

THE STETSON GADFLY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER

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ALOHA DR. RONALD L. HALL

To the Stetson Philosophy Community, including alumni and friends of the department:

This is a landmark issue of the Gadfly, as a major milestone for the Philosophy Department has been reached. Our emotions are deeply mixed as we announce that Dr. Ronald Hall is retiring after 48 years of teaching philosophy. We know he will remain engaged in his philosophical work. And, he is relocating to Hawaii, and so he will also be able to spend time with his beloved family, including many grandchildren, in a new home. We will miss Dr. Hall terribly, but we know that his impact on students has been immeasurable and will last for many, many years to come.

In this issue, you can read about Dr. Hall's influence and engagements with students, colleagues, and friends of the department.

I'd like to share my own lasting images of Dr. Hall's teaching. I picture him with his text always in hand, holding students in thrall to his next statement. His ability to ask questions of students was unparalleled; their pens would go still over their notetaking as they gazed at him, trying to follow him to where he was headed next. By turns jovial, serious, and disruptive, those questions were the key to his pedagogy. I picture him waiting, quietly and patiently, with his eyes sparkling, bent toward the class, for the students' answers. Even when he could or would predict those answers, he relished the responses and the students who gave them and built his classes around conversation. Dr. Hall was a responsive and terrific teacher of philosophy.

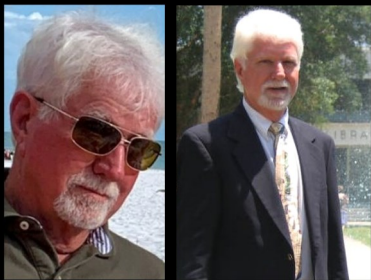
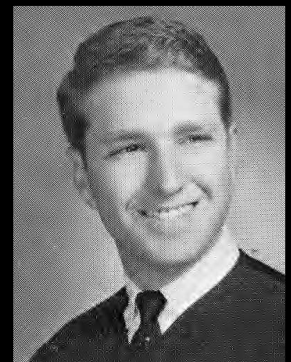
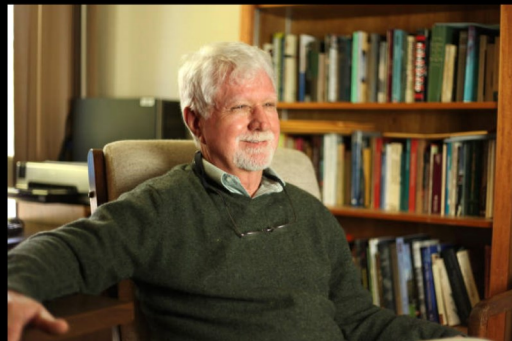
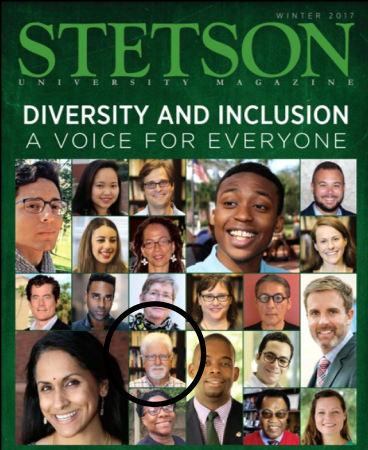
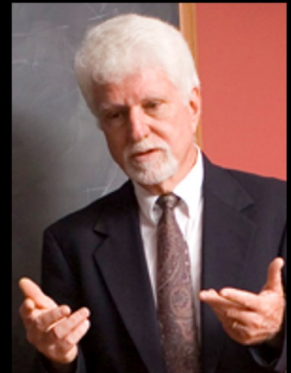
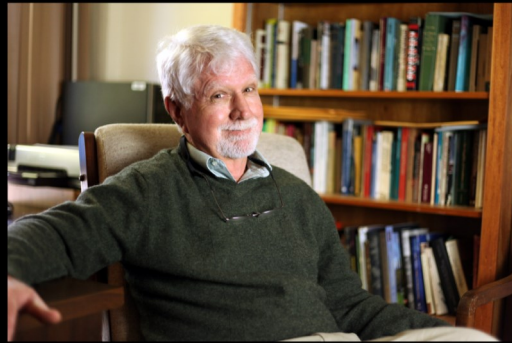
With warmest wishes,

Dr. Melinda C. Hall
Chair, Department of 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



The many faces of Dr. Ronald L. Hall



It might be said that Ron plays by his own rules.

