations that took place at these events were personally impacting and were some of the best memories I had at Stetson. However, my favorite times were the personal conversations we would have about philosophy and life. Your views, advice, and care are pearls of wisdom that I shall not forget.

As I progress to the next stage in my academic life, it is a high priority that we remain in touch. I shall do my part and inform you all of the latest happenings. I hope to visit Stetson several times this summer and when I do, I hope we can grab coffee or some food.

I am proud to call you professors, mentors, and friends.

Thanks for all you have done for me!
Derek Stottlemeyer



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, 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.



"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

∞ Our Graduating Seniors ∞

Sean Borelli: "Civilization" in Question: Humanity's Obligations to the Environment as Derived from the Relational Image of the Ecological Self"

Benjamin Leone: "Spinoza's God: Our Nature"

Abstract: A discussion of Spinoza's substance monism and how his argument reevaluates our natural world into what he fits as being "God". In doing so he attempts to solve the current schism in philosophy in regards to metaphysics and epistemology (his argument conflates the two rather than separates them).

Joseph Qualls: "Moral Luck and Moral Assessment"

Abstract: We make moral judgments about the acts of others every day. But do we really consider everything that is occurring within and around that action? Thomas Nagel believes we are making a serious error in ascribing moral responsibility to most actions because of the effect of external factors or "luck" on those actions. This calls into question some important aspects of our moral system. Along with the input of D.Z. Phillips, this is my attempt to understand what a fair system of moral judgment might look like.

Michael Simpson: "Mathematical Why-Questions: A Response to Sandborg"

Abstract: Mathematical Why-Questions: A Response to Sandborg examines whether Bas van Fraassen's why-question based approach to explanation can be extended to account for mathematical explanation. The first section of the paper provides an overview of van Fraassen's theory. The second section provides an overview of David Sandborg's criticisms of van Fraassen's theory as applied to mathematics. The last section of the paper addresses Sandborg's criticisms and illustrates a way in which mathematics can be brought under van Fraassen's framework.

Derek Stottlemyer: "A Qualophile's Critique of Consciousness Explained by Daniel Dennett"

Abstract: Since the time of the Rene Descartes, the Mind-Body problem has haunted even the most astute thinkers. For hundreds of years, philosophers pondered the relationship between the 'mind' and the 'body' and wondered if such a dichotomy even exists. However, with recent advances in technology, the disciplines of neuroscience and artificial intelligence have offered materialists the hope of finally solving the mystery of consciousness. Daniel Dennett, materialism's leading proponent, argues in *Consciousness Explained* that the feature crucial to our everyday phenomenology – subjective qualitative experience – is an illusion. Furthermore, Dennett postulates that in principle a robot could be just as conscious as a person. This brand of materialism is called computer functionalism, which states that mental states are fundamentally reducible to their underlying physical processes. If Dennett is successful, then consciousness is nothing more than a discriminative state brought about certain causal processes happening within the brain. Unfortunately for Dennett, his materialist theory of mind doesn't stand up to famous thought-experiments articulated by Frank Jackson, Thomas Nagel, and John Searle; therefore, consciousness is not explained.

Peter Bova: "The Problem of Evil in the Context of Christianity"

Abstract: This is an attempt to understand the problem of evil within a Christian context. What does the Bible and Christianity say about God being omnipotent and benevolent? Why would God create free beings if they would ultimately commit evil acts? These questions and others are discussed with regards to how the Christian view holds the answers to these questions to see what the problem of evil looks like from an inside perspective.



Jennifer Schmitt will join us as our next Lawson Scholar in the fall!

Jennifer comes to us from Cypress Creek High School in Orlando. She has travelled extensively in the US (to 34 states) and

her visits to museums, national parks, and historical sites have given her a great appreciation for America's cultural and natural landscape. She loves acting and was a member of her high school Thespian Society. When she arrives at Stetson this fall she will pursue a double major in English and German and plans to get involved in Stetson's Stover Theatre productions. We welcome you to Stetson Jennifer to join our other Lawson Scholars, Ryan Napier and Claire Stubblefield.

