

Rutgers Philosophy Newsletter

Spring 2010



Ernie Sosa wins inaugural Rescher Prize for systematic philosophy.

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International Affairs- Rutgers philosophers lead programs around the nation and world.

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Sports- Erik Hoversten reports on our department's IM teams.

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A peek inside the student-led undergraduate journal, *Arete*.

Distinguished Rutgers epistemologist Ernest Sosa has been named the first recipient of the Rescher Prize for Contributions to Systematic Philosophy. The award is named after Nicholas Rescher, a prolific Pittsburgh philosopher. The University of Pittsburgh will give the award every two years to "an individual who has made substantial contributions to philosophy". It carries a \$25,000 prize. Sosa will receive the prize at a ceremony in Pittsburgh on November 12th.

Sosa is currently the Board of Regents Professor of Philosophy at Rutgers. He has long been a leading figure in epistemology and metaphysics. In 2005 Sosa gave the Locke Lectures at Oxford, and his recent work has focused on developing virtue epistemology (among many other topics). Reacting to the Rescher prize announcement, Sosa reports: "The news that I'd be awarded this prize came as quite a surprise. I can only hope to be worthy of it some day."

Necessary Existence and Inconvenient Truths... Philosophers tackle issues ranging from modal metaphysics to environmental policy.



**Above: Peter Klein and Jerry Fodor lead a lunch discussion with undergraduates. (See p.6)
Below: Barry Loewer chats with Quayshawn Spencer after a talk on philosophy of biology.**



ZIMMERMAN ORGANIZES MAJOR WORKSHOP IN PHIL. RELIGION:

Dean Zimmerman and Michael Rota (from the University of St. Thomas) have received a major grant from the Templeton Foundation to start the St. Thomas Summer Seminar in Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology. The Seminar takes place over three weeks in Minnesota. Zimmerman hopes the program will fill a needed role in training philosophers of religion: "Only a few graduate programs include faculty with enough expertise in philosophy of religion to offer much by way of coursework; but many current graduate students and recent Ph.D.s have a great deal of interest in the subject. So we're trying to bring the best faculty who work in the area into contact with the best younger scholars. (We had 181 applications for the summer seminar this year, which suggests that there's a lot of younger people out there who want to do philosophy of religion.)" Speakers include Peter van Inwagen, Alvin Plantinga, Roger White, and Tom Kelly. Participants receive stipends along with housing

and food for the duration of the research seminar. Two Rutgers graduate students—Blake Roeber and Meghan Sullivan—have been selected as participants this June.

A BUSY SPRING OF COLLOQUIA:

There is never a shortage of talks or conferences around the department, and this spring has been no exception. The colloquium schedule has been especially busy, including two named lectures. Rutgers alum Jacob Ross (USC) began the semester with a talk on normativity and commitment. Tim Williamson (Oxford) delivered the annual Mesthene lecture on February 18th, arguing for necessitism—the doctrine that everything necessarily exists. Quayshawn Spencer (MIT) brought the department up-to-speed on recent developments in race theory. Glenn Shafer (Rutgers Business) shared recent work on game theoretic probability. Jesse Prinz (CUNY) argued for the AIR theory of consciousness. David Albert (Columbia) delivered the Class of 1970 lecture on quantum mechanics and philosophy. Christian List (LSE) will round out the semester.

RUTGERS AROUND THE WORLD:

Faculty and graduate students are venturing far and wide over the summer and coming school year. We continue to exchange scholars with the Arche Institute at the University of St. Andrews. In July, Jason Stanley is co-organizing another CEU Summer School in Budapest—this year focusing on meaning, context, and intention. He'll be joined by Ernie Lepore, one of many distinguished speakers on the program. In August, Ernie Sosa (our distinguished Rescher Prize winner!) will lead the Fifth Cologne Summer School in Philosophy in Cologne, Germany. Finally, Bob Matthews and Frankie Egan are among four Americans invited to the Hebrew University's Institute for Advanced Study in coming Spring 2011 to join a working group on computation and cognitive neuroscience.

NEW FACULTY JOIN THE DEPARTMENT:

The Rutgers Philosophy family is expanding next year. Branden Fitelson (formerly of Berkeley) will move into 1 and 3 Seminary this fall. Branden works in formal epistemology and philosophy of science. From the other side of the globe—Jonathan Schaffer and Susanna Schellenberg (formerly of ANU) will join the department in the Spring. In the hiring coup of the decade, Rutgers gets *three* Schaffer/Schellenbergs for the price of two—Jonathan and Susanna just had their first child, Ezra. Congratulations guys! Additionally, Alec Walen (formerly of Maryland) will take up a part-time appointment here and at the law school in Camden. Alec works in ethics and philosophy of law; you may remember him from the Fall colloquium series.

