

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY Newsletter Fall 2014



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Graduate Student
Women

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write Home!

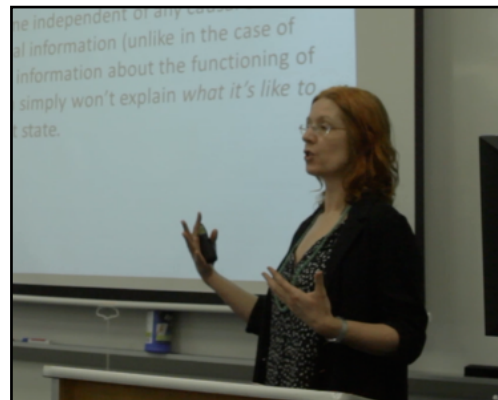
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first-years!

Rutgers University Honors Brian Loar

By Barry Loewer

On October 9, 2014 the Rutgers Department of Philosophy held a memorial conference in honor of colleague Brian Loar who passed away last year. Brian was a member of the department from 1994 until his retirement in 2009. He was a subtle and elegant philosophical thinker who influenced generations of students and colleagues and a great friend to many in the profession. He made major contributions to the philosophy of mind and metaphysics and is especially known for developing a novel account of phenomenal states and phenomenal concepts.

At the conference, talks related to Brian's work in philosophy of mind and language were given by Katalin Balog (Rutgers-Newark), Dave Chalmers (NYU) and Stephen Schiffer (NYU). Many of Brian's friends and former colleagues also spoke providing remembrances and stories about Brian. He is much missed.



The First Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy

In August of 2014, the first Mentoring and Networking Workshop for Graduate Student Women in Philosophy was held at Princeton University. The workshop was co-sponsored by Rutgers University and co-directed by our very own Liz Camp, who gives us the scoop on the event:

“Liz Harman, Jill North, and I (Liz Camp) put together this workshop as a small concrete way of addressing gender disparities in philosophy at what we think is a particularly crucial point in professional development. We recruited 10 mentors, from a range of areas in philosophy, to help us referee papers from applicants, participate in the workshop sessions, and provide advice on a range of profession-related topics.

“We were absolutely overwhelmed by the response before, during, and after the workshop. We received almost 10 times as many applications as we had spots; and we've had many comments since from mentors and participants using words like 'transformative' and 'empowering'. Several participants told us it was the first time they'd asked a question in a formal Q&A in 4 or 5 years of graduate school; others told us they'd gone home and submitted papers to conferences or journals for the first time, or started a working papers group for women in philosophy at their home institutions.

“This workshop was the first in a series of three, to be held every two years, funded by extremely generous support from Princeton, Cornell and Rutgers, as well as the Marc Sanders Foundation and an anonymous donor through the Rutgers Foundation. It's also already produced at least one spin-off: a



mentoring program for women on the job market, called MarketBoost.”
— Liz Camp

Ruth Chang, who participated as a faculty mentor, says, “It was amazing to see so many brilliant and enthusiastic young women philosophers in one (large) room. The atmosphere was exactly how the atmosphere of all philosophy events should be: friendly and constructive while searching and rigorous.”

For more information about future workshops, visit <http://networkingandmentoringworkshop.weebly.com/>.

Parfit Receives the Rolf Schock Prize

Every three years the Royal Swedish Academy of Science awards the Rolf Schock Prize in logic and philosophy. This year the prize was awarded to Derek Parfit “for his ground-breaking contributions concerning personal identity, regard for future generations and analysis of the structure of moral theories”(says the Rolf Schock Foundation). A

symposium was held in the building of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm on October 21st, and Parfit received the award at the House of Nobility on the following day. At the symposium, Parfit gave a talk titled “Can We Avoid the Repugnant Conclusion?” Ruth Chang and Larry Temkin also gave talks at the symposium. Larry Temkin says regarding the prize, “It is, and was, a BIG deal. The Prize is the closest we have in philosophy to a Nobel.”



