

# LANGUAGE truth & GOSSIP

**A newsletter for alumni and friends  
of the MSU Department of Philosophy**

*Language, Truth & Gossip* is published annually  
by the Department of Philosophy, Michigan  
State University, 503 S. Kedzie Hall, East  
Lansing, MI 48824

## **Editor**

JAMES ROPER

## **Department Chair**

RICHARD PETERSON

## **Acting Associate Chair/Graduate Director**

FRED RAUSCHER

## **Director of Undergraduate Studies**

DAN STEEL

Please visit the Department of Philosophy  
online at [www.msu.edu/~phl](http://www.msu.edu/~phl). Send your news  
to Julianne Fent at [fent@msu.edu](mailto:fent@msu.edu).

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE**

Greetings from the Chair. . . . .	1
Philosophy Events on Campus . . . . .	2
Graduate Student Report . . . . .	3
News from the Graduate Director . . . . .	3
Other Faculty Activities. . . . .	4
Recent PhDs . . . . .	4
Developments in the Undergraduate Program . . . . .	5
Books by MSU Philosophers. . . . .	5
Notes From the Center For Ethics and Humanities in the Life Sciences. . . . .	6
Update from Our Emeritus Faculty. . . . .	6

FACULTY NOTES  
& ACTIVITIES

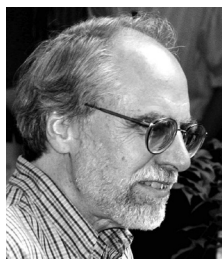
MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE NEWS

SPRING 2008

## **Greetings from the Chairperson**

Dear friends of Philosophy at MSU,



Richard Peterson  
Department Chair

As the academic year winds down, we send our belated greetings with a report of what we have been up to during another busy year. This has been a year of intellectually fruitful events, important visiting scholars, some new hiring, and a bit of programmatic rethinking.

Before sketching a review, I want to express the Department's appreciation to Jennifer Susse, who is leaving us after four years of valued contributions to our teaching, philosophical discussions, and committee work. Jennifer and her family will be moving to the Boston area, where she will explore political

as well as philosophical work. Her energetic and always good-humored and thoughtful presence has been much valued by students and faculty alike. We wish her the very best in the coming years.

I want also to thank visiting faculty who have made a great contribution to our students and to the life of the Department. Michael Stephens and Roberto Nigro both held one year positions and gave courses that received rave reviews. We thank Michael and wish him well as he explores extra-academic as well as post-doc opportunities. We are fortunate that Roberto will be able to continue here next year, again on a temporary basis. Our undergraduates have also benefited from working with Steve Sharra, who has taught and done the advising for Peace and Justice Studies.

As you will see elsewhere in the newsletter, we hosted an impressive number of distinguished philosophers this year, sometimes in the context of workshops or symposia that combined visitors with local faculty presentations. Hume's views on moral reasoning, the concept of fear, rule-following in Wittgenstein, and Health Care and Justice were themes explored in these events. Each provided a nice opportunity for our graduate students as well as other scholars in the region. We think events like these are helping to make our program more visible on the national map.

A major demand on faculty time this past year was the recruitment of two new colleagues, in African-American Philosophy and in social and political philosophy. Our efforts yielded noteworthy successes. Fall Semester we will be joined by two new tenure system faculty: Kristie Dotson (PhD, University of Memphis), who comes to us from Purdue as a specialist in African American Philosophy and epistemology, and Todd Hedrick (PhD, Northwestern University), who has taught this past year at Georgetown University and will assume a position in social and political philosophy. Both will be assistant professors who have already established strong records in teaching and research.

