

PHILOSOPHY NEWSLETTER

STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES

Quentin Williams

I have been accepted to the M.A. program in philosophy at Brandeis University and am waitlisted for a Ph.D. program in philosophy at the University of Miami. I am also awaiting responses from Rutgers University, the University of Connecticut, and Cornell University (all Ph.D. programs in philosophy). My primary philosophical interests are in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. Specifically, I am interested in the kinds of content that figure in experience—i.e., whether this content is wholly conceptual or at least partially nonconceptual. Such a question was at the center of my honors thesis.

In my thesis I examined a popular account of nonconceptual representational content, and whether it can preserve some epistemological commitments to the justificatory role of experience.



James Johnston

My journey throughout college has been one in which I've tried everything I can to find my calling. Looking back, I bet I've switched majors about four times. I took my first philosophy class in the spring of my sophomore year simply to fulfill a Gen Ed requirement but almost immediately fell in love with the class and the subject as a whole. The class was Philosophy, Society, and Ethics and it opened my mind to the incredible amount of issues as well as a good number of solutions to the problems that we currently face. Until that class, I had never thought to consider much about any of those issues but at that point I knew there was incredible work to be done.

That semester I declared it to be my minor, and continued to take classes in philosophy in order to fulfill the minor requirements. My teacher, Matt Ruble, was the one who talked me into switching, and I ended up having him as a teacher for three classes. The most influential of those, *Insanity and Ethics*, discussed health care and how mental illnesses are treated in society and in the medicinal world. During that class, what struck me most was the pharmaceutical industry and how it was able to use its money and power to get away with virtually whatever they wanted. From that moment forward, I have had a strong desire to fight against such corruption in hopes to help those with serious illnesses and diseases get the treatment they deserve. In fact, it wasn't long after taking that class that I decided - with the help of Dr. Kwong - to become a philosophy major. Ultimately, I want the medical industry to go back to caring more about the patient than the money attached to them. That's not to say that literally every doctor or pharmaceutical company acts in such a way, but the sad truth of the matter is that it still does happen on a fairly large scale and by pursuing a Master's degree in Bioethics at Case Western Reserve University I plan to work diligently to find a way to make the industry more ethical.

In the end, what I love about philosophy is the way in which it is able to make us aware of the issues of the world. Furthermore, we strive to solve these problems as ethically as we can, which rarely is easy and at some points seem impossible. Still, what is important about philosophy is that we never stop fighting for what we believe in. For this reason alone, I know that majoring in this field is one of the best decisions I've ever made and encourage everyone else to do so as well.



MAJORS PROFILES

Taylor Steinmeyer



"After I took my first philosophy class at Appalachian, and coincidentally my first philosophy class ever, I felt a sort of resonance within the dialogue. It's nice to think about issues, really think about them, and attempt to understand their implications on one's perceptions of the world. It's an environment of constant learning and progressive change--which is definitely needed.

I'm interested in metaphysics, aesthetics, and the philosophy of history. Although I haven't read an extensive amount, I do enjoy philosophers such as Derrida, Bataille, Hegel, and Foucault, and hope to read more of them.

I'm not too sure of what I want to pursue after graduation. It's up in the air.

Maybe graduate school, maybe not; either way, learning and talking about philosophy is a wonderful experience, one that I know I'll constantly attempt to integrate into my life."

Jeremy Estrello



"Hello, my name is Jeremy Estrello, my decision to major in philosophy was interesting. Originally a Political Science major, my parents didn't know what I was doing, and to be honestly neither did I. But I enjoyed what I was doing, I enjoyed the line of questioning, and the pursuit of truth which Philosophy gave to me. Philosophy itself shifted from a field of study for me, into a way of life. A new mediation formed for me between the world and my experience of it, as I continually break down old systems of thought and enter into new ones. If you take what we do here seriously, it truly is, as L. A. Paul would describe, a Transformative Experience.

My interests are pretty broad though, I tend to focus on epistemological studies, and critical theory. The nature of language, aesthetics, knowledge, and being, all draw my curiosity as they construct our world view. Subsequently, as Marx would argue, I feel it important that we as individuals can free ourselves from the conditions which enslave us. I think philosophy is the first step to this process. You cannot break from prison until you realize you are in one. I try always to keep a copy of Epictetus's handbook with me, but I enjoy the works of Marx, Derrida, and Sartre.

What to do when I graduate, well I want to save the world like everyone else. And for now that aspiration will lead my way into law school, the Peace Corps, and hopefully back to philosophy to retire as a teacher after graduate school. In my last semester here I cannot thank my peers and the faculty enough, for their presence, and their willingness to let me grow besides them."