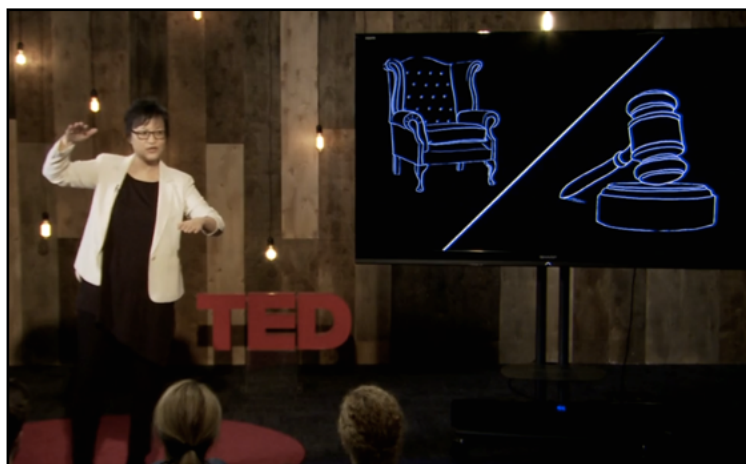
Princess Christina of Sweden awards Derek Parfit the Rolf Schock Prize

Faculty Highlights

By Larry Temkin

As usual, there have been a host of major honors, lectures, publications, and events associated with the Department and its faculty—far too many to list in detail here. But here are a few notable items:

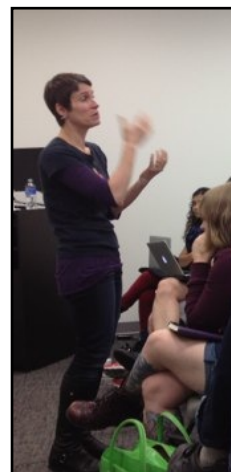
- Jonathan Schaffer, along with Jessica Wilson (of the University of Toronto), was awarded the 2014 Lebowitz Prize for Philosophical Achievement and Contribution for their symposium “Grounding in Metaphysics”. The prize is awarded by the Phi Beta Kappa Society, in conjunction with the American Philosophical Association, and their symposium was held at the 2014 Eastern APA.
- In December, there was an all-day Special Symposium on the Work of Doug Husak at Bar Ilan University, in Israel.
- Ruth Chang gave an inspiring Ted Talk, “How to Make Hard Choices”, which has had over 2.9 million viewers!



- Earlier this year Alvin Goldman served as the featured guest speaker on John Perry and Ken Talyor's weekly radio program Philosophy Talk.
- Larry Temkin's book *Inequality* influenced the World Health Organization's Global Burden of Disease Report in ways that impacted the Chinese Ministry of Health to make major systemic revisions of their healthcare system so that, indirectly, Temkin's work may have played a role in saving the lives of over a hundred million Chinese citizens over the past fifteen years. In response to this news, Temkin says, “I'm not sure if I fully believe such a claim, but it is a useful anecdote to bear in mind for those who question the real-world relevance, or “point,” of abstract, theoretical, analytic philosophy!”

Colloquia Line Up

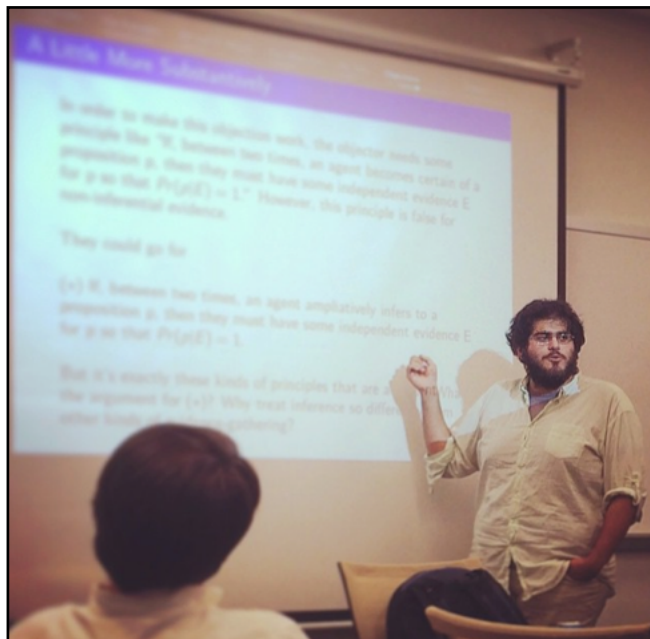
This Fall, the Department of Philosophy Colloquium Series hosted four talks. L.A. Paul (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) kicked off the series in September by discussing transformative experiences, and how such experiences make problems for traditional formal models of rational decision making. In October, Maria Lasonen-Aarnio (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) discussed a paradox that arises in cases of misleading evidence, given anti-akratic principles in epistemology. Then Gustave Arrhenius (University of Stockholm) visited in November to discuss whether taking values to be imprecisely comparable can help solve a classic problem in population ethics. Finally, Matthew Stewart gave a talk in November about the philosophy of the founding fathers.