One of the aims we have set for ourselves is to find ways to create a more diverse set of majors (and minors – this year we introduced a Philosophy minor, something that is only now possible at MSU). While we have an impressive corps of undergraduate majors, 80% of them are male and mostly white. We think it's time to find ways to make a philosophy track more accessible to women and minority students. To this end, we are experimenting with a new peer-tutoring program, the prospect of some new introductory level courses, and the possibility of a pre-law minor. As testimony to the Department's past efforts, particularly at the research and graduate level, it is pleasant

*continued on page 4*

# Philosophy Events on Campus

MSU philosophers hosted an unusual array of events that brought important scholars to campus and involved colleagues and students from other departments and the region.

- In summer of 2007, we hosted two workshops: **Tamra Frei** organized a workshop on Hume's contention that moral distinctions are not derived from reason. Visiting campus were **Sophie Butros**, University of London (whose recent book *Hume, Reason and Morality* was a center of discussion), **Don Garrett** (NYU), **Geoff Sayre-McCord** (UNC Chapel Hill). Several faculty and graduate students participated in the intensive and stimulating discussions.
- In addition, **Richard Peterson**, **Marilyn Frye**, and **Paul Thompson** arranged a workshop on FEAR, which analyzed some ways fear dominates our political, economic, and personal life in the U.S. A central focus was the disparity between how risks are treated by individuals and groups and how economic interests treat risks. Invited visitors included **Marilyn Charles** (a psychoanalyst from the Austen Riggs Center), **Carl Cranor** (a philosopher from UC Riverside), **Pat O'Donnell** (from the MSU English Department), and **Corey Robin** (a historian from the CUNY Graduate Center).
- In September we co-sponsored, with Film Studies (in the Department of English), a **Symposium on Film and Philosophy**, which focused on the theme of "**The Right to Hospitality: Migration, Accommodation, Globalization.**" Department participants were **Fred Rauscher**, **Christian Lotz**, and **Richard Peterson**. This was one of our contributions to MSU's "Year of the Arts and Culture."
- In October, Jim Nelson's organizational work resulted in a workshop commemorating publication of *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule* (Routledge, 1981), co-edited by **Christopher M. Leich** and department alumnus and former Rhodes Scholar **Steven H. Holtzman**. Guest speakers: **Crispin Wright**, **Philip Pettit**, **Naomi Scheman**, and **Alice Crary**. The workshop constituted the 2007 **Suter Distinguished Guest Lecture**, and was further supported by Steve Holtzman and Christopher Leich, who also participated in the program. Their role made it clear that serious philosophical thinking is not the monopoly of professional academics.

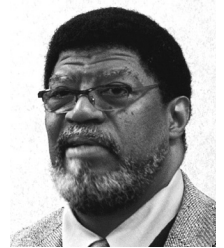


Jim Nelson

- November 9 was the **Benjamin Distinguished Guest Lecture** featuring **Grant Gillett**, Professor of Medical Ethics at the Bioethics Centre and Professor of Neurosurgery at

the Dunedin School of Medicine, The University of Otago, New Zealand. His talk was entitled "**Memory, Identity and the Care of the Soul.**" February 22 was the **Charles McCracken Distinguished Lecture**. **Linda Alcoff** (Syracuse University) spoke on "**Racial and Gender Profiling as Epistemic Practices: When is identity relevant?**"

- February 6, 7 and 8 **Marilyn Frye** delivered the **Romanell Phi Beta Kappa Lectures in Philosophy**. This is an important honor given to one American philosopher a year and gave Marilyn the opportunity to review the work she has been doing in recent years. The titles of her lectures (which were held in the Student Union and attracted large and enthusiastic audiences) were "**Kinds of Kinds: Models and Metaphors,**" "**Being a Kind: Will and Social Ontology,**" and "**The Powers of Labels: 'I'm (just) a person!'**"
- March 13, 14 and 15 MSU hosted **The National Conference of SAAP**, a society composed of philosophers who organize their scholarship around central figures in American philosophy. 180 registered for the conference, which featured a session on "Engaged Philosophy" with **Hilde Lindemann**, **John McClendon** and **Richard Peterson** discussing their research. **Paul B. Thompson** arranged the meeting with support from the College of Arts and Letters and the W.K. Kellogg Chair in Agricultural, Food and Community Ethics.