Mary Scott Willson



"I took my first philosophy class as a freshman and it was not until that point in my academic career that I found a subject that interested and inspired me on such an intrinsic level. I went into the class- "Mind, Knowledge and Reality", with Dr. Jack Kwong- with an enthusiasm based on my lifelong intrigue of the human mind and experience, but did not expect how great an impact taking this class would have on my college career to follow. After our first test, Dr. Kwong took an interest in my perspective and asked if I had ever considered majoring in philosophy. After a few meetings in which I learned more about the course of study, I declared as a major and have been so fulfilled ever since. As a sophomore, this is my first full year in the philosophy department and every day I am thankful for that one general education class that has allowed me to study something I am passionate about and that has opened up a door of such unforeseen possibilities.

The philosopher I am currently most immersed in is Alan Watts as one of the most interesting aspects of philosophy to me is the intertwining of Eastern and Western ideologies, but it is hard to pick favorites as each day I am exposed to new thinkers and ideas through the philosophy department. I also am intrigued with the connection between philosophy and art of all kinds as well as literature, especially seen in the writers and poets of the beat generation like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg.

I am not yet sure what I want to do with my degree once I graduate, but have always been passionate about the idea of art therapy, especially in collaboration with non-profit organizations, and have also recently taken an interest in the practice of environmental law. I think one of philosophy's greatest purposes is the capability it gives to understand our own experiences and empathize with the experiences of those around us and no matter what I do I hope to build on that idea.

Amanda Pinto



"Hello friends! My name is Amanda Pinto and I'm a junior. I'm a double major in Philosophy and Psychology with a minor in Spanish (so I'll be here a while). I came to Appalachian with the intent of a Psychology major and I took my first Philosophy class that semester with Dr. Elmore. As some of you know, his classes require participation and I was not good at that aspect, so I started going to his office hours and attending Philosophy and Film club. Soon I began attending Philosophy Club and meeting other students and professors, becoming more involved and committed to Philosophy than I was to Psychology. So I majored in Philosophy as well! Now I'm grateful to be a part of the "philosofamily" that I've found within this department and the connections we, as students, have made.

My interests are mostly in Social and Political types of Philosophy. I enjoy reading phenomenology and learning about pessimism. I love reading Foucault, Ahmed, and Marion Young. Currently, my interests are vague and wide as I try to read as many different things as I can before I have to start narrowing my focus. After graduation, I want to go to graduate school. Originally, I was going to go to grad school for Counseling, but I've been turned! I hope to pursue a doctorate in Philosophy and teach, so that I can encourage other young women that Philosophy is also for them.

Faculty Research

Dr. Christopher Bartel

Dr Bartel will be traveling to London in July to host an international conference titled Video Games and Virtual Ethics at the London Institute of Philosophy. The conference will focus on moral and political criticisms of video games. Academics across numerous disciplines have taken an interest in the study of video games. Excellent work can be found in philosophy, psychology, media studies, sociology, and literary studies. However academics within these disciplines often do not talk to each other about their shared interest in games. With this conference, our aim is to promote cross-disciplinary dialogue on these issues. Speakers at the conference include Morgan Luck (philosophy), Esther MacCallum-Stewart (game studies), Stephanie Patridge (philosophy), Miguel Sicart (game studies), and Garry Young (psychology). Attendance at the conference is free and open to the public, provided that you can make your way to London!

Dr. Kim Hall

I have been invited to be a Visiting Professor at the University of Paris Diderot, part of the Sorbonne Paris Cité consortium, for the month of March. While there, I will present three talks, help facilitate a graduate seminar, and work with their research groups on Identity, Culture, and Territories and Disability. My presentations, teaching, and research collaborations will be on the topic of gender, race, and disability. I'll be in Paris, France March 2-April 1, 2017.

In addition to the above, I've had 3 essays accepted for publication: My essay "Queer Epistemology and Epistemic Injustice," has been accepted for publication in *The Routledge Handbook on Epistemic Injustice*, eds. Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., Ian Kidd, and José Medina (Routledge, forthcoming 2017). My essay "Feminist and Queer Intersections with Disability Studies," has been accepted for publication in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, eds. Ann Gary, Serene Khader, and Alison Stone (Routledge, forthcoming 2017). And my essay "Crippling Sustainability, Realizing Food Justice," *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: An Anthology*, eds. Sarah Jacqueline Ray and J.C. Sibara (University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming 2017).

