

RUTGERS PHILOSOPHY

Newsletter

Fall 2012



30th Anniversary Bash!

In the early 1980s, approximately thirty years ago, the several smaller philosophy departments spread among Rutgers's colleges were unified to create a bigger department with greater ambitions. This marked the beginning of its transformation into one of the best graduate programs in the world. Thirty years seemed like a good milestone at which to look back at the history of philosophy at Rutgers, and to celebrate the achievements of our students by a weekend of talks by philosophers who – in one way or another – came from Rutgers during this period.

The Rutgers students brought back as speakers included: **Paul Pietroski** (Rutgers B.A., 1986), now split between philosophy and linguistics at the University of Maryland; **Greg Horowitz** (Rutgers Ph.D. 1992), Chair of the Department of Social Science and Cultural Studies at the Pratt Institute; **Richard Samuels** (Rutgers Ph.D. 1998), Ohio State University; **Hilary Greaves** (Rutgers, Ph.D. 2008), Oxford; **Andrew Sepielli** (Rutgers Ph.D. 2010), University of Toronto; and **Meghan Sullivan** (Rutgers Ph.D. 2011), Notre Dame. They represented a broad spectrum of areas of strength at Rutgers – philosophy of language, philosophy of science, ethics, metaphysics, and

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philosophy of mind.

After dinner, several people reflected upon the department's history. **Dean Zimmerman** explored the “pre-history” of philosophy at Rutgers — its role at Rutgers from its founding until the end of the 1960s. Many of Rutgers's presidents have been philosophers. **Ira Condict** was President Pro Tem 1795-1810; **Theodore Sanford Doolittle** was vice president and then acting president in the 1860s. In the 1960s, Rutgers president **Mason Gross** was famous as a television quiz-show wise guy (where he worked alongside a young Ed McMahon), but his Ph.D. was in philosophy. The next president, **Edward Bloustein**, was also a philosopher (editing a book of key passages from Whitehead). The best Rutgers philosopher in the university's first 200 years seems to have been **Walter T. Marvin**, one of the “New Realists”, alongside Ralph Barton Perry and others.

Peter Klein and **Brian McLaughlin** described the blueprint for Rutgers' growth that was followed in the 1980s, which led to the hiring of **Ernie LePore**, **Barry Loewer**, and **Jerry Fodor**, among others.

The whole celebration was the brainchild of **Barry Loewer**, who spearheaded the planning but was unable to attend due to sudden illness. Everyone at the conference gathered for a “Get Well Barry” photograph. Happily, Barry has recovered, and is back teaching a seminar with **David Albert** this semester.





Colloquia

Simon Saunders (Oxford) kicked off the Colloquium season this fall with “A Primer on Gibbs Paradox,” which tackled some foundational issues in statistical mechanics. He was followed by **Julia Markovits** (MIT) who defended a desire-based, internalist account of normative reasons. Next up was **Zoltan Szabo** (Yale); in his talk he outlined an approach to the basic parts of speech which brings them in closer parallel to basic logical types. The series closed with a visit from **David Manley** (Michigan) who answered such questions as: How should I update my credences when I get *de se* evidence? How should I reason when the world might contain more than one individual with all the experiences and apparent memories that I have right now?



Grad talks

Rodrigo Borges kicked off our grad talk series this semester with some traditional epistemology, as he argued *Against Gettier Lucky Knowledge*. Next, **Tim Campbell** taught us why we can do *Practical Reasoning without Transitivity*, followed by **Tobias Wilsch** who discussed the relation between *Grounding and Construction*. **Preston Green** then argued *Against Time-Bias*, and **Heather Demarest** presented her account of chance in *Propensities, Inheritance, and Credence*. Finally, **Carlotta Pavese** wrapped up this semester’s grad talk series with her analysis of *Skills as Knowledge*. Thanks to all the grads who attended the talks this semester, continuing a great tradition here at Rutgers!