Laurie Paul talks about transformative experiences



Branden Fitelson does a “Break it Down for Me” session on epistemic utility theory.



Grad Talks

This semester's graduate student talk series was kicked off by David Black, who gave a talk on inferential evidence and evidence infallibilism (picture above). Next, Marilie Coetsee argued in favor of an affective-phenomenal account of the representation of value (picture below-left). Then Will Fleisher gave a talk on metaphilosophy and disagreement, arguing that philosophers should be understood as merely accepting, rather than believing, their philosophical claims. Topping off the Bayesian portion of the series, Mary Salvaggio then discussed how forgetting creates problems for Bayesian epistemology, and Justin Sharber discussed two competing Bayesian accounts of the principle of simplicity (picture below-right). Janelle Derstine concluded the semester's talk series with a metaphysical twist, arguing that there are no ordinary objects. Thanks to Daniel Rubio and Chris Hauser for organizing!



Update from Heather Demarest & Zachary Miller:

Being an assistant professor is pretty awesome. Yes, it's more work, but it's fun (and the pay is so much better!) Teaching undergrads is pretty much the same as when we were grad students, but the seminars are different. At first it's really intimidating to teach a seminar to grad students (especially when some of them are on the market and older than you!) but, it's also really exciting and you learn a lot more than you do from teaching undergrad courses. It can be hard to find the time to research, especially with young kids, but somehow we have, and when things get accepted for publication, it's a really great feeling! The hardest thing is finding people to give you feedback. I miss my meetings with Barry! Going to conferences is a wonderful way to get feedback, but it's time-consuming. We really miss all of our friends from Rutgers, and while it's fun seeing each other at conferences, it's not the same as the weekly get-togethers. Our colleagues at Oklahoma are fantastic. They're all really interesting, happy, funny people and the department is exceptionally supportive. Also, there are a surprising number of ways to get extra funding for various projects (including childcare at conferences), and we've taken full advantage of those!

Update from Jennifer Wang & Tom Donaldson:

After leaving Rutgers, we spent a year living 886 miles apart as the crow flies: Jenn as an assistant professor at UGA in Athens, Georgia, Tom as a junior fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We got married in the summer of 2014: three of the bridesmaids and one of the groomsmen were onetime Rutgers Philosophy grad students! This year, we are reunited at Stanford University.

Jenn is continuing her work in modality, turning her attention to its interaction with fundamentality. She is also co-designing a 'Formal Methods in Philosophy' course for Stanford. Tom is finishing up his work on analyticity in mathematics, and is beginning to think about analyticity and mereology. He is also working on an absurdly long and pompous paper about what grounds facts about cardinal numbers.

Things we miss about Rutgers:

- The Dunkin Donuts in Highland Park (Tom)
- Rutgers grad talks (Jenn+Tom)
- Canoeing on the Raritan (Jenn+Tom)
- All the Rutgers grad students and faculty (Jenn+Tom)

Things that we do not miss about Rutgers:

- The weather in the summer (Tom)
- The weather in the winter (Jenn)

Good luck to all Rutgers grad students who are on the job market, or preparing for it!

Meet the



(drawing by Eli Shupe)

first-years!

Veronica Gomez

Veronica got her degree at the Universidad de los Andes in Columbia. Her research interests are in philosophy of mind, language, and metaphysics, and music is her main non-philosophical interest. If she were stranded on a desert island, she would like to have a copy of "Possible girls" by Neil Sinhababu helping her pass the time.

Austin Baker

Austin did her undergraduate MA at the University of Edinburgh. She's primarily interested in epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of cognitive science, but has subsidiary interests in meta-ethics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language. She says she is an amateur oil painter, devotes as much time as possible to traveling, and knows quite a bit about Scotch whisky, from living in Scotland. Her desert island pick would be *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace because (a) it would take ages to read and understand, (b) she could use the pages for kindling or shelter, and (c) then she could finally stop saying, "I am just about to read *Infinite Jest*."

