

# THE STETSON GADFLY

## DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER

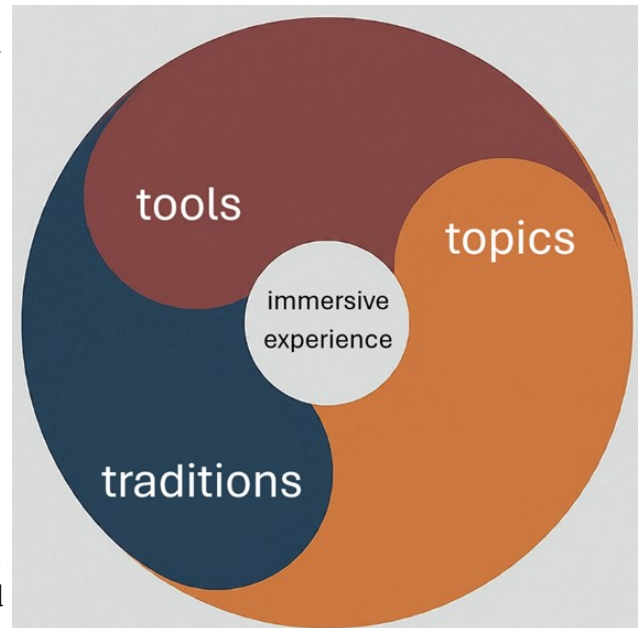
Dr. David DiQuattro (ddiquatt@stetson.edu), Susan Peppers-Bates (speppers@stetson.edu),  
Melinda Hall (mchall@stetson.edu), Joshua Rust (jrust@stetson.edu)

### Refreshing our curriculum!

**Dr. Joshua Rust**

I really enjoyed so many of our Idle Chat conversations! We talked about scientific naturalism, the value of Stetson's so forcefully attempting to create a sense of community among students, the way in which GenAI might undermine academic integrity, whether there are certain situations in which pain can be intrinsically good, and so many other things. A conversation late into the semester turned to the question of how the philosophy department organizes its curriculum and Ali B. suggested that we might consider grouping our various classes under broad headers or categories. Great suggestion!! Earlier in the summer the faculty met and came up with this curriculum map:

The idea is that every one of our classes would fall under one of these categories. Tools, for example, would include core skill-building classes like Logic, Intro to Philosophy, and Research in Philosophy. The remaining classes would fall under traditions or topics. Immersive experience is a new requirement that would have philosophy majors engage with the discipline outside the classroom, through reading groups, Ethics Bowl, Philosophy Fest, and, yes, Idle Talk.



This is very much a work in progress; please feel free to give us feedback!

*"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 News

**The Philosophy Club hosted four talks in fall 2023 and Spring 2024.**

September 19, 2023 -

Kim Q. Hall, Queering Philosophy

February 8, 2024 -

Luke Ford, The Loom and the Lotus:  
Ancient Fabulation and the Poetic  
Prehistory of Virtual Reality

March 14, 2024 -

Ron Hall, The Earth and the World

April 8, 2024—

Mary Bernard, How my Philosophy Major  
made me a Better Therapist

## Hall Award 2024 Grace Norgard



Grace Norgard is from Grandon Fl and wrote her senior thesis on "Natural Piety." After graduation, Norgard plans to attend Liberty University for a Master's in Divinity with the intention to pursue a career in women's counseling. She would like to thank Dr. Peppers-Bates for guidance throughout the creation of her senior thesis."