The Summer Institute for Diversity in Philosophy

Philosophy, as a discipline, has not been successful in achieving diversity in its students or faculty. Even though the American Philosophical Association has not produced a comprehensive demographic assessment of its members, it is quite apparent that members of historically under-represented groups remain under-represented.



The Summer Institute for Diversity in Philosophy is a seven-day residential program designed to encourage undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds to consider careers in academic philosophy, give students a better idea of what graduate study in philosophy is about, introduce students to the areas of specialization in the discipline, and explore various perspectives on what it means to be a professional philosopher.

The program, directed by **Howard McGary**, has been in existence for twenty years and it has inspired many past participants to pursue graduate degrees in philosophy. It received the 2004 Award for the most innovative philosophy program sponsored by the American Philosophical Association and the Philosophy Documentation Center, and has motivated several universities to develop similar programs.

For more information on the Summer Institute, see philosophy.rutgers.edu/events-335/summer-institute. Applications for the 2013 Institute are due May 6.

2012 Participants

Attendees

Abdul Abad	Jason Bonsall
Brittany Cobb	Julio Covarrubias
James Dunn	Christopher Freire
Jason Gordon	Ethan Graber
Shanice Hinckson	Jesse Huang
Caroline King	Michaela Manson
Shari Maynard	Robert McMahon
Christopher Moore	Amy Pippa Nardie-Warner
Nedah Nemati	Olivia Odoffin

Faculty Speakers

Luvell Anderson	Lawrence Blum
Kristie Dotson	Richard Falk
Alfred Frankowski	J.L.A. Garcia
Randy Higgins	Douglas Husak
Sarah-Jane Leslie	Howard McGary
Jennifer Morton	David Schrader

Graduate Student Panel

William Allen	Rodrigo Borges
Anton Johnson	Jameliah Shorter
Jennifer Wang	

Department website gets a new look

The Philosophy Department now boasts a cleaner, cooler webpage. A Website Committee (led by **Holly Smith**) was responsible for creating the design, which was implemented by **Justin Sharber** and **Stacey Messing**. A stairwell (photographed by **Lucy Jordan** in our own 3 Seminary Place building) now stands as an evocative metaphor atop the site. The biggest improvement may be the "Resources for _____" sections on the left-side menu, which provide one-stop lists of university pages pertinent to faculty, grads, prospective grads, undergrads, and friends and alumni (respectively). The Website Committee has more changes in the pipeline – watch for them at <http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/>.



An update from our department climate reps

The Climate Committee was busy this semester! We organized a workshop on how to be a good ally co-facilitated by Dr. **Susan Marine** (Merrimack College) and our own **Andy Egan**. The workshop filled the seminar room to standing capacity, with active participation by both faculty and graduate students. It generated several ideas for making Rutgers an even better place to be. Stay tuned for updates as these ideas get put into practice! We also organized an advice session for women currently or soon to be on the job market, where several women faculty (**Ruth Chang**, **Frances Egan**, **Susanna Schellenberg**, **Holly Smith**) met with women currently or soon to be on the job market, to give advice on any questions they might have. We also had our third annual women-in-philosophy community dinner, where undergraduates rubbed elbows with women grad students and faculty. Several male allies, undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty also helped to make the event a truly warm and inviting space for the entire Rutgers philosophy community.

- Lisa & Mike



Meet the First-Years!



David Black

Previously: Brown U., B.A.

Interests: Metaethics, Epistemology, Metaphysics

Desert Island Paper: G.E. Moore, "Defense of Common Sense"



Marilie Coetsee

Previously: Stanford U., B.A.

Interests: Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Language, Metaethics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Mind

Desert Island Paper: Allen Wood, "The Duty to Believe According to the Evidence"



Megan Feeney

Previously: Lafayette College, B.A.

Interests: Epistemology, Metaethics, Early Modern

Desert Island Paper: I would bring G.E. Moore's "Proof of an External World" to keep me sane.