The expectations of a job interview are relatively clear. The candidate is supposed to give a teaching demonstration on a subject matter communicated weeks in advance. For my interview (in 2007!) at Stetson University, Susan Peppers-Bates had asked me to teach a class on Malebranche. While this was an intimidating prospect, given that Susan is among the foremost experts on this philosopher, I was also given plenty of time to prepare. And prepare I did because I hate winging it. What I wasn't ready for was a request that Ron made of me over breakfast on the first day of the interview: "I just realized that today I'm scheduled to talk about John Searle's Chinese Room argument," he said to me. "You've written a book on Searle. You teach it!" It is true that I wrote the book. But it is also the case that I had never taught that material. Still, I couldn't turn down the request and I taught the class.

It must have gone reasonably well, as I was offered the job. As frightening as that request was, it betrays something that Ron deeply and intuitively understands about the essential nature of philosophical activity. Of course, you must prepare. But the beating heart of philosophy is found in the spontaneous and unanticipatable moments of interaction—the moments where an interlocutor asks you to respond to an objection that you hadn't considered or the times when you are asked to describe a view you hadn't prepared for. Despite Plato's claims to the contrary, philosophy isn't laid out in advance, waiting to be rediscovered. Rather, it is a processual and dialogical enterprise where novelty and disruption always threaten to emerge from the Heraclitan flux. Ron embodies that flux. Thus, instead of saying that Ron plays *by his own rules* (*what is it to have one's own rules anyway?*), it is perhaps more accurate to say that Ron always, with a kind of mischievous and childlike wonder, *plays with the rules*. As Heraclitus says, "eternity is a child playing checkers; the kingdom belongs to a child."

Josh Rust

Two of my favorite memories with Ron are from my job interview at the American Philosophical Association Conference and fly out to the DeLand campus. The APA was in New York, during a blizzard. Ron showed up in Birkenstocks and wool socks. I began to suspect Floridians were different. After he toasted me at a dinner he and Maggi held in their home and capped it off with a toast wherein he bit through his wineglass. I knew I was in for a fun and, as I would see, a punny adventure. Thanks for the years of philosophy games! You will be missed.

Susan Peppers-Bates



Here is my testimonial on my experience learning with Dr. Hall :

I can't say I remember a lick of Kierkegaard. But, I remember Dr. Hall's eyes sparkling with excitement whenever he spoke with students. I remember his love of pecan pie (and pecan pie analogies). He and his wife graciously hosted the philosophy students at their house their first year of Stetson, and I remember that same glint in his eyes when he complimented his wife's hosting prowess with deep authenticity, and regaling us with the story of how they met when they were studying at Stetson. His eyes were probably less sparkly but equally as magnanimous when I told him I hadn't read Wittgenstein and was late to class every day because it started at 8 am and I simply wasn't a morning person. The joy he took in having a healthy, curious conversation on the philosophical topic of the day has stayed with me--there was a class where we were debating a text I'm less than positive I had read the night before, and another student and I were ridiculing the idea of God because we couldn't tolerate the concept of omnipotence in the face of a messy and too often cruel world. Dr. Hall encouraged the conversation through the wilderness of adolescent intellectualism, and then with absolute delight posed to us an interpretation of God--loving, evolving, and learning right along with us and the rest of the universe--that struck me like lightning and has stuck with me ever since. I remember Dr. Hall: His deep acceptance of and gratitude for others. His embodiment of joy and love. A small seed that has continued to nurture someone who grew up without such a soul. Wishing him the absolute best life has to offer in this next chapter.

Sincerely, **Gina (Welker) Savory**, Class of '03

I have known Ron through the Florida Philosophical Association for many years. (Could it be 20?!) Ron, you are the rare person who manages to combine a sharp intellect with genuine amicability. Thank you for your wit and insight at so many FPA meetings! I hope you enjoy retirement.

Best wishes, **Brook Sadler**

Dear Ron, First and foremost, congratulations on your retirement! I'm honored to be invited to play a small part in celebrating all that you have contributed to the University and to your profession in your time on the faculty at Stetson. You leave big shoes to fill, my friend.