BUNZL TAKES ON THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH:

For the last three years, Martin Bunzl has been directing the Rutgers Initiative on Climate and Social Policy (www.csp.rutgers.edu), which he founded. Here he reflects on some of the challenges and opportunities for a philosopher wading into the arena of climate change debates:

"Working on climate change has been a shock for me, if only because I suddenly have to traffic in facts!... The issue offers a textbook instance of the problem of choice under both uncertainty and ignorance. We don't know the probability of worst-case climate scenarios or their cost. Much of the discussion of climate change policy assumes, erroneously I think, that we can proceed using an expected utility analysis either ignoring worst case scenarios or by extending a calculus based on less extreme outcomes for which we can assign both costs and probabilities."

The CSP promotes philosophically informed research on these issues. In line with this project, Bunzl is at work on a book of philosophical reflections on climate change policy.

DE SE AND DONUTS- THE FACULTY/GRAD RESEARCH FRIDAYS PROGRAM KICKS OFF:

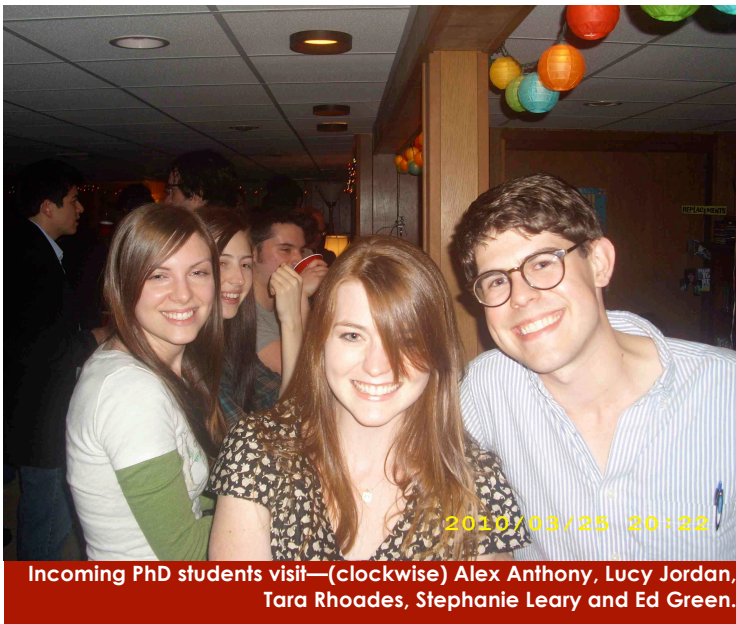
In addition to the usual busy colloquia and graduate talk program, this Spring the department has begun to offer Friday Faculty-Graduate research talks. Once a month a different faculty member gives a presentation to the graduate community on a current research project. The talks are designed to give participants a broad sense of projects going on in the



Above: Andy Egan inaugurates Friday Grad-Prof research talks with "Three Grades of Self Involvement." Below: Jason Stanley admires the official motto of office 215A



department. The department provides donuts and drinks. In March, Andy Egan was chosen as the first speaker, and he delivered a lecture on different approaches to *de se* content. A lively discussion followed that continued at Charlie Brown's pub long after the talk. In April, Frankie Egan (no relation) followed up by leading a presentation on computational theories of mental representation. Egan argued against essentialist theories of mental content and sketched a model where pragmatic considerations influence the assignment of representations. Once again, debate continued long after at Charlie Brown's. Is a theme developing?



Inner Lives and Inner Tubes... Catching Up with the Grad Program

PROSPECTIVE PHD STUDENTS VISIT THE DEPARTMENT:

March 24-26th, twelve prospective Philosophy PhD students visited Rutgers to meet members of the department and experience the intellectual life around 1 and 3 Seminary Place. Visitors came from a wide-range of undergraduate universities with interests ranging from metaethics to philosophy of physics to philosophy of law. Jason Stanley organized admissions for the department this year. Some admitted students were unable to come, but for those who made the trip, it was a fun and philosophically-packed week. Highlights include a talk on resemblance theories of pictorial semantics by Gabe Greenberg, a dinner in the Soviet Non-Conformist wing of the Zimmerli Art Museum, and a blowout final party at Dean Zimmerman's house.

