

Rutgers Philosophy Newsletter

Spring 2009



Rutgers is once again ranked 2nd overall Philosophy Department in the US...

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The doctoral program continues to attract top graduate students. Meet the current group and learn what recent PhDs have done.

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A Letter from the Chair

Every two years, Blackwell Publishers releases its *Philosophical Gourmet Report*—a ranking of the fifty best Philosophy departments in the English-speaking world, based on the reputation and accomplishments of their faculty members. In the February 2009 edition, Rutgers was once again ranked 2nd overall in the United States (after NYU) and 3rd overall in the world (after NYU and Oxford). In the specialty rankings, Rutgers was voted the top department internationally for Philosophy of Language and Cognitive Science, and tied for #1 in Epistemology and Mind. Rutgers was among the top four departments for Metaphysics. And Rutgers was within the top ten for Philosophy of Science, Applied Ethics, Decision Theory and Early Modern Philosophy. The surveys reflect the outstanding strength our department has in core areas. See more of the rankings at www.philosophicalgourmet.com.

Catching up with the Faculty:

New Research by Rutgers Professors; Conferences, Talks and Upcoming Projects



2008-2009 has been a busy year of conferences and workshops for the department.

(Above: Jeff King, Below: Ernie Sosa with Nick Wolterstorff at the Knowledge, Faith and Disagreement conference)



This past year has brought some changes to the Rutgers faculty. While Barry Loewer continued as Chair, Jeff King took over as Graduate Vice-Chair and Martin Lin as Undergraduate Vice-Chair. Andy Egan and Thony Gillies (both formerly of Michigan) were hired and will join the Rutgers ranks this coming fall.

A Packed Calendar of Workshops and Conferences

2008-2009 has also been a busy year of conferences and workshops for the department. In April, Rutgers faculty joined forces with Princeton to host a conference on disagreement and religious epistemology. In July, metaphysicians from around the US and UK gathered for Dean Zimmerman's bi-annual Metaphysical Mayhem conference on metaontology. In September, a similarly broad audience came to New Brunswick for the Aristotle on Predication conference, hosted by Alan Code. In January, the Center for Philosophy and the Sciences hosted a packed-auditorium for a debate between Jerry Fodor and Phillip Kitcher on Darwinian natural

selection. In April, Larry Temkin hosted a two-day conference on human rights in honor of James Griffin. On May 13th-14th Rutgers will be hosting its first Foundations of Statistical Mechanics Workshop. And this coming summer, Rutgers is headed abroad. Jason Stanley and Barry Loewer are hosting a workshop at the Central European University in Hungary. Scholars and graduate students from Europe and the United States will spend two weeks in Budapest studying linguistic and metaphysical issues in conditionals. Finally, this coming summer will also feature the bi-annual Rutgers Epistemology Conference, hosted by Peter Klein. While there, Rutgers alum Jonathan Weisberg will receive the 2009 Young Epistemologist Prize for his "Bootstrapping in General."

Maudlin and McMahan Win Guggenheim Fellowships

In 2008, the Guggenheim foundation awarded one of its prestigious fellowships to Tim Maudlin for his project "New Foundations for Physical Geometry." Jeff McMahan

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followed up this year and was selected for a Guggenheim for his new book project, *The Ethics of Killing: Self Defense, War, and Punishment*. Only 2-3 philosophers win this award each year.

Temkin Lights Up the Australian Airwaves

While visiting at the Australian National University last spring, Larry Temkin gave two national radio interviews: one on "Extending Human Lifespans" and the other on "Egalitarianism and Fairness". You can listen in at www.publicethicsradio.com for the former and the Philosopher's Zone for the latter.

Rutgers Partners with Notre Dame in Philosophical Theology

This May, seven Rutgers graduate students will accompany Dean Zimmerman to a three-day conference at Notre Dame University inaugurating Logos: An Interdisciplinary Workshop in Philosophical Theology. Theologians and philosophers from around the world will gather to discuss the doctrine of the Trinity. Zimmerman is partnering Notre Dame's Michael Rea to hold annual workshops, alternating years between New Brunswick and South Bend.