Christopher Hauser

Chris received his B.A. in Philosophy and History from Dartmouth College. He's interested in metaphysics, ancient and medieval philosophy, ethics, and philosophy of religion. In his free time, he likes to do creative writing, go on day hikes, read epic fantasy, learn about theology and pre-modern history, and play strategy board and card games. If he were stranded on a desert island, he'd like to have Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* with him.

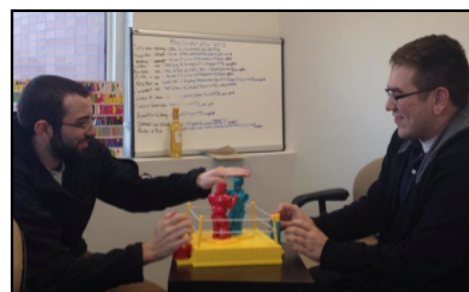
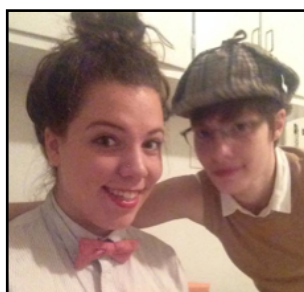
Eli Shupe

Eli received her B.A. at the University of Toronto, and her M.A. at Carleton University. She's interested in philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and epistemology. Her hobbies are reading poetry and fiction, looking at trains, and eating fancy cheeses. If she were stranded on a desert island, she would like to have Russell's *Principia Mathematica* with her, so that she could lash the volumes together into a crude raft and sail back to civilization on them.



Nate Flores

Nate received his B.A. from Harvard. He's especially interested in philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. When not doing philosophy, he plays speed chess online and listens to sad music. He's not sure what to take on a desert island, but he thinks it would be something existential to help him grapple with the reality of being stranded.



Congratulations to our graduate students who have presented or published papers this semester!

Ben Bronner

"Maps and absent symbols", forthcoming in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*

Bob Beddor

"Evidentialism, Circularity, and Grounding", forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*

"Justification, Permission, and Obligation", presented at the 4th Edinburgh Graduate Epistemology Conference
 "Noncognitivism and Epistemic Evaluations", presented at the 18th Oxford Graduate Philosophy Conference

Eddy Chen

"Summarizing the Quantum World: the Wave Function as a Humean Law", presented at Huazhong University of Science and Technology

Marilie Coetsee

"The Reasonability of Reasoning with the Unreasonable", presented at the Austin Graduate Ethics and Normativity Talks

"On the Affective-Phenomenal Representation of Value", presented at Ghent University's Analytic Existentialism Conference

Nico Kirk-Giannini

"Skeptical Theism and the Future", presented at the New Insights and Directions for Religious Epistemology Workshop on Formal Epistemology and Religious Epistemology at the University of Oxford

Will Fleisher

"Virtuous Distinctions", presented at the Oxford Graduate Philosophy Conference and the Northern Graduate Philosophy Conference.

Michael Townsend Hicks

"Derivative Properties in Fundamental Laws", forthcoming in the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*.

"Solving the Coordination Problem", presented at the University of Illinois, Wesleyan and the Philosophy of Science Association's biannual meeting

Daniel Rubio

"Conditional Excluded Middle Revisited", presented at the Meeting of the Central States Philosophical Association, Northwestern University

Peter van Elswyk

"Humean laws and circular explanation" (with Mike Hicks), forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*.

"Endophoric that", presented at the New York Philosophy of Language Workshop

"Beautiful for a lump of clay", presented at the Eastern APA

Tobias Wilsch

"The Nomological Account of Ground", presented at the 2014 Bellingham Summer Philosophy Conference



Fall 2014 Talent Show

Every semester, Simon and Kathryn Goldstein host a talent show, where Rutgers philosophy grads and their friends show off their non-academic talents. This semester's talent show was kicked off with the beautiful voice and guitar of Katherine Hauser, who performed "Brave" by Sarah Bareilles, followed by the always entertaining Kat van Elswyk reading poetry from Billy Collins.