## Senior Projects

**Philosophy Senior Theses July 2023,  
December 2023 and May 2024**

Emily Flugrath

Group Belief: A Criticism of Summative and Non-Summative Accounts

Tywan Lewis

The Relationship Between Law and Morality

Leah McCarter

Bimbification Reclaimed

Grace Norgard

Natural Piety

Brett Zimmerman

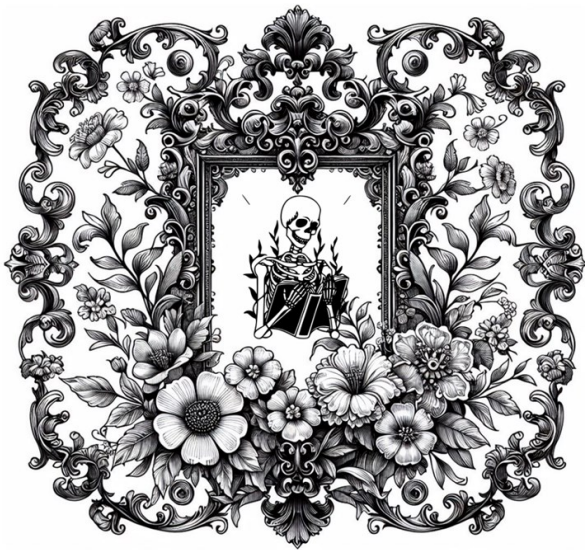
Communitary: Marx and Laclau on Resistance to Neoliberalism

## Majors and Minors Events

Fall 2023—Boston Coffee Fall Mixer

Spring 2024—Persimmon Hollow Spring Mixer





## PhilosophyFest

PhilosophyFest is a miniconference that gives our Juniors and Seniors the opportunity to present their theses to each other, other philosophy majors, and the faculty. This year's PhilosophyFest was April 20, 2024. It was a blast! We are so impressed by our majors!

Ali Burgess - Rediscovering the Truth of Philosophy of Disability Through Poetics

Tanner D'Errico - The Aesthetics of Open Bodybuilding

Joshua Griffen - Why the Right went Wrong

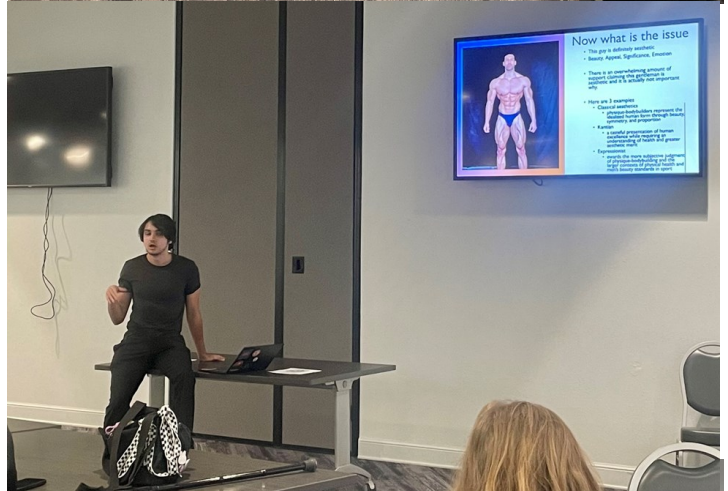
Logan Hawley - Abstraction, Striking the Balance

Leah McCarter - Bimbification

Tristyn Rampersad - Analyzing Racial Disorientation Through Predictive Processing

Melissa Schmiede - Copyright in Generative AI

Brett Zimmerman - Communality: Marx and Laclau on Resistance to Neoliberalism





## From San Servolo to Legge Basaglia: Madness in Venice

### Dr. Melinda Hall

In Spring 2024, I had the pleasure of co-teaching a course with a thoughtful colleague, Dr. Michael Eskenazi (Psychology). I don't get to collaborate on teaching very often, and I was especially glad that the course included a study abroad trip to Venice, Italy, over Spring Break. The privilege to teach the course involved a competitive application and Dr. Eskenazi and I planned the course for two years in collaboration with Stetson's WORLD office and their international learning partner program, CEPA.