Philosophy Plans Events for First Annual Rutgers Day

On April 25th, the department will participate in the first ever Rutgers Day celebration on the College Avenue campus. The Philosophy Café will be open for coffee and conversation. Undergraduate majors have built a brain-in-a-vat for visitors to explore. And Minerva the owl will be on hand to dispense

Service to Rutgers, New Jersey and the APA

Outside of their publishing and teaching, many faculty members also serve in various service roles at the university. Here is a rundown of recent activities:

Ernie Lepore- State of NJ Board of Education.

Ernie Sosa- President, VP, and Past-President of the Eastern APA (2003-2006), Chairman of the Board of the American Philosophical Association (2005-2008), Chair of Committee to Elect New Members of American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Philosophy and Religious Studies).

Peter Klein- Executive Vice Dean.

Howard McGary- SAS Dean Search Committee.

Frances Egan- SAS Curriculum Committee.

Barry Loewer- University-wide Promotion Review Committee.

Brian Weatherson- Humanities A&P Committee.

Larry Temkin- Committee on Academic Planning and Review, Graduation Marshal Committee.

Doug Husak- SAS Promotion Review Committee, Co-director of the Law and Philosophy Institute (Camden).

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Tackling Major Debates
(Above: Larry Temkin visited ANU in the spring 2008. Below: Jerry Fodor discusses natural selection with Phillip Kitcher at a Center for Philosophy of Science event)





Preston Greene explains Newcomb's puzzle at a graduate retreat.

Training New Philosophers:

What are the graduate students working on?

In the fall of 2008, eight new PhD students joined the forty-six upper-level graduate students in the department. Graduate students in the department now represent five continents. The PhD students in our department have diverse interests and work on topics ranging from the structure of time, to the best interpretation of quantum mechanics, to strategies for coping with moral uncertainty, to the meaning of pronouns. Seminars are supplemented with less formal reading groups for students working on moral philosophy, religion & metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of language. A large number of students also participate in the Cognitive Science Certificate program, working closely with RuCCs. This year, seven graduate students were awarded Mellon summer funding for their research. Here are just a few PhD projects in the works:

The Science Behind the Unconscious Mind...

Karen Shanton is studying the philosophical implications of empirical findings about the cognitive unconscious. Recent work in psychology and neuroscience suggests that the unconscious mind is (1) more complex than we tend to think and (2) often in conflict with the conscious mind. Shanton is identifying the implications of this work for a range of traditional philosophical issues, from consciousness to personal identity to rationality.

Matt Benton Investigates How We Speak and Reason About the Future...

Some prominent epistemologists have recently argued that the primary norm governing assertion is tightly connected to knowledge: roughly, one properly asserts that *p* only if one knows that *p*. The arguments for this view are fairly compelling, but the norm doesn't seem right for future-tensed utterances: we (properly) make future-tensed assertions all the time, but

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There are fifty-four graduate students at present, representing five continents and working on a wide range of dissertation projects.

intuitively, we typically don't know such future-directed propositions. Matt Benton's dissertation aims to explain why we fail to know much about the future, to discern what alternative norm(s) might plausibly govern future-tensed assertion, and to hypothesize why the knowledge-norm and the future-directed norm have hitherto been conflated.

Will Starr On Truth Conditions

According to truth-conditional semantics, knowing the meaning of a sentence amounts to knowing the conditions under which that sentence is true. Despite its successes, this proposal faces some challenges. For example, it does not naturally extend to non-declaratives and recent work has challenged the truth-conditionality of conditionals, performatives, epistemic modals and anaphoric texts. Will develops precise models for some of these phenomena which extend the empirical coverage of existing approaches. These models are shown to embody a certain generalization of truth-conditional meaning. Will's project situates this notion of meaning within a broader picture of representation and action that builds on work done in linguistics, the philosophy of mind, AI and social sciences.

Recent PhD Alums

We also caught up with recent alumni of the PhD program to see where their research has lead them. Jonathan Schaffer (1999) reports: "I'm now a professor at the Australian National University in beautiful Canberra, and dabble in many areas but especially in metaphysics and epistemology. At the moment I'm writing a paper on ontological

dependence, thinking about the status of indices in semantics, and planning to return to the mall to conduct more surveys about the role of contrasts in knowledge." (Jonathan neglects to mention that in 2008 he won the APA Best Article Prize for "Knowing the Answer.")