I am so glad that we've had the opportunity to connect these last few years. And at *your* initiative, I might add! Not only did you reach out to invite me to join the editorial board of the prestigious journal you edit, but you took the time to come to my father's funeral (your former professor at Stetson), to come to a talk I gave at SPEP, and then to join with Melinda to invite me to return to my alma mater to give a talk! To me, that speaks volumes about you as a scholar, a teacher, and a human being. First, the very fact that you were selected to edit the International Journal of Philosophy of Religion says a lot about your standing as a scholar. Both of the invitations that you have offered me speak to your openness to varied approaches to philosophy, to interdisciplinarity, and your commitment to honoring that in your colleagues. That you would make space in your busy day to celebrate Dad's life with us after all these years embodies a serious commitment to honoring meaningful relationships. This, in particular, will stand you in good stead in the years to come. No doubt, there will be challenges ahead, but I look forward to the new adventures and rewarding opportunities that retirement will open up for you.

Fondly, **Ellen True Armour**

Beyond Dr. Hall's classes, which I took nearly every semester, I am even more thankful for his support, guidance, and mentorship. In our many meetings in his office, whether discussing my future goals or what I should read to prepare for my senior research, Dr. Hall was one of the most meaningful mentors I had as a student and person.

Austin Fuller, Philosophy and English double major/December 2013



My memory begins at the Persimmon Hollow senior philosophy social this year. All the professors and Philosophy majors sat at a table and spoke. I was talking to my friend Crystal, with Dr. Melinda Hall and Dr. Ron Hall sitting close, and I could hear them discussing something to do with my senior project. I couldn't focus on Crystal so I kept looking to the side and Dr. Melinda Hall caught my eye. She reassured me they weren't saying anything bad, in fact the exact opposite. For context, I am obsessed with Miranda Fricker, the main philosopher I highlighted throughout my senior project. He told me that he was still thinking of one of the concepts we discussed during my presentation, so he EMAILED MIRANDA FRICKER. I literally had to hold back tears because I was so happy and my brain and heart filled with so many emotions at once. Miranda Fricker has to be one of my philosophical idols because she gave me the words to describe my thoughts on North Korea. My biggest dream would be to see her and pick her brain, so Dr. Ron Hall completely rocked my world. To think Dr. Ron Hall not only thought of the question long after my presentation ended, he also emailed the author of the books I used in my project! It was one of the best, most validating moments I've had as someone who really cherishes philosophy. I appreciate him with my whole heart. I am endlessly grateful to have been in a class with him and to have the ability to say "Yes I know Dr. Ron Hall". I hope he realizes the impact he's had on me as a student and the infinite other stories students probably carry with them. I really hope he enjoys his retirement and gets to do all the things he wants to do on his bucket list. If on that list he has "inspire students to live a long life with the treasures and wonders of philosophy", he can check it off. :) Thank you Dr. Ron Hall for everything you've done for philosophy. It has not gone unnoticed and you have helped confirm why we ought to continue to care about philosophy today.

Jeanel Leon/Class of 2022

One thing that I remember from every class I took with Ron Hall is laughing. Dr. Hall had a way of incorporating his unique brand of humor in every conversation. Some wise guy he would talk about every now and again, Ludwig Wittgenstein, said, "A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes." And I would say that Dr. Hall was a serious and good philosopher.

Thank you so much for being a great teacher and advisor during my time at Stetson,

Luke Ford/Stetson alum class of 2015.

Dr. Hall's Socratic wisdom, Kierkegaardian wit, Nietzschean iconoclasm, and Wittgensteinian ingenuity were indispensable in shaping my understanding of philosophy as a flexible, embodied, and interpersonal practice — rather than an aloof or abstracted field of study. Now in my work as a psychotherapist, I rediscover every day the power of philosophical thinking to edify, inspire, shatter, and heal. Without Dr. Hall's inimitable instruction, mentorship, and guidance, my life and career would not be as rich, fulfilling, and —to use one of Dr. Hall's favorite words—wonderful, as they continually prove to be. Thank you, Dr. Hall, for helping me to find my path. Because of you, "I know how to go on."

Warmest regards, **Michael Cicalese**/Stetson Alum class of 2014

The Rob and Ron Show....

I remember when Dr. Ron Hall joined Stetson's philosophy faculty in 2000. My husband, Dr. Rob Brady, who was hired in 1972 as Stetson's first full-time philosophy professor and had worked hard to build a strong department, thought Ron would be a great addition.

