


5-2015

UA68/11/1 Philosophy & Religion News, Vol. 7, No. 3

WKU Philosophy & Religion

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Recommended Citation

WKU Philosophy & Religion, "UA68/11/1 Philosophy & Religion News, Vol. 7, No. 3" (2015). *WKU Archives Records*. Paper 4301.
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PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION NEWS

From the Department Head's Desk

This issue of the newsletter is packed with stories and information about our students. The content certainly is appropriate for this time of year, when we graduate so many students and recognize their many achievements.



In this issue you will learn about the students that we have identified for their outstanding work in our four programs, the annual hooding ceremony for our graduate students, and other news about current students and alumni. Also, below are the names of all the students who graduated from the department in May.

On behalf of the entire department faculty and staff, let me say how proud we are of the accomplishments of all these students. We will miss their presence in our classes. We will miss their visits to our offices. We will miss their many penetrating questions, their insights, and their passion for joining us in studying deep questions, classic texts, and diverse cultures.

Higher education in the United States faces many challenges today – the lack of state funding, an assault on the value of the humanities, the student debt crisis, and much more. But one thing has not changed and we believe never will. There remains a powerful joy and satisfaction in working with students, in seeing them discover new ideas and think in new and innovative ways. This joy and satisfaction gives purpose and meaning to our work.

Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head

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MAY 2015

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Congratulations to the Class of 2015

The end of the academic year always means having to say goodbye (we hope only "see you later") to the many students who enliven our department and our teaching. Congratulations to all of the following students.

MA students in Religious Studies: Joshua Scott, Matthew Sheffield, and TK Waters.

Asian Religions and Cultures majors: Rebecca Center, Kyle Huff, Brandon Kerr, and Christina Paige.

Philosophy majors: Forrest Deacon, Parker Hanna, Alexander Jacobs, and Timothy Witthuhn.

Religious Studies majors: Casey Bray, Gabrielle

Canant, John Corum, Kyla Dozier, Maryruth Drescher, Kara Lengeman, Emily Potts, Jeffrey Prewitt, Katherine Taylor, Patrick Thompson, Claire Winter, and Timothy Witthuhn.

Classical Studies minors: Natalie Hayden and Jeffrey Prewitt.

Philosophy minors: Casey Downey, Laura Haagen, and Hannah Wilson.

Religious Studies minors: Savannah Burke, Allee Flener, Nicholas Johnson, and Margaret Whitlock.

Many thanks to all of these students for being a part of our programs and our work during the last few years.

Outstanding Students Receive Awards



Pictured from left to right are Dr. Lawrence Snyder (Associate Dean of the Potter College of Arts & Letters, students Erika Brown, Tyler Prochaska, Matthew Sheffield, and Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo (Department Head of Philosophy and Religion).

Each year the Department of Philosophy and Religion names and recognizes a student for outstanding work in each of its four programs. This year the award recipients were:

- Erika Brown, junior, Philosophy
- Matthew Sheffield, MA program in Religious Studies
- Jeffrey Prewitt, senior, Religious Studies
- Tyler Prochaska, senior, Asian Religions and Cultures

Congratulations to each of these students for their excellent work. Each student received an engraved award from Potter College as well as a monetary gift from the department. Gifts from the department are made possible by generous donations from alumni and friends of the department.

STUDENT AND ALUMNI NEWS

Tyler Prochazka, 2015 Asian Religions and Cultures graduate, has been awarded a prestigious Boren Scholarship. The scholarship will allow Tyler to spend the next academic year in China studying the language and culture.

Forrest Deacon, 2015 Philosophy graduate, was accepted into the Teach for America program. He will be teaching for two years at a high school in Memphis, TN. As part of the program, he also was accepted to the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University, where he will complete an online MA degree focusing on education inequity and secondary education studies.

Gabby Canant, 2015 Religious Studies graduate and JUMP student, and Emily Potter, 2015 interdisciplinary studies graduate and JUMP student, have been admitted into the full MA program in Religious Studies. The JUMP program has allowed both students to complete many graduate credit hours as they finished their undergraduate degrees. They now will have only one year left to complete the Masters degree.

Tim Witthuhn, 2015 Philosophy and Religious Studies graduate, has been accepted as a Dean's Scholar to pursue graduate work in religion at Boston University next year.

Ella Shipp, sophomore in Asian Religions and Cultures, has been inducted into Theta Alpha Kappa—the national honors society in Religious Studies. She also will be spending the summer at the University of Texas in an intensive language program in Arabic.