Kelsey Laity-D'Agostino

- Previously:** U. of British Columbia, B.A.
- Interests:** Philosophy of language, Metaphysics, Feminist Philosophy
- Desert Island Paper:** I think I'd take W.V.O. Quine's "Translation and Meaning." It's got a little bit of everything.



Daniel Rubio

- Previously:** Spring Arbor U., B.A. Western Michigan U., M.A.
- Interests:** Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic, Philosophy of Religion
- Desert Island Paper:** Well, really a book: David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*. But if it must be a paper: Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting"



Peter van Elswyk

- Previously:** Biola U., B.A. Northern Illinois U., M.A.
- Interests:** Metaphysics, Philosophy of Language
- Desert Island Paper:** That's easy: David Kaplan's "Demonstratives"

Rutgers undergrad journal *Arete* interviews Lisa Miracchi (excerpt)

Arete is a journal staffed entirely by Rutgers students which is dedicated to publishing outstanding work by undergraduate philosophers. The most recent edition, Issue 5 (Summer 2012) features an interview with Rutgers grad student **Lisa Miracchi** by Corresponding Editor **David Colaço**, which is excerpted below. To read the interview in full (and to browse the complete *Arete* archives or get information on how to submit a paper) visit <http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/undergraduate-program/arete-philosophy-journal>.

Currently, one of the more pressing issues in the community is the status and underrepresentation of women in philosophy. While this issue has been relevant for most of the history of the discipline, recent events have brought the issue to the forefront within our department. Specifically, the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP) released a report on the climate for women in various departments, listing Rutgers as one among only four in the "Needs Improvement" category.

David: Tell us about the Climate for Women Report and your initial reaction.

Lisa: When the SPEP climate report first came out, I had this initial feeling of frustration. When I applied to Rutgers for graduate school, it had a bad reputation for women; people told me to watch out. When I visited, I realized it was not this way at all. There were, and still are, many active women graduate students participating in all sorts of graduate life. Many other students felt the same way about the situation; we thought that the report had gotten it wrong. We also worried that the climate report hadn't gone about it the right way. We thought that it was strange that none of us were asked for our opinion of the climate here. So, we decided to tell people what our opinion of the climate was. We wanted to make a public statement both



to counteract this perception of Rutgers as a bad place for women, and to have our voice be heard, which we think is an important part of evaluating a climate for departments.

David: Tell us more about how do you feel about the climate surrounding Rutgers. Do you feel that Rutgers is similar to other universities in this way?

Lisa: Quite honestly, and this was something I was really surprised about when I visited as a prospective student, it was totally the opposite of what I had been told. I remember when **Meghan Sullivan**, who is now Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Notre Dame, gave the prospective graduate talk. She just kicked ass, and I thought, "I want to be in a place where women give talks like that". And this is a place where women genuinely are fully intellectually involved in the community.

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Unfortunately, I think that is somewhat rare, though I hope for it to become less rare. I think that Rutgers is such a wonderful place to be a female graduate student in large part because there are so many strong female graduate students. You have a kind of momentum going: it's a lot easier to talk in class when a bunch of other women are talking too, or to give a talk if a bunch of women are giving also giving talks.

Big semester for Philosophy Club and Honor Society

The Philosophy Club, advised by **Mercedes Diaz** and led by officers **Jimmy Goodrich** (President), **Aviv Alter** (Vice President), **Joy Li** (Treasurer), and **Carmelo Cintron Vivas** (Secretary) met bi-weekly this semester and had two major talks by **Stephen Stich** (*"Experimental Philosophy: What it is and why it is important"*) and **Larry Temkin** (*"Rethinking the good: Moral ideals and the nature of practical reasoning"*). For more information on the Philosophy Club, visit <http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/undergraduate-program/philosophy-club>.

