

University of Minnesota Duluth Department of Philosophy Presents **The Dialogue**

Spring 2015, Volume 1

Welcome

Welcome to the first volume of *The Dialogue*, an annual newsletter from the UMD Philosophy Department. We hope *The Dialogue* will be of interest to a wide range of people, including current UMD students, alumni, and fans of Philosophy in general. We also hope that it will serve as an invitation to hear from you—we'd love to hear your thoughts about anything discussed in the current issue, ideas you may have for future issues, and ideas for future UMD Philosophy Department events and activities more generally.

Enjoy!

--Bob Schroer, Department Head

rschroer@d.umn.edu

--Bridget Park, Executive Office Administrative Specialist

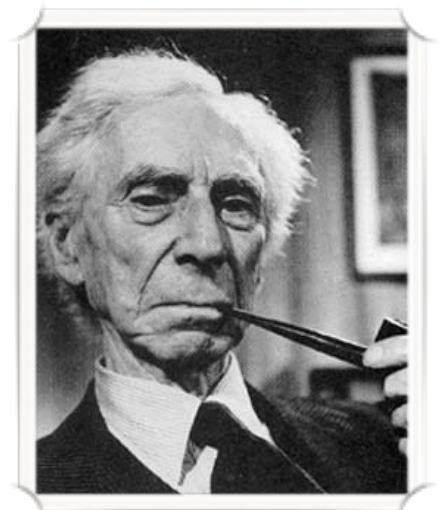
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This year *The Dialogue* investigates the question:

What is the Value of Philosophy?

In the *Problems of Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell claims that Philosophy is valuable because of the questions that it asks—these questions “enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation.”

--Bertrand Russell was a philosopher, mathematician, and social activist. He won the Nobel Peace Prize for literature in 1950 and wrote one of his many, many books—*Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*—while in prison for protesting the first World War.



Bertrand Russell

**Here is what some current and former
UMD Philosophy students said when asked this question.**



Yasmina Antcliff

“Our generation has a lot of unique challenges ahead of us, and the ability to think critically is a tool that will serve us well in every kind of endeavor. The philosophic pursuit of knowledge trains us to look both within and without, examining our deeply held beliefs and the belief systems that govern our world. I wouldn’t be who I am today without Philosophy. Everything I do, I do better and with greater purpose. The time I’ve spent in the thoughtful study of Ethics will affect the way I confront moral dilemmas for the rest of my life. The study of Virtue Ethics, specifically, has had a profound effect on my ability to continually carve myself into a more thoughtful and compassionate creature as I move forward. For the past few thousand years, there’s been a conversation developing about what really matters in our lives, and I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to not only listen but to participate in humanity’s greatest conversations.”

--Yasmina Antcliff is currently a Philosophy and American Indian Studies double major at UMD. Yas is also one of the student assistants for the Center of Ethics and Public Policy and recently won a scholarship which allowed her to attend a seminar on Women, Law & Legal Advocacy, sponsored by The Public Leadership Education Network and held in Washington D.C.



“I have a degree in philosophy from UMD. As an undergrad I worked with Professor Eve Browning on a project entitled, ‘Animal references in pre-Socratic philosophy’. Needless to say, when I finished my bachelor's degree, none of the local philosophy companies was interested in hiring a pre-Socratic philosophy professional. Perhaps if there had been a philosophy company or two in existence, one may have at least talked to me. So I did what many unemployable college grads did; I went to law school.

Actually, I got my degree in philosophy with the intent to go to law school although actually practicing law was not on my radar. The value of philosophy in my education has been invaluable. In studying various philosophies and philosophers, coupled with some logic, one learns to consider outcomes



Terry Trogon

beyond one's experience or expectation. One learns that any statement of conclusion must be supported by facts and this is a necessary skill in law school as well as in the practice of law. First in philosophy and then in law school, I learned to think of alternate scenarios for most any situation, putting together the known components with the unknown and then drawing a variety of conclusions.

I am now an attorney and partner at a law firm in downtown Duluth, Gerlach, Beaumier, & Trogdon, Attorneys at Law. I am a litigator and for years was a family law attorney. Now my practice focus is on wills, estates, elder law, guardianships and other life issues. As an attorney, one of the things I get paid to do is to think of as many possible outcomes for a situation based on knowns and unknowns and predict likely outcomes. I know I am much better at imagining possible outcomes and predicting likely ones because of my studies in philosophy.”

--Terry Trogdon is a UMD Philosophy Alumna. In addition to being an attorney, Terry has taught classes for both UMD and UWS on the law and on law-related issues.

**What do you think
the value of
Philosophy is? Send
your answer to:
umdphil@d.umn.edu**

**If you'd like to see what the some of the current UMD
Philosophy faculty members think about this topic,
visit our website— <http://www.d.umn.edu/phil/> —and
click “Why Philosophy?”**

Philosophy Outside of the Classroom

Philosophy is too valuable (and too fun) to be confined to the academic classroom. The Department provides a number of opportunities for students and members of the community opportunities to do Philosophy outside of the classroom.