Matt Sheffield, MA student in Religious Studies, presented his paper "Faith, Fans, and the Hardwood: Religion and College Basketball," at the annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. The meeting was held in April in New Orleans.

Emily Sullivan, senior in Philosophy, is a new member of the Potter College Dean's Council of Studies for the 2015/16 academic year.

John Winstead, senior in Philosophy, was runner-up in the undergraduate essay competition at the spring meeting of the Kentucky Philosophical Association.

Three Philosophy students, Erika Brown, Forrest Deacon, and Laura Harper (all seniors) presented their work at the annual WKU Student Research Conference this spring.

Please send any student or alumni news to eric.bain-selbo@wku.edu.



Hooding Ceremony

Each spring the Religious Studies faculty hold a ceremony to bestow masters hoods on graduating MA students. This year, three students were "hooded" by their thesis advisers as family, friends, staff, and faculty looked on. Pictured above (from left to right) are Joshua Scott (MA graduate), Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Matthew Sheffield (MA graduate), Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, TK Waters (MA graduate), and Dr. Nahed Zehr. Mr. Scott and Mr. Sheffield were advised by Dr. Bain-Selbo and Ms. Waters was advised by Dr. Zehr. Congratulations to all three students!

Scholarship Winners!

Each year the Department of Philosophy and Religion selects outstanding students for three scholarships. Two of the scholarships go to students in philosophy. This year, Casey Fortney, junior in philosophy, received the Dr. Larry D. Mayhew Memorial Book Scholarship. This scholarship is in memory of Dr. Larry D. Mayhew, a long-time member of the philosophy faculty here at WKU. And Erika Brown, junior in philosophy, received the Jonathan Andrew Evans Merit Scholarship. This scholarship is in memory of Mr. Evans, who was a graduate of the philosophy program. On the Religious Studies side, Cayla Baughn, junior in religious studies, is the recipient of the Kentucky Clergy Economic Education Foundation Scholarship. The scholarship is given each year to an outstanding returning student in religious studies. Congratulations to all three scholarship recipients!

Other Faculty News

Dr. Audrey Anton, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, gave three talks during the spring semester. In February, she presented at the Central Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Her paper was entitled "Retrospective Moral Responsibility and the Desert of Praise and Blame." In April, she was the guest of the Ancient Mediterranean Club at Austin Peay State University, where she gave her paper was "Desert or Consequences? Aristotle on the Justification of Praise and Blame." Finally, in May she presented "Why Are Bad People Bad?" at the local Society for Lifelong Learning's "Food for Thought" program.

Dr. Eric Bain-Selbo, Department Head of Philosophy and Religion, was a panelist reviewing the documentary film *Happy Valley* at the annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association. The meeting was held in early April in New Orleans.

Mr. Marcus Evans, Instructor in Religious Studies and graduate of the WKU MA program in Religious Studies, was awarded funding to attend McMaster University in Canada. He will begin the PhD program in Religious Studies this fall.

Dr. Bella Mukonyora, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, published "Four Ways into an African Sacred Wilderness: A Study of Johane Masowe Teaching" in the acclaimed *Journal of Religion in Africa*. Also, now published under <http://henry.calvin.edu/projects/citizen-mobilization-in-africa/index.html> is the paper she presented at the University of Stellenbosch last summer. Dr. Mukonyora's topic was "African Womanhood in the Methodist and Masowe Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe (1978-2000)."

This spring semester ended with Dr. Mukonyora coordinating a

research workshop on Western Kentucky University's Green River Preserve in Hart County, KY. Ten members of the American Academy of Religion, all involved in place-based pedagogies on religion and ecology in the southeast region of the United States, presented papers on current teaching and related research endeavors. The main goal of Place-Based Pedagogies is to support each other's scholarship and create an academic book on religion and ecology.

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, gave the 3rd Annual Study of Religion Lecture at Western Kentucky University. The annual lecture is held in April, and recognizes a department or regional scholar's work in the study of religion. Dr. Samuels' paper was entitled "Creating Unity amidst Diversity: Buddhism and the Politics of Religion in Contemporary Malaysia."

As you consider your contribution to the New Century of Spirit campaign for Western Kentucky University, please remember that you can designate your gift to the Philosophy and Religion Department. Your contributions are critical to the life of the department and its students.

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION NEWS

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