Mercedes also resuscitated the Philosophy Honors Society, Phi Sigma Tau, which is being led by **Abdul Abad** (president), **Jimmy Goodrich** (Vice President), **Aaron Kraut** (Secretary), and **Alexander Leone** (Treasurer). For more on Phi Sigma Tau, see <http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/undergraduate-program/phi-sigma-tau>

Grad students: publications and presentations

Here's a roundup of some of what our grad students have been up to.

Alex Anthony

"A *fun* ambiguity", New York Philosophy of Language Workshop

Timothy Campbell

"Infinite Utility and Cain's Paradox", Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress

"Metaphysics and What We Care About: A Comment on Professor Baker's Practical Realism", Passhe Iaprs Philosophy & Religious Studies Conference

Marilie Coetsee

"Political Liberalism and the Case of the Reciprocity Fundamentalism", Proceedings of Yale Rawls Fest

Michael Da Silva

"Trial Level References: In Defense of a New Presumption." *The University of Western Ontario Journal of Legal Studies* Vol. 2, Issue 2

"Quantifying Desert Prior to the Rightful Condition: Towards a Theoretical Understanding of the Provocation Defence." *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* Vol. 26, No. 1

Georgi Gardiner

"The Commutativity of Evidence: A Problem for Conciliatory Views of Peer Disagreement", Miami Graduate Epistemology Conference

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In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report the death of one of our 2012 graduates.

Emily F. Michell died tragically in a car accident on Friday, July 20th, 2012 just a few months after graduating from Rutgers. She was a bright presence in the philosophy program.

After learning of her untimely death, some of her philosophy teachers made the following comments about her:

"She was kind, inquisitive, and very smart."

"I remember vividly the care she would treat other student's questions and comments – it just showed such a level of generosity and maturity."

"She was one of the best students in the class, and the person I would turn to when nobody else wanted to speak up."

"In my interactions with her, both in class and through reading her papers, she seemed like an intent and serious student, and she did well in the course."

"I believe she did organizational work for one of our conferences. I remember her dealing with all the awkward conference participants with a smile, and going out of her way to make them feel welcome in NJ."

"Our community lost a very bright star with Emily."

Our hearts go out to her mother, her older sister Kathleen (Rutgers '10) and her twin sisters Lauren and Allison, who will be freshmen at Rutgers this Fall.

Grad students: publications and presentations, continued

Preston Greene

"When is a Belief True Because of Luck?"
Forthcoming in *The Philosophical Quarterly*
(and previously at the Rochester Graduate Epistemology Conference)

Stephanie Leary

"A Role for Reasons in Epistemology",
Edinburgh Graduate Epistemology
Conference

David Rose

"Knowledge Entails Dispositional Belief"
(with Jonathan Schaffer). Forthcoming in
Philosophical Studies (and previously at the
Buffalo Experimental Philosophy
Conference)

"Demoralizing Causation", Society for
Philosophy and Psychology

"Harm, Affect, and the Moral/Conventional
Distinction: Revisited" (with Sydney Levine),
Society for Philosophy and Psychology

Kurt Sylvan

"Truth Monism without Teleology",
forthcoming in *Thought*

"The Place of Reasons in Epistemology" (with
Ernie Sosa), forthcoming in *The Oxford
Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*

Jenn Wang

"Linguistic Counterpart Theory", CRNAP
Modality Conference

"From Combinatorialism to Primitivism",
forthcoming in *Australasian Journal of
Philosophy*

Phenomenal Zombies score goals, feel no pain

The **Phenomenal Zombies** took to the pitch once again, competing in the Rutgers Intramural Program's Coed-A Soccer League last fall. This year, the Zombies enjoyed the addition of three team members from Cognitive Psychology: **Sydney Levine**, **Daglar Tanrikulu**, and **Vicky Froyen**. Other new members included visiting philosophy student **Jonathan Parry** and first-year student **Marilie Coetsee**. Stalwarts **Marco Dees**, **Heather Demarest**, **Preston Greene**, **Erik Hoversten**, **Mary Salvaggio**, and **Nick Tourville** returned for another go around.