We covered the deinstitutionalization of mental illness in the 70s and forward, with a focus on the work of anti-psychiatrist Franco Basaglia. While Basaglia was not based in Venice, he had direct influence on an asylum in Venice, San Servolo. With our students, we visited this once-prison for disabled people, which was closed due to the law passed in Basaglia's name in 1978 ("Law 180" or Legge Basaglia). And, as a class, we studied Basaglia's influence; he, along with those of thinkers like Laing and other anti-psychiatrists, engaged the whole world in new thinking on mental illness. His work led to the massive closures of asylums in Europe and elsewhere, and he argued, with clear understanding, that such institutions were carceral in nature and logic and deeply inhumane in their effects.

In the course, I focused on disability justice themes and the history of concepts of disability seen through feminist, anti-capitalist, and radical lenses. We wondered about "hypostatic abstraction" and asked if mental illness counts; we wondered if mental illness was disability, and if the "social model" could work for mental illness; we wondered if we could see a future without involuntary treatment; we asked questions about NYC's new laws that embolden police officers, social workers, nonprofits, and bystanders to affect the arrest of any unhoused persons who seem mentally ill; and more. Along the way, our teaching assistant Laura Cheshire (self-designed major in Art Therapy who is headed to a masters' degree in Bioethics), helped us think about making ethical arguments and engaging the tools of art therapy in thinking about our own perspectives on mental illness.

For me, the visit to Venice was tremendous. I only hope the students learned as much as I did. For example, it was distressing visiting the site of the San Servolo asylum, but viewing the implements of "treatment" kept there was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We were led in our tour by a highly capable guide with expertise in health matters. I also learned many elements affecting who was incarcerated at San Servolo, including the class-based implications of various historical moments in Venice. Further, while I knew of Basaglia's work and Legge Basaglia, I made assumptions about the Italian system for treating mental illness that were not correct. I viewed the Italian system as abolitionist; however, "asylums" persisted until 2013 for those who are already incarcerated. That means that mentally ill people were still being held and treated against their will in Italy 25 years after the passage of Legge Basaglia. I also learned, from visiting the community-based mental health clinic in Bologna and listening to a lecture by Moreno De Rossi, the Director of the Department of Mental Health in Venice, that the closure of the asylums bring a proliferation of new forms of authority and power over disabled lives. Staffing has multiplied in various ways and types of mental health centers in Italy; does a horizontal, many-pronged center make for better outcomes? Or is this simply the bureaucratization of disability?



## From San Servolo to Legge Basaglia: Madness in Venice continued

Dr. Melinda Hall

We also used the course as a reason to get in touch with the filmmaker and documentarian Erika Rossi, who created several films about the closure of asylums in Italy and the impacts of the sudden freedom of mentally ill folks in Trieste, where Basaglia spent a large portion of time. We viewed her 2012 film *Trieste racconta Basaglia*, to which she gave us free access, and she spoke with the class about her process and thinking in creating it and her perspective as a member of the community today in Trieste.

Speaking of lessons we can only learn on the ground; our class learned from our discussions with Erika Rossi that there is an archive of Basaglia's work in Venice. So, that means we must return!



## What will we do in utopia? Dr. Joshua Rust

Imagine that AI and technology have solved all of our material problems. Like Janet in *The Good Place*, we can get whatever we want as we need it. Moreover, imagine that we've solved our social, political, scientific and political problems as well. And we live a very, very long time. *Now what do we do?*

This is a question I've been asking my intro classes for a couple of years. If you believe in heaven, then you might call it the problem of heaven. However, even if you don't believe in heaven, there remains the problem of utopia. Bernard Suits has an audacious solution to the problem of heaven or utopia: we should create and play games. Indeed, Suits argues that game-play is the only thing that can fill the void left by a post-work society. And even when we do things that resemble work, we are approaching that work as a game. While I don't think that Suits was a communist, his vision of utopia sits fairly well with one of Marx's few positive descriptions of our post-capitalist lives:

"[W]hile in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic." — Karl Marx, *The German Ideology / Theses on Feuerbach / Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*

Suits's suggestion is highly controversial. Even he recognizes that the prospect of simply playing games is so horrifying to some members of utopia that they would rather burn it all down and artificially create work for themselves. But I think Suits might be on to something--we just have to make sure we play the *right* games. Or at least that I what I argued in my latest article in the *Journal for the Philosophy of Sport*. Check it out here if you want to learn more! <https://bit.ly/utopiagames>



Dall-e's response to the following prompt: "draw a picture of people playing games in utopia". Apparently, in utopia, chess is way bigger and soccer balls are way smaller!