Rob and Ron had different interests, and often co-taught courses to show students that it was OK—and indeed helpful — to disagree and argue intelligently over issues. But they were good colleagues and Ron even compiled a logic textbook to accompany Rob's computer software for teaching logic, "The LogicWorks." They traveled together to philosophy conventions around the country to promote both the book and the software; and after my husband's sudden death in 2004, the department continued to grow and improve under Ron's leadership. A favorite Ron story comes from one of their early trips together —to New York City in the dead of winter. Rob called me in disbelief, saying Ron had brought only sandals, and was trekking through the snow with bare toes.... That's a Floridian, for sure, and suggests he'll do just fine in Hawaii!

Betty Brady, Widow of longtime Philosophy Professor and Chair Rob Brady



Philosophy Club News

The Philosophy Club hosted three talks in **fall 2021**. Mary Bernard (September 14th), an alumni and therapist (LMHCA) who discussed how the philosophy major prepares you for a career in mental health. We also hosted Piers Rawling (October 7th), a regional collaborator and philosopher at Florida State University, who discussed pitfalls in utilitarian theory. Finally, we hosted Asa Burman (November 18th), a Swedish philosopher who works on social ontology, an area of interest to faculty in our department. In **spring 2022**, Joshua Rust was an internal speaker, providing us insights into his most recent sabbatical research (March 17th). Meanwhile, we hosted Holocaust historian Steven Katz (April 7th), and disabled feminist philosopher Shelley Tremain, a Canadian independent scholar and philosophy PhD (April 4th).

Idle Talk News

We continued our Idle Talk series via Zoom. This is a biweekly casual conversation among students and faculty; all students are welcome and encouraged to attend regardless of whether they are majors. While our groups were small (approximately 5 students and faculty per session), we have received strong positive feedback from our majors so far. These meetings, envisioned as part of our department's Philosophy Club, are meant to keep us connected to students between planned visiting speakers. We also further diversified the types of events we held as a department. We held a fall gathering at Trilogy coffeshop (October 29th) to celebrate the new academic year and our return from COVID; this was well-attended by approximately 15 students (majors and minors) and all four faculty members. Joshua Rust hosted a philosophy film screening of *Run Lola Run* (October 14th) and discussed decision theory and alternative reality; this was well-attended by approximately 10 students (majors and minors).

Other Philosophy News

In May 2022, we designed and distributed a shirt for our majors and minors in support of LGBTQ students affected by "Don't Say Gay" legislation in Florida. Susan Peppers-Bates spearheaded this effort and drafted a [public letter against this legislation](#). As a department, we edited and signed the letter and passed it to the Faculty Senate for consideration. With one vote against, the Senate also chose to sign our department's letter.

Joshua Rust and Melinda Hall organized an **Adorno Reading Group** which included current and former students (Najae Hewling, August Maulfair, Kristina Mickens, and alumni Matthew Brogan). The group met weekly in the fall semester 2021 to read *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Majors and Minors Events

Trilogy Coffee Roasting Co. Mixer - October 29th, 2021: Students and Philosophy Faculty gathered for coffee and prizes. They also attended the Artisan Alley Farmer's market.

Persimmon Hollow Brewing Co. Gathering - April 28, 2022: Students met with Philosophy faculty for a graduation send off.

Hall Award 2022



Congratulations to Kadhapriya Lindo, the winner of *The Ronald L. and Margaret Smith Hall Philosophy Award*.



Q & A with this year's seniors

From **Noah McGahagin** ('22):

How will your philosophy education help you in the future?

"My philosophy education will enable me to problem solve, think critically, and approach my work in unique unorthodox ways."

Please tell us some strengths of the philosophy program at Stetson.

"The accessibility of faculty. Whenever I needed something I knew I could have my questions answered and that I would be supported. I felt very welcome and like I belonged."

What's something you learned in the philosophy department that continues to strike you?

"There isn't one particular fact that I learned that stands out to me, but I've taken away the importance of thinking about thinking. In one way or another, philosophy is about examining how and why we think about our world and the things in it the way we do. While there are no hard answers, I see great value in considering many approaches and constructing one's own reasoned opinion."

From **Miracle Duff** ('21):

How has your philosophy education helped you?

"I am a legal assistant for a small law firm in Winter Park and I would say it realized my plans as I knew I wanted to study philosophy to gain reading skills and interpretation skills to enable me to have a successful future in law school as I hopefully will start attending in fall of 2023."

Please tell us some strengths of the philosophy program at Stetson.