Jill North (2005) spent two years at NYU as a Bersoff Fellow after finishing at Rutgers and is now an assistant professor at Yale. She writes, "I have recently been thinking about 'structure' in physics; things like: What do we mean by the structure (spacetime or other structure) of a given physical theory? What does a theory's mathematical structure tell us about the nature of the world?" Jill's paper "The Structure of Physics: A Case Study" is forthcoming in the *Journal of Philosophy*, and a related paper, "The Structure of Mechanics" is under submission.

Angel Pinillos (2006) is now an assistant professor at Arizona State University. He reports that when he is "not busy getting sun burnt" he is working on three projects in philosophy of mind and language. First he's extending his dissertation on coreference. Second, he's completing a paper on how semantic relativism and time dilation. And finally, he's conducting some experimental philosophy. "I recently directed a large-scale experimental philosophy project (1000+ subjects) where we try to elicit philosophical intuitions in subjects under conditions where they are temporarily disposed to reflect harder about cases. We got some interesting results. Subjects in those conditions were less likely to exhibit the famous Knobe Effect. In one condition, the effect was completely gone!"



The grad student motto is "Argue Hard. Play Hard." (Above: The Phenomenal Zombies- Our departmental soccer team. Below: Matt Benton makes a point to Louise Antony.)



Job Market Corner

Every year Rutgers graduate students brave the highly competitive market for Philosophy jobs. So far in 2009, seven students have secured posts. Saba Bazargan is one of them. He's headed to UCSD as an assistant professor next year. Saba reports on his experience: "At the APA, I felt weird wearing the 'Rutgers University' nametag. I felt like I was showing off. But it was pointed out to me that it is unlikely that I will ever have the opportunity to be part of a better philosophy department -- so I should avail myself of the current opportunity to live it up. So I indulged, which is to say, I wore the nametag. And I still have it -- who knows, maybe one day I'll come across some exclusive nightclub that has a philosopher as a bouncer."

Designing Courses for the 21st Century: The Undergraduate Program Brings Philosophical Rigor to Pressing Questions

The past year brought growth for undergraduate philosophers at Rutgers. New courses are being planned, to meet the rising number of majors. The Philosophy Club continues to serve as a forum for new ideas. And several majors have now gone on to top Leiter-ranked PhD programs.

The New York Times Highlights Rutgers' Undergraduate Philosophy Program

In April 2008, the *New York Times* Education Section ran a cover story on the undergraduate program. Reporter Winnie Hu interviewed several students about their experience in the program. On the topics in her Philosophy courses, Christine Bullman (now a senior) shared, "All of these things make the world a smaller place and force us to look beyond the bubble we grew up in."

Designing Courses for 21st Century Challenges

With Christine's experience in mind, Rutgers faculty are working to develop even more courses which bring philosophical methods to bear on contemporary issues. Here's a brief peek at two undergraduate courses in the works...

Human Diversity (Stephen Stich)

This course will introduce students to the empirical and philosophical problems posed by human diversity. First,

students will study the extraordinary range of behaviors, beliefs, preferences and norms that exist in different cultures. Next, the course will delve into theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon. Are human differences innate? Can they be explained by evolutionary psychology? Are our differences social constructions? Borrowing concepts from biology, philosophy and psychology, students will assess and criticize these theories. Finally the course will consider the normative dimension of human diversity. How should we react to diverse cultures, beliefs, or practices? How might different reactions be appropriate for different forms of diversity?

Eating Right: The Ethics of Food Choices and Food Policy (Andy Egan)

Our choices about what to eat are, more or less universally, expressive of some sort of value. Some are expressive of our aesthetic values: of our judgments about which foods are or are not tasty, appealing, delicious, revolting, etc. Some are expressive of our moral values: of our judgments about

which foods we are permitted, obligated, or forbidden to eat. Some are expressive of cultural or religious values: of our judgments about which foods are culturally or religiously permitted or forbidden, high- or low-status, the sorts of things that we eat or the sorts of things that they eat, etc. And all of these issues tie to perennial questions in moral philosophy: Which entities are deserving moral consideration? What sorts of harms are permissible to cause, to which sorts of entities, and for what sorts of reasons? What sorts of moral obligations, if any, do we have toward non-human animals? What are the environmental and social consequences of various sorts of eating habits? To what extent does the presence of those sorts of consequences generate moral obligations to adopt (or to abandon) the relevant eating habits? What's the moral (and policy) significance of the cultural importance of particular culinary traditions, and the importance of cultural group membership to individual well-being? Students will see what guidance philosophy can provide in answering these pressing questions.