In April 2017 I will present as part of an invited panel on Linda Martín Alcoff's book *The Future of Whiteness* at the Pacific meeting of the American Philosophical Association.

Also in April 2017 I will participate in a research seminar on *The Transnational Politics of Meat* funded by a grant from the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at University of Michigan Ann Arbor. The title of my paper is "Romancing the Pig: A Queer Crip Tale from BBQ to (Xeno)Transplantation."

Finally, I have been invited to participate on a panel on Feminist Disability Studies at the American Sociological Association meeting in Montréal in August 2017.

My three year term as Director of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies ends in July 2017, and I will return to teaching full time in the Philosophy and Religion Department in fall 2017. In fall 2017 I will teach PHL 3050 Philosophy and Race, which will focus on the critical study of whiteness, and I will teach PHL 2015 Environmental Ethics.

Dr. Rick Elmore

I had a productive Fall Semester in 2016. I continued to make progress on my current book project on the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, and worked with several authors on proposals for my book series: *Ecotones: Ecology and Theory*.

My article, co-authored with Jonathan Elmore, titled “The Hybrid Turn: What the Figure of the Vampire Hunter Tells Us about the Humanities in the 21st Century,” was published in *Readings: A Journal for Scholars and Readers*“ Volume 3 (2017), Issue 1. We argue that a meaningful connection can be made between the continuing erosion of the humanities in American higher education, and the marked increase in the appearance of vampire narratives in American fiction and popular culture. More specifically, we contend that the current response of the humanities under the constant threat of budget cuts, reduced student enrollment, and the pressure to measure one’s contributions purely in terms of economic utility is, at least among a small but vocal minority of humanities professors’, eerily similar to that of nineteenth and twentieth-century vampire hunters to vampirism. We end by arguing that, given the similarities between the pedagogical projects of vampire hunters and humanities professors, the humanities could learn much from the evolution of the vampire hunter and that professors also must evolve, changing especially how we face the “practical” and “economic” threats to our profession, an evolution that offers, we believe, the possibility of a “post-human” figure of the humanities.

My commentary “Troubling Lines: The Process of Address in Derrida’s *The Postcard*” was accepted for publication in the forthcoming collection, *Going Postcard: The Letter(s) of Jacques Derrida* published by Punctum Books. In this piece, I analyze a tension I see in Derrida’s account of address in *The Postcard*. In the second entry marked 6 June 1977, Derrida states, “[f]or me it is always more important to know that [to whom one writes] than to know what is being written; moreover I think it amounts to the same, to the other finally” (17/21). I show that this privileging of knowledge of the addressee over knowledge of content is inconsistent with other aspects of Derrida’s analysis.

I organized a Syndicate Philosophy session on Katerina Kolozova’s newest book *Toward a Radical Metaphysics of Socialism: Marx and Laruelle*. The central contention of Kolozova’s book is, following the work of French theorist François Laruelle, that philosophy is a problem in the sense that it is oppressive, exploitative, and destructive of human and animal life. In fact, the problems of philosophy are, she argues, synonymous with the alienation and exploitation of capitalism, both these systems driven by a violent, fetishistic logic that works to replace our real, material lives with abstractions, abstractions that alienate us from real life. Hence, this session brought together three scholars of radical Marxism and Non-Philosophy (plus myself) to discuss and critique Kolozova’s book.

Lastly, I published a review of Jamie Lorimer’s *Wildlife in the Anthropocene: Conservation after Nature.*” for *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 26 no. 2, 2016.

I gave one conference paper last semester at the annual meeting of The International Association of Environmental Philosophy (IAEP) entitled “Ecology Without Metaphysics: A Critique of Tim Morton’s Realist Ecology.” In this paper, I argue that environmental philosophy must be philosophically realist, and I explore to what degree recent continental realisms offer resources for environmental philosophy. More specifically, I show that in general continental realists have tended to argue that reality is either composed of objects or of forces, and I show that one needs an approach to realism that allows one to theorize both the reality of objects and of forces, if realism is to be of any use to environmental philosophy. Additionally, I also gave a talk to the Appalachian State Philosophy Club, which laid out the basic principles of Frankfurt School Critical Theory.

Dr. Jack Kwong

I am currently on research leave. I recently finished a paper on the nature of hope, in which I argued that extant accounts fail to explain what it is to hope and proposed a new way of understanding it. I will be presenting a version of this paper at the Midsouth Philosophy Conference at the end of March in Memphis, Tennessee. For the remainder of my leave, I will be working on a paper on the topic of shame.