"Very caring professors that are always there for you when you don't understand a concept. They teach what they love, and you can tell they are masters on the subject that can talk for hours about the content."

What's something you learned in the philosophy department that continues to strike you?

"Arguments all have a logical reasoning to them that can be represented with symbols and is what truly holds all of philosophy together. I still use logical reasoning all the time in my work."

From **Crystal Freeland** ('22):

How has your philosophy education helped you?

"Majoring in philosophy introduced me to my love of thinking deeply about complex matters whether that be on the systematic oppression of disabilities or different ways one ought to live their life ethically. Philosophy also pushed me to think about the different ways I can think about and approach my subject artistically and more deeply."

Please tell us some strengths of the philosophy program at Stetson.

"Every single one of the Professors are professional, kind, accessible and passionate about their subjects. I also enjoyed the idle talks I've been to, this was a great environment to discuss troubling matters about my personal research projects or any material I might be confused about during class, also a great way to share what you are passionate about!"

What's something you learned in the philosophy department that continues to strike you?

"Finally learning how to read complex theories is something that I'm sure I will continue to value for the rest of my life. The philosophy department taught me how to educate myself and to think deeply and openly about almost any subject."



List of Senior Project Titles & Destinations for new grads



Fall 2021

- Makayla Burnett**, Senior Thesis Title: "The Only Inalienable Right"; Plans to apply for law school
- Miracle Duff**, Senior Thesis Title: "Everyone Deserves to be an Athlete: A Feminist Take on Hitting Hard"; Legal Assistant, Winter Park, FL
- Skyler Gainor**, Senior Thesis Title: "Are All Legal Laws Moral Laws?"; Plans to apply for law school
- Kadhapiya Lindo**, Senior Thesis Title: "The State of Womanhood: Misogyny as a Political Interest, and the Necessity of Political Womanhood"; Plans to apply for law school

Spring 2022

- Madison Baynard**, Senior Thesis Title: "Clinical Trials: Exploitation of Human Subjects"; Currently applying for law school
- Crystal Freeland**, Senior Thesis Title: "The Connection Between Writing and Reading to Achieve Understanding"; Gap year dedicated to travel, artwork and learning Spanish
- Joseph Ginsburg**, Senior Thesis Title: "Anxiety"; gap year
- David Harnage**, Senior Thesis Title: "Why Suffering?: A Response to the Problem of Evil"; Will continue as an undergraduate at Stetson for one more semester (senior project is complete)
- Jeanel Leon**, Senior Thesis Title: "The Potential Epistemic Harm of Political Ideology: A North Korea Study"; Attending Florida Atlantic University for a Master of Social Work degree in Fall 2022
- August Maulfair**, Senior Thesis Title: "From queers and criminals to queerness and criminality: thinking and doing resistance without identity"; Plans to apply for Philosophy PhD after a gap year
- Noah McGahagin**, Senior Thesis Title: "Science Fiction, Faith, and the Enquested Life"; Attending graduate school for master's in library science degree in Fall 2022
- Nicole Nieves**, Senior Thesis Title: "Developing Attitudes Towards Assisted Reproductive Technologies"; Gap year
- Zurielle Payen**, Senior Thesis Title: "The New Age Draft"; Gap year
- Ion Sancho**, Senior Thesis Title: "Calling For a Change in How We View Violence in Civil Disobedience: Self-defense via Nonviolent Philosophy"; Gap year for travel



Alumni News

This spring, **Matthew Brogan** ('18) completed his MA in philosophy at Warwick University.

This spring, **Luke Ford** ('15) was accepted into the MA program in philosophy at the New School (he previously worked with a non-profit).

Mackenzie Shaw was accepted into Towson University's Experimental Psychology Master's program for Fall 2022. The concentration is in social psychology and will be researching stereotyping, prejudice and implicit bias.

Many of our alumni continue in philosophy graduate programs, including **Kelsey Maglio** ('19), who is pursuing her PhD at Baylor University.

Department Seminar

In Spring 2022, Dr. Melinda Hall taught the annual department (senior) seminar with the topic **Philosophy of Disability**. Given that this is her major area of expertise, the original syllabus was overstuffed and needed to be trimmed down! It was difficult going, given the subject matter and reasonable hesitations among the students—especially about where to begin, how to define our terms, and how to handle the epistemic hesitation around an identity category that many in the class did not (at least initially) identify with.