"Rutgers... is one of a number of universities where the number of philosophy majors is ballooning."
—NY Times (April 2008)



Recent and Forthcoming Work from Faculty:

Here's a glimpse into recent and forthcoming publications by Rutgers professors:

Martha Bolton:

"Berkeley and Mental Representation: Why Not a Lockean Theory of Ideas?" *New Interpretations of Berkeley's Philosophy*. ed. Stephen H. Daniel (Humanity Books, 2008); "Locke on Rational Virtue and Moral Law" *Early Modern Metaphysics: Essays in Honor of Vere Chappell*. ed. David Owen, Gideon Yaffe, and Paul Hoffman (Broadview Press, 2008); "Locke and Leibniz on the Structure of Substance and Powers: the Metaphysics of Moral Subjects." *Studies on Locke: Sources, Contemporaries, and Legacy*. eds. Sarah Hutton and Paul Shurman (Springer-Kluwer, 2008).

Ruth Chang:

"The Reasonable and the Rational in Conflict Resolution," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (Forthcoming- Talk in July 2009); "Voluntarist Reasons" *Practical Reason and Action* (Cambridge, Forthcoming).

Frances Egan:

"The Content of Color Experience," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2008); "Wide Content", *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, eds B. McLaughlin, A. Beckermann, and S. Walter (Oxford, 2009); "Is There a Role for Representational Content in Scientific Psychology?" *Stich and His Critics*, eds. D. Murphy and M. Bishop (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

Jerry Fodor:

LOT 2: The Language of Thought Revisited. (Oxford, 2008).

Alvin Goldman:

"Reliabilism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2008); "Immediate Justification and Process Reliabilism," *Epistemology: New Essays*. ed. Q. Smith (Oxford, 2008); "Mirroring, Mindreading, and Simulation" *Mirror Neuron Systems: The Role of Mirroring Processes in Social Cognition*. ed. J. A. Pineda (Humana, 2008).

Doug Husak:

Overcriminalization (Oxford, 2008); colloquium on *Overcriminalization in Criminal Justice Ethics* (forthcoming).

Jeff King:

"Complex Demonstratives as Quantifiers: Objections and Replies." *Philosophical Studies* (Nov 2008); "Complex Demonstratives, QI Uses and Direct Reference" *The Philosophical Review* (2008).

Barry Loewer:

"Why There Is Anything Except Physics!" *On Being Reduced*. ed. J. Kallestrup. (Oxford, 2008); "Determinism" *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science*. ed. Martin Curd (Routledge, 2007); "Mental Causation or Something Close Enough" *Debates in Philosophy of Mind*. ed. McLaughlin and Cohen (Oxford, 2007).

Robert Matthews:

"A Measurement-Theoretic Account of Propositional Attitudes" *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*. ed B. McLaughlin & A. Beckermann (Oxford, 2009).

Brian McLaughlin:

Editor *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford, 2009).

Jeff McMahan:

Killing in War (Oxford, 2009); "Eating Animals the Nice Way," *Daedalus* (Winter 2008); "Challenges to Human Equality," *Journal of Ethics* (2008); "Aggression and Punishment" *War: Philosophical Perspectives* ed. Larry May (Cambridge, 2008).

Holly Smith:

"Subjective Rightness," *Social Philosophy and Policy* (Forthcoming); *Making Morality Work* (Manuscript in Progress).

Jason Stanley:

"Knowing How," *Nous* (Forthcoming); "Knowledge and Action," *Journal of Philosophy* (2008) with John Hawthorne; "Knowledge and Certainty," *Philosophical Issues* (2008).

Stephen Stich:

Stich and His Critics. ed. Dominic Murphy and Michael Bishop. (Blackwell, 2008).

Larry Temkin:

"Illuminating Egalitarianism," *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy* eds. Thomas Christiano and John Christman, (Blackwell, 2009); "Aggregation Within Lives," *Utilitarianism: The Aggregation Question* eds. Paul, Ellen F., Miller, Fred D., and Paul, Jeffrey, (Cambridge, 2009); "Is Living Longer Living Better," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* (2008).

Brian Weatherson:

"Deontology and Descartes' Demon" *Journal of Philosophy*. (2008); "Conditionals and Indexical Relativism" *Synthese*. (2009).