Dr. Joe Weiss

Joe has recently been informed that Telos, the philosophy and social criticism journal, will publish his essay entitled "The Old in New Critical Theory: Locating the Gambler and the Prostitute in the Image of Neoliberalism." He has also recently been notified that his essay entitled "Beyond the Ethics of Schuld: Kant, Universal History, and Eco-Catastrophe," which he submitted to the journal Postmodern Culture, is being considered under a "revise and resubmit" provision. More generally, Joe has two essay projects in the works. One concerns Hobbes' conception of sovereignty and its relationship to the the rise of advance capitalist bureaucracy or so-called biopower. The other concerns Gille Deleuze's and T.W. Adorno's conceptions of revolutionary electronic music and how this theory might echo with the work of Donna Haraway who, like many contemporary theorists, has attempted to imagine new, transformative kinship relations (between, e.g., the human and non-human, the human and machine, etc.) in the era of the Anthropocene.



APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Philosophy Club meets every Thursday at 7pm in I.G. Greer Rm. 119. All majors and disciplines are welcome, along with all degrees of experience! The club is open to anyone who is interested in learning about and engaging with philosophical ideas. Over the course of the spring semester, we will have a series of speakers presenting on some of the major ideas within philosophy. Some forthcoming topics include: friendship in classic Greek philosophy, Goodman and worldmaking, fluoridization, the end of humans as the dominant species, and more. Come out and join us! Be where philosophy is being done.

Join our Facebook page ("Appalachian State University Philosophical Society") and follow us on Instagram (@appstatephilosophyclub).

President: Jordan Venditelli

Vice President: Liam O'Mahony

Secretary: Amanda Pinto

Marketing Director: Lauren Wilson

Advisors: Dr. Rick Elmore, Dr. Joe Weiss, Dr. Matt Ruble

Why Major in Philosophy?

Careers for Philosophy Majors

- Law
- Health Professions
- Local, State, and Federal Government
- Business
- Information Technology
- Science

Source: <http://www.philosophy.umd.edu/undergraduate/careers>

Philosophy Top Earner in the Humanities

According to The Atlantic ("The Earning Power of Philosophy Majors"), philosophy is the top humanities bachelor degree in the ranking in terms of employment and income.

Source: <http://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/09/philosophy-majors-out-earn-other-humanities/403555/>

Thinking of Going to Law School? Pursue a Philosophy Major

- "[The] study of philosophy provides students with training in analytic thinking and logical argumentation, both of which are essential to success in law school and in the practice of law... [A] major in philosophy also allows students to examine many of the current moral, political, and legal issues that are of interest to lawyers, judges, and legal scholars, while understanding the philosophical background to these issues".
- "Philosophy majors perform exceptionally well on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT)."
- "It's no surprise, then, that the acceptance rate for Philosophy majors applying to law schools is **higher than** the acceptance rate for applicants majoring in Economics, Political Science, History, Psychology, Accounting, Business Management, and most other majors."

Source: <http://www.umsl.edu/~philo/Undergraduate%20Program/Pre->

Philosophy Majors Changing the Business World

According to the Huffington Post, philosophy majors will become entrepreneurs who "[shape] the business world". Some highlights:

- "Philosophy develops strong critical thinking skills and business instincts."
- "Former philosophy students have gone on to make waves in the tech world."
- "Philosophers (amateur and professional) will be the ones to grapple with the biggest issues facing their generation."
- "Philosophy students are 'citizens of the world.'"

Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/05/why-philosophy-majors-rule_n_4891404.html

Philosophy Majors Dominate in GRE Scores

"Philosophy students reigned supreme in two of the three sections however, suggesting a "love of wisdom" will serve you well." Source: <http://www.physicscentral.com/buzz/blog/index.cfm?postid=5112019841346388353>

Fall 2017

UPPER-DIVISION PHILOSOPHY COURSES

PHL 3000: Ancient Philosophy; Dr. Anna Cremaldi

What does it mean to live a good life? The philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome argued against the traditional view that the goodness of a life is measured by status, possessions, or divine favor. Instead, they claimed, a good life is measured by the quality of your character, or--as they suggested--the harmonious arrangement of the soul. The focus of this class is their theory of the soul and the means for inducing the soul's harmony--including, for example: loving relationships, the Socratic elenchus, the therapy of emotions, the education of one's habits and the transformation of the intellect. Readings include Plato's *Apology* and *Republic*; Aristotle's *Physics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as selections from Epictetus' *Handbook* and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

PHL 3015: Medical Ethics; Dr. Matthew Ruble

This course is an introduction to ethical issues in medicine. We begin with an overview of theoretical medical ethics and then move on to discuss some of the major ethical issues in medicine and consider how various theories inform or fail to inform ethical issues that arise in healthcare. Along the way we will make ample use of actual cases in order to *practice* addressing deeply contested moral issues just as health care providers and medical ethicists are required to do every, and day as a team. We will also delve into psychiatric ethics and the emerging field of neuroethics. The course ends with an unsettling expose of the pharmaceutical industry.