Then post-doc Andrew Moon played a lovely Christmas carol mash-up on guitar, and Pamela Robinson and Stephanie Leary sang "Hide and Seek" by Imogen Heap. From the Rutgers English department, Erin Kelley recited the Canterbury Tales in a Minnesotan accent and Kathryn Goldstein played her own arrangement of "Green Arrow" by Yo La Tengo on piano, accompanied by Andrew Moon on the shaker.



The talent show concluded with the impressive piano stylings of Simon Goldstein, playing Bach's "Prelude and fugue in C Major" and Stephanie Leary singing

"Your Congratulations" by Alanis Morissette. As an impromptu encore, Andrew Moon then led the group in a sing-along of "Do you want to build a snowman?" from the movie *Frozen*.



A Letter From the Chair



Dear All,

There is a small chance that I would have taken this, my very first “Letter from the Chair” for a Department Newsletter, seriously, if only someone hadn’t come up with the accompanying photograph to go with it! My first thought, of course, was that I looked like Rio de Janeiro’s famous “Christ the Redeemer.” But the angle of the arms isn’t right. Notre Dame’s “Touchdown Jesus” is more like it! So, in the “one picture is worth a thousand words category”, there now seems to be virtually indisputable proof that I do, indeed, think I’m God. Or at least I act like it! Just what I need....

Ok. So I really do want to be more serious. Many people contributed to the production of this newsletter, each of whom deserves thanks. However, a *special* thanks is owed to its editor, Stephanie Leary, who put an enormous amount of work into producing this wonderful newsletter.

As the newsletter makes plain, it has been another exciting semester for the Philosophy Department. In addition to all the many honors, publications, major lectures, and accomplishments racked up by our world-class faculty and graduate students, we have an incredibly active Undergraduate Philosophy Club, and our majors produce one of the world’s best undergraduate philosophy journals, *Arête*. This is a golden-age for Philosophy at Rutgers, and I am so proud to be a part of it.

I do have some sad news to report. Jerry Fodor is now officially retired, and he will be joined in retirement by Peter Kivy after this semester. The importance of the contributions of these two long-time colleagues and friends to the Department and Philosophy cannot be overstated, and they will be sorely missed. We will also miss Jeff McMahan, who, despite his deep love for Rutgers, left for Oxford when, in the best of New Jersey traditions, they made him an offer he couldn’t refuse: the world’s oldest and most respected Chair in Moral Philosophy, The White’s Chair. On an even sadder note, I note the passing of our retired colleagues Brian Loar and Bruce Wilshire, and the sudden and tragic passing of Mark Colby. All three were fixtures in our Department for many years, and each, in his own way, left an indelible mark on countless students that he inspired over the years.

Turning to brighter news, Rutgers will soon be launching a major new lecture series in Philosophy, whose lectures will subsequently be published by Oxford University Press. And I am absolutely *thrilled* to report that Jill North (Rutgers PhD, philosophy of physics) and Ted Sider (former Rutgers professor, metaphysics), will be returning to Rutgers after a number of years wandering in the philosophical desert (Yale and Cornell for Jill, and NYU and Cornell for Ted)! Ted will be assuming Rutgers’s first Mellon Chair in Philosophy. Additionally, we hope soon to be filling another new Chair in Philosophy of Religion, the Alston Chair, and, with luck, we also hope to make a number of other distinguished hires in the not too distant future. So the future for Rutgers Philosophy, like the present, looks very bright indeed.

Let me conclude by observing that it is my great fortune, and honor, to be Chair of the *world’s greatest Philosophy Department*. I am aware, of course, that there are a few other Chairs who no doubt feel as I do. But this is one of those cases where I have no worries about the problem of epistemic peers. The difference between me and them in this matter is really very simple. I am right! And they are wrong! My sincere thanks to *everyone* who helps to make the Rutgers Philosophy Department the truly special place that it is: faculty, staff, graduate students, undergraduates, alumni, and friends.

Warmly yours,
Larry S. Temkin

Would you like to donate to Rutgers Philosophy?

<http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/donate>

Newsletter Credits

Photos: Austin Baker, Rodrigo Borges, Will Fleisher, Stephanie Leary, Eli Shupe, and Peter Van Elswyk

Editor: Stephanie Leary

Many thanks to all contributing writers!