Dean Zimmerman:

"Yet Another Anti-Molinist Argument" *Metaphysics and the Good*, eds. L. M. Jorgensen and Samuel Newlands (Oxford, 2009); "Examination of Sydney Shoemaker's Metaphysics" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (2009).

Newsletter Credits, Etc.

Photos: (p.1) Dean Zimmerman, (p.2a) Jeff King (personal website), (p.2b) Dean Zimmerman, (p.3a) ANU website, (p.3b) Jacob Samuelson, (p.4) Meghan Sullivan, (p.5a) Elizabeth Miller, (p.5b) Dean Zimmerman, (p.6) Mercedes Diaz, (p.8) Rutgers Philosophy website.

Editor: Meghan Sullivan

A Letter from the Chair:

This is the first of our bi-annual on-line newsletters. We hope that this newsletter will help our faculty, staff, and current students keep in touch with former faculty, staff and students and also inform members of the university community and beyond about our department and events of the past semester and plans for the future. In this newsletter you will find reports on some of the faculty's recent activities and news about present and former graduate and undergraduate students. One of the most satisfying aspects of the 20 (!) years I have been at Rutgers is seeing how many successful students have been through the program. Rutgers PhDs and philosophy majors are now to be found throughout the analytic philosophy world.

This is my second year as chair. There was a lot of change this year since both our graduate director Jeff King and our undergraduate director Martin Lin are new to the job. Also our long time and much loved graduate secretary Susan Viola left at the end of last academic year to start a restaurant in downtown Manhattan. Mercedes Diaz took over her job and Ann Lipovski joined the department as undergraduate secretary. Also, in the fall Stacey Messing took over as our Computing Manager. Together with two of our computer savvy grad students (Will and Gabe) she has been redoing our department web page. We expect the web page to be up by May. Pauline Mitchell, our executive administrator, has of course been the constant keeping everything together while we all got used to our new jobs. While it has taken a little while for that I think we are now running pretty smoothly.

At this point we face a number of significant challenges and there will be some interesting developments in the near future.

Some of the most prominent members of our faculty are close to retirement. To maintain our excellence we will with the administration's support be making appointments prior to retirements. We have begun by luring Andy Egan and Thony Gillies from the University of Michigan to join our department starting next fall. Both are multi-talented philosophers. Andy is especially known for his work in metaphysics and philosophy of mind. Thony is especially known for his work in philosophy of language and formal epistemology. Over the next few years

we will have a number of positions. We would like to add in mind, science, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and history but will be looking for the best philosophers regardless of field.

One of the most exciting developments is that we will move (really!) from our old 1960ish brick building on Douglas into two handsome houses on College Ave that are leased from the Seminary. Ruth Chang and I have devoted countless hours designing the renovations and together with an architect have devised a beautiful plan for the buildings. The move was originally planned for this year but put on hold due to the current world and Rutgers financial situation. It is likely that we will be able to move (really!) this summer but the renovations will only be partly completed. We will need to raise funds in order to complete the renovations. When completed we will have a library, a seminar room, and graduate student lounge that will provide a home for the philosophy department for years to come.

When I took over as chair I noticed that funds for colloquia, graduate student travel, purchase of books and journals, and day to day expenses are very limited. The financial recession has made matters worse. Further, we are the only top ten philosophy department in the country that lacks named chairs. And, as I mentioned, we will need to raise some funds to furnish out new home on College Avenue. So we will be initiating a fund raising drive. We already have a link from our web page that can be followed to contribute to the department gift fund. Anyone interested in contributing to a particular effort should be in touch with me.

Our PhD program directed by Jeff King (with Mercedes help) is in good shape. We have a great first year class. Ruth Chang has been a fantastic admission director finding the best applicants and persuading them to come to Rutgers. Jeff McMahan has been an equally successful placement director. Our students have done well in a difficult job market. In the last few years Rutgers PhDs have landed positions at University of Toronto, Oxford, UCSD, UCLA among other places. One of the big developments this year is that we were the recipient of a Mellon humanities grant that will provide summer support and help support students writing dissertations.

Our undergrad program directed by

Our department's future home on the College Avenue campus.



Martin Lin (with Ann's help) is also doing well. This year a number of our philosophy majors have been accepted to PhD programs (including the top two Rutgers and NYU). We are adding some interesting new courses to our undergraduate offerings in response to courses dealing with challenges of the 21st century.

By the next newsletter we will be in our new home on College Ave.

-Barry Loewer