PHL 3040: Social and Political Philosophy; Dr. Rick Elmore

Modern theories of government and the state include not only systems for organizing individuals and societies, regulating the rights, duties, access, and potentialities of citizens and social actors, but also the implicit control and regulation of those not considered part of the social body (foreigners, the undocumented, and the socially marginalized). Biopolitics names perhaps the most influential site for exploring this facet of modern political systems, showing how they involve an excluding of life and regulation of death, one that concerns the regulation of individual rights and freedoms as much as the norms of populations, the regulation of life as well as death, and, more specifically, the regulation of the death that makes possible, visible, stable, and coherent the life of the social body. Such accounts suggest that within liberal and neoliberal discourses the existence of racism, patriarchy, ableism, and heteronormativity are not merely unfortunate deviations or failures of liberal discourse but are, in fact, constitutive of the very notions of individuality, citizenship, subjectivity, freedom, and rights upon which liberalism is founded. Hence, in this class we will explore modern political theory as a biopolitical discourse. In particular, we will look at how liberalism and neoliberalism work to create certain notions of life through the regulation of populations and death, as much as individual rights and freedom. We will be particularly focused on the transition from classical liberalism to neoliberalism and the way in which this transition changes, intensifies, and redefines the political and social institutions, principles, categories, and existence of modern liberal societies.

PHL 3050: Philosophy and Race; Dr. Kim Q. Hall

Questioning Whiteness and Race: In his classic book *The Racial Contract*, philosopher Charles Mills describes the construction of whiteness as founded on "an inverted epistemology. . . that precludes self-transparency and genuine understanding of social realities" (1997, 18). This course will seek to unpack and understand this claim by focusing on a study of important work on the question of whiteness that has emerged in the critical philosophy of race. Issues explored in this course will include the meaning of race and racism; evidence, race, and the epistemology of ignorance; and the role of imagination and the possibility of anti-racism. Our goal will be to understand how the question of whiteness has been analyzed in the critical philosophy of race and the relevance of these analyses for understanding race and racism in our world today

PHL3530: Spirit, Freedom, Utopia; Dr. Joe Weiss

This course will examine the manner in which the concepts of spirit, freedom, and utopia form a constellation in the thinking of 19th Century philosophy. From Kant and Hegel to Marx, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard, philosophy of this century became increasingly focused on the possibility of spirit rising above the phenomenal world in the task of actualizing the human potential for freedom. And yet, at each turn, this utopian drive for self-realization was confronted with a series of social, political, and metaphysical obstacles, to the point at which it eventually felt compelled to posit the need for a new mode of production (Marx's communism), a different type of human (Nietzsche's Zarathustra), as well as a radical leap in faith (Kierkegaard's knight of faith). While examining some of the major texts from this experimental period, we will eventually attempt to measure the degree to which this mode of thinking continues to weigh on 20th and 21st Century philosophy, that is, continues influence our thinking after this longing for freedom appears to have completely died out.

PHL 4300: Ethical Theory; Dr. Jesse Taylor

An examination of some major ethical theories and issues raised in relation to epistemology and language, such as the status of knowledge in ethics and the function of ethical language.

PHL 4549: Senior Seminar; Dr. Jack Kwong

Shame. Hope. Decency. Forgiveness. These are the four main topics that will be covered in this seminar in moral psychology. Some questions it will raise include: What is the nature of shame, and how does it differ from guilt, humiliation and embarrassment? Is shame a moral and social emotion? Is an audience required for experiencing shame? What is it to hope? How does hope differ from optimism, and how is it distinguished from despair? Is it rational to hope, especially in cases of hoping against hope? What is the function of hope? What are the conditions for forgiveness? What are its moral implications? Is forgiveness a virtue? What does it mean to be a morally decent person? How does it regulate our conduct? Are we morally required to be decent? We will address these questions by drawing from resources in philosophy of mind, ethics, and psychology. This seminar is open to all majors, and should be of especial interest to philosophy and psychology students.