## Faculty News



**Dr. Melinda Hall** This year, Dr. Melinda Hall embarked on a new, major adventure: she is currently serving as Associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. The role, which she just agreed to continue into the next academic year, has put her - in some ways - at odds with her previous experiences. As a long-time member of the Faculty Senate, and previous Chair, she often was in administrative conversations representing faculty. Now, she must think about policies and academic programs from a new vantage point. She loves the logic and persuasion embedded in the role. None of the enhanced workload has helped her pursue her research in philosophy, unfortunately, although she did join and attend her first meeting of the American Conference of Academic Deans. Philosophers don't always leave the cave, but when they do, they make relatively good (maybe!) leaders. We will see what comes next, and hopefully she will also be able to complete her current philosophical works in progress, too. In late 2023, Dr. Hall was proud to publish her latest essay, "Risking Ourselves, Together: The Politics and Persons of Risk," in *The Bloomsbury Guide to Philosophy of Disability*, and this writing provides a great entry point for anyone interested in her book project on risk and disability. Feel free to email her for a copy, if you are interested to know more.



**Dr. Susan Peppers-Bates** SPB had an unprecedented but good year, taking on chairing the department for a year and teaching a new topic for the department seminar on the Feminist Philosophy of Religion. The seminar was a perfect marriage of my teacher-scholar sides, as the enthusiastic class participation helped me revise and hone my sabbatical paper "Epistemic injustice in western religion & philosophy of religion" which I am sending out for review to journals in August. I also got the opportunity to reconnect with Mary Bernard, MS, LMHC, Stetson Philosophy graduate 2007 as we collaborated on "Ellie and Abby Are the Queer Feminist Icons We've Been Waiting For" forthcoming 2024 in *The Last of Us and Philosophy* (Wiley, ed. Joshua Horn, Series Editor William Irwin). After many years on hold, and the editor leaving academic philosophy, the forthcoming Oxford Handbook to Malebranche with my contribution "Malebranche and Quietism" should finally be out in 2025. I will be working with the new editor Dr. Julie Walsh. My eldest, Anne-Marie, after a semi gap year of 2 classes a semester at Stetson, will be heading to Berea College in Kentucky come August, to study philosophy and religion (her late father was also a philosopher, specializing in mediaeval philosophy, so her interest in philosophy and religion may be over-determined!). Finally, this fall I will be trying out my "plus one" class, a weekly coffee, cookies, and LGBTQI reading group. If you are interested in attending, please email me at [speppers@stetson.edu](mailto:speppers@stetson.edu)



**Dr. Joshua Rust** A huge shout out to my students for listening to me complain about being Senate Chair during my classes! It was exhausting, but the work forced me to develop new skills and abilities. Still, I'm happy to return to teaching and scholarship. In August, David DiQuattro and I are going to start an Ethics Bowl team. Are you interested in joining us? If so, send one or both of us a note!



**Dr. David DiQuattro** I enjoyed my second year as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the philosophy department. One highlight was the chance to read and discuss the excellent Senior Thesis projects this year. In October, I presented a keynote talk for an Intercollegiate Colloquium on the Liberal Arts. The title of the talk was "Friendship, Intellectual Life, and the Love of Wisdom." I am working on a writing project on Augustinian eudaimonism, where I develop a conception of agency and the good inspired by the writings of Augustine of Hippo.