Playing their first season in the more competitive Division A, the Zombies ended the regular season with a respectable 2-2 record. The team was ousted in the first round of the playoffs.

Teamwork was once again the Zombies' focus. Everyone made important contributions at both defense and offense throughout the season. Notably, **Daglar** was asked to take some time at each position, and he admirably stood up to the task, with perhaps his most significant contribution being a clean sheet as goalkeeper in the regular season finale.

The leading scorers were **Preston** and **Erik**, with **Jonathan**, **Heather**, and **Vicky** also contributing goals. The goal of the season came in the last regular season game off of **Heather's** boot, beating the keeper up top with a blast from 18-yards out.

Rutgers philosophers have talent

This semester's **Talent Show** provided another exciting glimpse into the hidden talents of the grad students. It featured **Kelsey Laity-D'Agostino** reciting an original poem, *Inyo*. **Georgi Gardiner** showed off her remarkable *poi* (fire-twirling) skills. Visiting student **Patrick Epley** exhibited a talent we haven't seen at any previous talent shows - drinking fluid very quickly. **Marco Dees**, accompanied by **Simon Goldstein**, performed Gabriel Fauré's *Berceuse* for piano. **Simon** also performed a prelude and fugue for keyboard from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. **Kathryn Goldstein** performing an original arrangement of a song by The Zombies on the piano. **Heather Demarest** gave a thrilling recitation of the Banjo Paterson poem *The Man from Snowy River*. **Stephanie Leary** gave an unforgettable performance of her original song *Teenage Envy Tango*.



Philosophers survive super-storm Sandy

2012 will long be remembered as the year of Sandy, one of the largest and costliest tropical cyclones in the history of the Atlantic Coast. Sandy made landfall October 29th less than 100 miles from New Brunswick in southern New Jersey and caused widespread flooding and power outages in Middlesex County. Here's how a few of our grad students were affected:

Around 8PM that night, half the roof came off our apartment complex on Woodbridge Avenue. Everything seemed fine until then, but we were forced to leave. When we tried to see about the building the day after Sandy, we were told (misleadingly) that the building was "condemned" and we couldn't go in to get any of our stuff. Luckily, because the apartments in the building are rented by a large management company that has a strong interest in not giving breaks to customers, they repaired the roof quickly and we were able to return in a week. But in the meantime, we were basically homeless and couch-surfing. Since we lived on the first floor and the building is a three story building, none of our stuff was damaged. But people on the third floor got screwed. In the end, our rent did get prorated a tiny bit (by about 10%). But this was only after much complaining by all the tenants.

-Kurt Sylvan

The hurricane itself was undramatic. The house was quiet and didn't even creak. After the power went out, I watched all the local transformers blow out with flashes of green light, and then I went to sleep. When I went for a walk in the morning, it became more evident why the power went out. There were quite a few branches down, and just down the street a very large tree had fallen through the power lines onto the front porch of a house.

It took eleven days to get power back on, so I was among a few people still in the dark even after classes resumed. For the first few days, I sat in my house reading wrapped up in blankets with my feet on the lid of a pot of hot water to keep warm. I was chilly and bored, but mostly fine right after the hurricane when the weather was only cool. When it got down below freezing at night, I was much less happy, though luckily, there was power in the department by then. I didn't own a heavy blanket yet, so I slept in a lot of sweaters and under a few coats. I had gas for my stove and for the water heater: a little reprieve from the cold! In the mornings, I took a hot shower and made coffee as quickly as possible before driving to my office in the department, where there was heat and electricity. I only left just before I was ready to jump in bed again.

-Kelsey Laity-D'Agostino

We lost power for almost two weeks after Hurricane Sandy, but it was fine. We spent a lot of time at my office!