THE LAWSON LECTURES AT STETSON



Jean Bethke Elshtain

Rockefeller Professor of Social and Political Ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School

"The Sovereign Self" March 10, 2009

Dr. Elshtain visited Dr. Rush's Introduction to Philosophy class where she participated in a discussion on the topic: "Woman, Children and Welfare" (*The Republic*: Book 5, 449a-471c). She also led a discussion at the *Phi Beta Kappa* sponsored session "Deliberating about Things That Matter." Students piled into the Faculty Lounge (sitting room only) to discuss the topic: "The War against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World."

Stetson Philosophy Club

The Philosophy Club does more than think. We actually get involved in the real world. This past semester the Club sponsored a fund raising event for ARK, a non-profit animal rescue group. Students got a chance to take out their hostility on some of their favorite Profs and Administrators by giving them a pie in the face. Yes, things got tad messy but “delicious” when students , who were willing to pay for the chance, gave Dean Ballenger, Dean Blum, Dr. Michael Denner , and Philosophy Profs some pie in the eye. This pie tossing event raised \$100 for abandoned animals in Deland.



Dr Rust, Dr Hall, and Dr Peppers-Bates at the pie throwing contest.

Dr. Susan Peppers-Bates pies Dr. Ron Hall.



Dr. Hall with pie in the face.



Dean Toni Blum with a pie on her head.



Dr. Denner seriously pied



Philosophy Club continued:

As well, The Philosophy Club was pleased to welcome back a former student, Jennifer Lawson (not to be confused with Jennifer Schmitt our newest Lawson Scholar). Jennifer is currently pursuing an MA in Philosophy at the University of North Florida. She les a discussion of The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. (For more information on The Declaration see <http://www.iwgia.org/sw248.asp>.) As Jennifer pointed out, after thirty years of drafting and debate, the United Nations adopted The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with an overwhelming majority vote. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a non-binding document that sets a minimum standard at which states should aim. The Declaration grants indigenous peoples the right of self-determination, but it does not allow the formation of competing nation-states.

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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, dbungard@stetson.edu.

Faculty news

From Ron Hall:

Professor Hall presented the Presidential Address at the Florida Philosophical Association's annual meeting that was held this past November in Daytona Beach. The paper was entitled "On Getting Over Getting Over the Rainbow" and it will be published this summer in the *Florida Philosophical Review*. In December Hall presented a paper entitled: "Normativity in Nature: Towards a Post-Critical Ontology" at the American Philosophical Association in Philadelphia. Hall is served as the Vice President and Program Chair for the Society for the Philosophy of Religion and organized the program for this year's meeting to be held in Hilton Head Island, SC in February. Hall is currently President of the SPR and he will give the presidential address next year in Claremont CA. Hall was on sabbatical leave in the spring semester.

From Susan Peppers-Bates:

Dr. SPB was on fall sabbatical and successfully completed her book *Nicolas Malebranche: Freedom in an Occasionalist World*, forthcoming 2010. She also published an article, "Divine Simplicity and Divine Command Ethics" in *The International Philosophical Quarterly*. Spring semester she presented a paper on Religious Pluralism at Bethune Cookman University. She was nominated for (but alas did not win) the McInery award for excellence in teaching (divian, can you check the spelling of Mcinery for me). She also knitted 3 blankets and continued to keep up with her fabulous, feisty four year old Anne-Marie. Also adopted Frances, a rescue dog,

From Joshua Rust:

Thanks to everyone for making the philosophy department at Stetson such a fun and stimulating place at which to teach. I enjoyed leading seminars on Searle and Kant; those of you who took both classes with me are brave, brave souls. I also enjoyed being advisor to both the Philosophy Club and Stetson's Film Appreciation Society. Special thanks to Michael Simpson, who will be graduating this year—I'll miss our long conversations on, among other things, the nature of mathematical explanation. Good luck! With respect to scholarship, this has been an exciting year for me. I completed a book on John Searle (thanks to those who took the seminar for struggling through the draft) and had two journal articles accepted. Both articles concern the empirical question of whether or not professors who specialize in the study of ethics are, in fact, more ethical. The jury is still out, but it isn't looking good for the ethicists!

From Bob and Sylvia Perkins:

Sylvia's new book was published by Oxford University Press in 2009 under her maiden name, Sylvia Walsh, with the title *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode*.

Perkins, Robert L., ed., *International Kierkegaard Commentary: The Book on Adler* (Macon, GA; Mercer University Press, 2008), 248 pp. Also participated on at the panel on truth at the Society for Philosophy of Religion, in Hilton Head, SC. Feb, 2009.