Seven students accepted offers to join the 2010 Philosophy PhD cohort: Alex Anthony (from Wesleyan), Edwin Green (from Rutgers), Lucy Jordan (from University of Southern California), Stephanie Leary (from University of Washington, Seattle), Tara Rhoades (from University of Delaware), Una Stojnic (from University of Belgrade) and Christopher Weaver (from Northern Illinois). Welcome to the department—we hope at least one of you is also a good goalie!

THINK OR SWIM! THE DEPARTMENT ADDS TO ITS INTRAMURAL SPORTS SEASONS:

Erik Hoversten has been organizing the department's active intramural sports teams. We caught up with Erik for his take on the seasons so far:

"The Phenomenal Zombies ended their 2009 campaign with a 3rd place finish in the Intramural Soccer Coed-B division. They took a

(Continued)

Seven philosophers from around the U.S. and world will join the department as Ph.D. Students in 2010, after a very competitive admissions season.

5-2 record into tournament play, and ousted EJB in a spectacular 3-2 game before falling to the Marshmallow Puffs in the semifinals 6-3.

Although two thirds of their scoring output came from the foot of player/coach Preston Greene (24 goals), this years' Zombies were far from a one man team. Preston's magic was complemented by goal scoring from Erik (8), Marco (2), Heather (1), and undergraduate Austin Hennelly (1). Jenn, Karen, and Mary anchored an ironclad defense, and Angela, Meghan, and Mike ably controlled the midfield. Perhaps the best show was put on by former philosophy undergrad Tim Hwang at goalkeeper, whose reflexes put the nimblest felines to shame.

While the Zombies have traditionally relied on Preston's speed and dribbling skills, as the season progressed, they were able to incorporate much more team-oriented ball control. On a number of occasions, scoring plays were sparked by intricate passing in the midfield. The adaptability of the Zombies is reminiscent of the "total football" mentality of the great Dutch teams; this was perhaps most evident in the voracious play of first year graduate student and native Dutchman Marco Dees.

The Zombies can certainly look on their 2009 season as a success, but just as certainly, they have their eye on the 2010 season, which promises to bring even more thrills. What do we want? Brains! When do we want them? Brains!

The spring semester of 2010 saw the introduction of a new sport to the philosophy grad student repertory – inner tube water polo. The Cogito Ergo Swim hit

some rough waters early on, but finished the season with even wins and losses. To a person they have found the new experience to be a splendid romp in the pool.

Now as we finish the spring semester, we start our second year of intramural softball with the Home Platos. This year we have a faculty ringer—Doug Husak has joined the team on first base. We hope for a winning season and many trips to On the Border."

JOB MARKET CORNER:

Spring 2010 was one of the smaller years for Rutgers grads going on the job market; nevertheless, four secured tenure-track appointments. Will Starr received four job offers, and he will start as an assistant professor at Cornell in 2011, after taking a year as a Bersoff Post-Doc at NYU. Maya Eddon (previously a post-doc at UMass Amherst) will start as an assistant professor at UMass in the Fall. She received three tenure track job offers. Alex Jackson will start as an assistant professor at Boise State University. And Troy Cross (previously at Yale) will move to a tenure-track position at Reed College. Finally, Jeff Glick has accepted a visiting assistant professorship at the University of Rochester.

DUB SWEEPS CROSSWORD CHALLENGE:

When not plumbing the depths of philosophy of psychology, Richard Dub enjoys doing crosswords. This avocation earned him an iPad at the recent Rutgers Crossword Challenge, where he took first prize for solving a giant puzzle in twenty-seven minutes in front of a live audience.



Above: Zombie leaders Erik Hoversten and Preston Greene warm up before the soccer playoffs. Below: Richard Dub wins the 2010 Rutgers Crossword Challenge.





Max Mintz leads a discussion on the layout of the newest edition of the undergraduate philosophy journal.

ARETE HELPS STUDENTS DEVELOP AS PHILOSOPHERS, WRITERS AND EDITORS:

On a given Thursday afternoon, wandering through Bishop House, you are likely to stumble on an intense discussion of personal identity or aesthetic value. More often than not, this will be accompanied by a close critique of a student's writing. And more surprising, you won't find any faculty member leading the discussion. This course is run entirely by Philosophy undergraduates. Lead by Max Mintz, the *Arete* is Rutgers' entirely student-run philosophical journal. This semester, fourteen students and one graduate advisor (Michael Johnson) meet weekly to plan every production aspect of the journal. They receive 1.5 credits for their work, but more importantly, participants gain invaluable experience organizing, writing and editing philosophical research. Michael Licciardi and Nadia Saleh prize the class for the practice they get in writing and editing. Saleh shares, "I've had some editing experience and this is by far better—more

collaborative and intimate, and much more effective." The students in the journal read through submissions from all over the country and make hard decisions about which arguments merit publication. Editors fight passionately for papers they believe in; as Jessie Koza puts it, "we fight to the death!" Heather Katzoff enjoys her work on the journal because of the broad sample of philosophy it offers: "There are so many different areas of philosophy you won't get a chance to study as an undergraduate—for example, aesthetics—but you get to see little pieces of many topics in the journal." The most recent edition of *Arete* debuts on May 3rd with an interdisciplinary panel discussion featuring Dean Zimmerman, Mark Baker (from Rutgers Linguistics) and Dan Ogilvie (from Rutgers Psychology).