-Simon Goldstein

Giving what we can update

As many readers may know, **Giving what we can** is an organization founded by philosopher Toby Ord and dedicated to researching and encouraging effective charitable giving. Rutgers grad student and former GWWC research director **Nick Beckstead** sent us this update on the group's recent activities:

Since last year, GWWC has grown from 180 people taking the 10% giving pledge to 280 people, and the total amount pledged (based on self-reported estimates of future earnings of people who took the pledge) has grown from \$69 million to \$109 million. GWWC estimates that GWWC members and other GWWC supporters have so far donated \$2.7 million to GWWC's top recommended charities. There are now campus based GWWC groups at 10 universities around the world. GWWC had some major media attention in the last couple of months, including appearances on NPR's All Things Considered and the BBC. GWWC has also taken on full-time staff to support the expansion of its ideas around the world.

GWWC's top recommended charities are currently: the **Against Malaria Foundation**, the **Schistosomiasis Control Initiative**, and **Deworm the World**. GWWC is also accepting (tax-deductible) donations to promote giving more and giving more effectively. People interested in making a donation to support GWWC directly should contact Will Crouch at will.crouch@givingwhatwecan.org.

For much more information, please visit <http://www.givingwhatwecan.org/>.



A letter from the chair

Well, well, well. Another Fall term in the books and so time for Deep Thoughts from your chair. Let's begin with a shout out to our intrepid and talented incoming class: **David Black, Marilie Coetsee, Megan Feeney, Kelsey Laity-D'Agostino, Daniel Rubio, Peter van Elswyk.** Welcome to the best place to do philosophy on earth!

Super-storm Sandy came in with a boom, making landfall fewer than 100 miles from New Brunswick on October 29. Other than forcing some of our grad students who had no power at home to spend more time in their offices and flooding a few low lying offices, the effects on the department were minimal. This contrasted with the effects on lower Manhattan, which looked like the set of a post-apocalyptic movie starring displaced hipsters.

The long anticipated *new Rutgers Philosophy webpage* made its stunning debut this fall to critical acclaim. Dazzled critics thought it evoked the entire range of human emotions. Thanks to web masterminds **Holly Smith, Justin Sharber** and **Stacey Messing** for leading the way; and to **Lucy Jordan** for the homepage pic! Finally we have a website that (at least partially) reflects the awesomeness of Rutgers Philosophy.

The Climate Committee had a big Fall (no, I mean the season). First, they organized a *Being an Ally workshop* led by outside expert **Dr. Susan Marine**. Attendance was excellent and all those who came learned lots. Next, **Professors Chang, F. Egan, Smith** and **Schellenberg** organized an advice session for women going on the job market this year or soon. Finally, the department had its third annual women-in-philosophy dinner, which was attended by undergrads, grads and faculty. Clearly, the Climate Committee continues to help Rutgers Philosophy lead the way in addressing climate issues (though it did NOT help with super-storm Sandy!).

Liz Camp finally relieved us of our anxiety and accepted our job offer. We are all excited to have Liz around and explain metaphors to those of us who don't get them. Liz is obviously a fabulous addition to the department. Welcome Liz!

Finally, I should close by addressing the rumors that the Department will be moving, maybe even soon. Yeah, I really should address those rumors. No doubt those rumors really need addressing. I mean, why not address them? What would be the point of failing to address them? And again, there do seem to be reasons to address them. So yeah, I really should close by addressing those rumors. (Damn you akrasia!)

Stay classy Rutgers Philosophy.

-Jeff King

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philosophy.rutgers.edu/donate

Newsletter edited by Alex Anthony

Thanks to our contributors!

Nick Beckstead, Mercedes Diaz, Georgi Gardiner, Simon Goldstein, Michael Hicks, Erik Hoversten, Lucy Jordan, Jeff King, Kelsey Laity-D'Agostino, Stephanie Leary, Howard McGary, Lisa Miracchi, Justin Sharber, Boris Yakubchik, and Dean Zimmerman