Dr. Hall was grateful for the opportunity to teach both her own work and the work of terrific, marginalized philosophers and interdisciplinary scholars, including Eli Clare, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Shelley Tremain, the Harriet Tubman Collective, Keah Brown, Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, Julia Watts Belser, Talila Lewis, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. Included among the learning outcomes were to understand philosophical approach to disability and to become familiar with disabled people's lives, narratives, and theories. With those two goals—one academic and one political—in the balance, we made tremendous progress. And each student worked on researching, planning, and structuring philosophically papers strategically in a series of short papers on media, politics, the body, and more.





Faculty News



Ronald Hall is retiring from Stetson at the end of August. He is working on a paper entitled "The Ontology of Words" which is an attempt to elaborate what Charles Taylor (in his recent book *The Language Animal*) calls the constitutive concept of language. He will be moving to Hawaii later this summer but promises to stay in close contact with the Department. He will remain in his post at Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. A plaque is hung in the Lawson Room commemorating his service to the Department over the past 20+ years and reads as follows:

Professor Ronald L. Hall joined Stetson's Philosophy Department in 2000. He then worked diligently to increase the department from two to four professors. Hall was the founding editor of the department's *Gadfly* as well as the highly successful philosophy club. Hall retired in 2022 having taught for 48 years.

Raised in Sarasota, Florida, Professor Hall graduated from Stetson in 1967. He received his MDiv from Duke University and the PhD in Philosophy from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1973. He then taught at Francis Marion University in Florence, SC where he received Distinguished Professor status. He retired from FMU to return to Stetson, thus fulfilling his dream.

As an engaging teacher, Professor Hall preferred discussion to lecturing, convinced that the best way to teach philosophy was to draw students into lively philosophical conversation. At this he was particularly good. Hall taught a wide range of classes including existentialism, the philosophy of religion, and investigations into Greek tragedy. He had the philosophical temperament of an existentialist and an ordinary language philosopher.

Hall authored numerous articles and books including *Word And Spirit: A Kierkegaardian Critique of the Modern Age* (Indiana University Press), *The Human Embrace: The Love of Philosophy* and the *Philosophy of Love: Kierkegaard, Cavell, Nussbaum* (Pennsylvania State University), *Logic: A Brief Introduction* (the philosophy department's logic textbook), and co-edited *Recovering the Personal*.

During Hall's career he served as President of the following: The Society for the Philosophy of Religion, the S.C. Society for Philosophy, the Southeastern AAR, and the Florida Philosophical Association. For over a decade, Hall was Editor-in-Chief of the prestigious *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*.

Dr. Hall and his wife, Maggi, (Class of '67) established in 2001 The Ronald L. & Margaret Smith Hall Philosophy Award. This annual gift is to honor and recognize the most outstanding graduating senior in Stetson's Department of Philosophy. The 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's name is engraved on a plaque listing previous winners and displayed outside the Philosophy Department offices.





Faculty News



Dr. Melinda Hall This year, I published a chapter on disability issues in the field of bioethics entitled “Disability,” in the *Handbook of Bioethics*, edited by Ji Yong Lee, Ezio Di Nucci, and Isaac Anderson Wagner for Rowman and Littlefield. I also signed a contract with Routledge for an edited volume, with co-editor Sarah Gorman, for *Reclaiming Philosophy’s Disability History: Crippling the Canon*. We are thrilled to see the long-anticipated work from disabled philosophers and philosophers of disability come to fruition, with a publication date in 2023.



Dr. Susan Peppers-Bates My article “The Greatest Conspiracy Ever: Racism and Sexism as the foundation for Unjust Religious Interpretation and Exclusion” is forthcoming in the 2023 book from Eerdmans Press, *Christianity and Conspiracy Theories*. Whereas that short article is designed for a popular audience, I will be on sabbatical in the fall 2022 to write a related scholarly article, entitled “Christianity, Hermeneutical Injustice, and Epistemic Vice,” addressing how racism and sexism within the Christian church shut women, people of color, LBTQI and other marginalized groups out of the meaning making community.



Dr. Joshua Rust After my sabbatical year, it was thrilling to be back in the classroom with such an exceptional group of philosophy majors and minors! In addition to teaching, I continued to pursue scholarship at the intersection of sociology and biology. When is it more appropriate to describe an institution as more like an organism and less like a tool? Ask me at the end of the summer, when I’ve finished the paper!