- We have an ongoing Department colloquium series that is open to both students and the public. Recent talks have engaged such diverse topics as Plato's theory of time, the nature of free will, and political regime change. Information about upcoming talks can on the UMD Philosophy Department webpage: <http://d.umn.edu/phil/main/index.php>
- The Department also currently houses the Center for Ethics and Public Policy, which is a lecture series that seeks to promote understanding of ethics and public policy. Recent Center events



A Center Event

include hosting a political debate for Minnesota House 7A and panel discussions on medical marijuana, Minnesota's minimum wage, the wolf hunt in Minnesota, and copper and nickel mining in the region. The Center is run by Shane Courtland and two student assistants: Yasmina Antcliff and Carli Amatuzio. For additional information, please visit the Center's webpage at: <https://sites.google.com/a/d.umn.edu/cepp/>

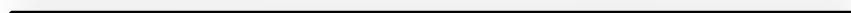
- This past October, the UMD Philosophy Department hosted the 2014 meeting of the Minnesota Philosophical Society. There were 30 individual sessions (held in 5 different rooms) plus the keynote address, given by Professor William Lycan, author of 7 books and over 170 articles. Our own Jason Ford is president of the Minnesota Philosophical Society.
- Finally, and most importantly, there is a student-run philosophy club at UMD: The Socratic Society. This past year, the Socratic Society held a number of well-attended meetings, including a movie and pizza party. Currently, several members of the Socratic Society are also forming a student-run philosophy book club. The student officers of the Socratic Society are P.J. Ebensteiner, Clint Glenn, Haley Pehrson, and Nace Oswald. The faculty advisors to the club are Michelle Saint and Sam Taylor.

The Socratic Society



Looking for additional opportunities to think about Philosophy outside of the classroom?

- KUMD (103.3 FM) plays episodes of "Philosophy Talks" from 7:00-8:00am every Sunday.
- Wireless Philosophy has great videos exploring various philosophical topics (<http://www.wi-phi.com/>)



Fun Facts! Did You Know That...

- UMD Philosophy students can gain college credit by serving as teaching assistants for lower-level Philosophy classes! (Eight UMD students took advantage of this opportunity during the 2014-2015 academic year.)
- You can view videos (or listen to audio recordings) of many past Center Events on the Center's webpage! (<https://sites.google.com/a/d.umn.edu/cepp>)

- The Center has established a "kickstarter" fund!

(<https://crowdfund.umn.edu/civicrm/pcp/info?reset=1&id=69>)

- In its 2nd semester, enrollment in the newly formed Cognitive Science Minor doubled from approximately 10 students to 20 students!

- The upper-level Philosophy class with the highest enrollment for Spring 2015 is Philosophy of Race and Racism, taught by Jeanine Weekes Schroer!

- Jason Ford is currently conducting a psychology experiment on visual attention using UMD students as subjects!

- During the 2014 calendar year, UMD Philosophy faculty members had 11 original articles accepted for publication on such diverse topics as Confucius and Aristotle, Racism, Health Care, Perceptual Knowledge, Personal Identity, and Perceptual Consciousness!

- During the same period of time, members of the department also gave over 25 conference presentations!

- Eve Rabinoff's essay, "Aristotle on the Intelligibility of Perception," was awarded the 2013 Annual Dissertation Essay Award by the Review of Metaphysics. You'll be able to find the essay there in print in June.

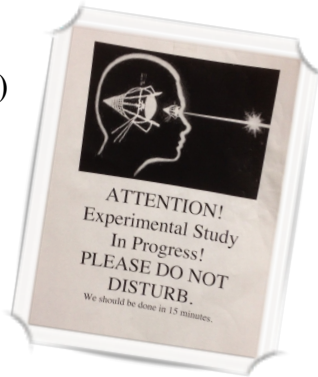
- Bridget Park, the department administrator, has a background in education and speaks Spanish!

- The last UMD Philosophy Department retreat took place in a barn!

- The retreat before that one took place on a boat!

- Robin Roeser, a lieutenant in the Duluth Police Department and UMD Philosophy alumni, recently gave a guest presentation in Jason Ford's Philosophy & Law class!

This last year, the Center for Ethics and Public Policy received over \$10,000 in external grants!



The Philosophy Minor is currently one of the most popular minors in the College of Liberal Arts!

Departmental Report for 2014-2015

The 2014-2015 academic year has been busy one for the Department. To start with, we've undergone some big changes in terms of our faculty and staff:

- Eve Browning left UMD Philosophy to take up a position at the University of Texas-San Antonio.
- David Cole retired.
- Brett Coppenger left UMD Philosophy to take up a position at Tuskegee University.
- Beth Matson left UMD Philosophy to take up a 12-month position as the administrator for the Theatre Department.

The current faculty members of the department include: Shane Courtland, Jason Ford, Gerald Marsh, Michelle Saint, Jeanine Schroer, Robert Schroer, Sam Taylor, and Sean Walsh. Eve Rabinoff will be joining the department Fall 2015. The new department administrator is Bridget Park.

In addition to changes involving our faculty and staff, we've made a number of significant changes to our classes and curriculum over the past couple of years. We've modified the requirements for the Philosophy Major to make it more flexible for students; with the help of several



Philosophy - Then & Now

other departments at UMD, we've added a new minor in Cognitive Science; and we've added a number of new classes to the books, including Philosophy of Race and Racism, Introduction to Cognitive Science, Philosophy through Dialogue and Debate, and Eastern Philosophy.

What's on the horizon for the Philosophy Department? We've been discussing a number of interesting possibilities, including: a new Minor in Ethics, a new Religious Studies Minor, and establishing internships where our students can do some "applied philosophy" in the surrounding community.



UMD Philosophers at MPS

A Final Question: Who is this?

This is Henry Ehlers, the original and founding member of the UMD Philosophy Department. Henry founded the department in 1947 and was its sole member until 1964. Both an annual scholarship and book award have been established in his honor.

Recent recipients of the **Ehlers Scholarship** include: Nicole Anderson (2014), Daniel Norgard (2013), and Alethea Tusher (2012).

Recent recipients of the **Ehlers Book Award** include: Nace Oswald and Nicole Anderson (2014), and Bryce LaLiberte and Chloe Meyer (2013)



Nicole Anderson



Daniel Norgaard



Alethea Tusher

If you are a current
UMD student and want
to apply for the Ehlers
Book Award, please
contact us at:
umdphil@d.umn.edu