SWANSON WINS UNDERGRAD TEACHING GRANT:

Carrie Swanson has won a Dissertation Teaching award for 2010-2011. She will spend the summer designing an

Undergrads Create Philosophy Journal Course

advanced undergraduate seminar on aspects of ancient philosophy relevant to her dissertation: "The Resolution of Fallacy in Plato's *Euthydemus*."

PIZZA WITH PHILOSOPHERS PROGRAM KICKS OFF:

Jerry Fodor and Peter Klein kicked off a new monthly program for undergraduate philosophers on Feb 5th—the pizza with professors series. One or two faculty members have lunch with undergraduate majors and lead an open-ended discussion on research questions they find intriguing and how they found themselves in academic careers. The lunch series provides an informal venue for students to meet prominent faculty members and learn about careers in Philosophy. Larry Temkin followed it up with a second session, sharing insights from his career in ethics. The department hopes to make these lunches an ongoing tradition.

A Letter from the Chair:

Our first year in Philosophy's new home in Seminary 1 and 3 is drawing to a close. We have settled in pretty well. There are pictures on the walls, the espresso machines are operating full time, and the library is taking shape. Next year (funding willing) we will fix up the seminar room and the student lounge. We are aiming to turn the seminar into a "smart class room" and we will put a large screen TV in the grad lounge (not for the World Cup) so that we can show videos of philosophy events and also broadcast colloquia and seminars into the room.

We had some great events this year. In the last few months there was the showing of a film on Heidegger (who says we are just an "analytic department") and a conference on Philosophy of Cosmology and Quantum mechanics where we discussed outré matters involving Boltzmann brains, dark matter, and wave function ontology. The recruitment dinner and party at Dean's house was a blast.

We made some stunning appointments this year. Branden Fitelson (philosophy of science and formal epistemology) will be joining us next fall and Susanna Schellenberg (philosophy of mind) and Jonathan Schaffer (metaphysics and epistemology) will join us in January. Alec Walen (ethics and Philosophy of law) will be joining the law school in Camden and part time with us. We will also welcome Matt Walker from Yale who was the only philosopher to receive an ACLS New Faculty Fellows post doc. Matt works on Greek ethics.

The incoming class of graduate students is terrific. Our new students come from around the globe (Belgrade, Canberra, and even New Brunswick). Thanks to our graduate students who hosted them and to Jason who as admissions director worked astonishingly hard to recruit them. Our graduating students did well on the market. Will Starr will be starting a tt position at Cornell, Alex Jackson tt at Boise State, and Maya Eddon tt at University of Massachusetts, for just a sample. Thanks to Jeff McMahan who took time off from his Guggenheim project to guide our students through the job search as placement director.

Our undergraduate program has also been flourishing. We started "Meet the Faculty Fridays" with pizza and philosophy. And the undergraduate journal has been humming along. It is very impressive.

Our graduate students have enormous initiative, from leading reading groups to even starting a blog: "Discovering Truths and Announcing Them." A list of the truths they have discovered will be in the next newsletter.

That our new home looks so good and our programs run so well is mostly due to the hard work of our staff; Pauline, Mercedes, Ann, and Stacey. They are really the backbones of our department.

When I took over as chair I had a number of aims. One was to move us to College Ave, another was to replace some faculty losses by appointing terrific middle career philosophers, and a third was to raise funds for departmental

The "Delta" and "Omega" houses, as seen from Seminary Place.



activities and for a departmental fellowship and scholarship. So far the first two aims have been met. During the next year we will be raising money to endow a departmental graduate fellowship. This is especially important in these difficult times for state financing. Look for an announcement of this initiative on our web page. If you can help us out get in touch with me at loewer@rci.rutgers.edu or 7329321321.

Have a great summer,

Barry

Newsletter Credits, Etc.

Photos: All photos by Meghan Sullivan, except (p.1, 5 (bottom)- Angela Harper).

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