John McClendon  
Director of African  
Studies at MSU

- March 24 and 25, **Hilde Lindemann** organized (with support from Philosophy and the College of Arts and Letters) a symposium on "**Justice, Power, and Health Care**" devoted to examining the unjust ways power circulates through health care practices, with emphasis on issues of justice that stem from abuses of social power, especially in the contexts of race and poverty. MSU speakers: **John McClendon** and **Leonard Fleck**. Prominent outside speakers: **Dorothy Roberts** (Northwestern University Law School) and **Alex John London** (Carnegie Mellon). The symposium included a graduate student class.
- The Department also hosted several scholars in colloquia during the year: **Brian Norton**, **David Danks**, **Benjamin Pollock**, **David Hoekema**, **Sara Ahbel-Rappe**, **J.M. Bernstein**, and **Gale Pohlhaus**.

## GRADUATE STUDENT REPORT



Elizabeth Mauritz

**Elizabeth Mauritz** recounts the activities of our graduate students over the past year.

Another year has come and gone, full of activities and new ideas to contemplate. A small but dedicated softball team was organized to pitch MSU philosophy into the summer, and those who played reportedly had a blast! Last summer we had the unusual opportunity to take a graduate seminar in philosophy during the summer. Paul Thompson offered Philosophy of Technology and many graduate students participated in the course. A smaller contingent also attended the Society for the Philosophy of Technology conference hosted by the University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC.

As has become tradition, the graduate students had a small gathering of their own to kick off the school year and welcome new students. This time Eric Berling and CJ Fisher hosted the event. During the year, besides attending regular courses, many students participated in the Wittgenstein workshop and a Nietzsche reading group. This year the Graduate Employees Union bargained with the University for a new contract, and several of philosophy graduate students played important roles in the process. On the social side, we have held several game nights in which grads not only get together, but also exercise their understanding of capitalism, social justice, and development ethics through games like Class Struggle, Anti-Monopoly, and Settlers of Catan. Our pumpkin picking and hayride event at Andy T's in St Johns was brought back for a third consecutive year.

In February we held our ninth annual Graduate Student Conference, which hosted Alice Dreger as the Keynote speaker and Steve Esquith as the Featured Faculty speaker. Many of us participated in the Justice, Power, and Health Care symposium held in March. . Our guests Alex London and Dorothy Roberts provided students with constructive criticism on their work in bioethics in a master-class that was held the day after their public lectures. Additionally, some of us have been active outside MSU by participating in regional and national conferences and workshops. As the semester is drawing to a close, a number of us are planning to participate in reading groups and/or preparing to teach our own courses this summer.



## News From the Graduate Director

**Fred Rauscher** (*Acting Associate Chair and Graduate Director*)



Fred Rauscher

With the restructuring of the graduate program to allow students to enter the PhD program without first earning an M.A., almost no students now enter the M.A. program and our students tend to stay at MSU for their entire program. We are increasingly attracting applicants interested in our "philosophy engaged" emphasis, concentrating on the philosophy and ethics of health care and social and political thought.

This concentration is matched in our graduate seminars. Each semester we offer four (students now must earn three-quarters of their credit hours at the 800 level). Recent seminars include "Foucault," "Feminism, Liberalism, Choice, and Oppression," "Philosophy of Technology," "Organ Transplantation," "Kant's Political Philosophy: Roots and Development," "False Consciousness," "The Infinite," and "History of Feminist Bioethics."

Our funding situation has improved, but we are unable to support all our students or to offer funding to many strong applicants; we have enough to fund five students per entering class for an average of four years. In the past few years several of our entering students have received fellowships from the University Distinguished

Fellowship program and the Environmental Science and Policy Program.

I believe the MSU Philosophy Department is becoming well-known and widely respected for its PhD program emphasizing "Philosophy Engaged". Our placement record in recent years is excellent. From 2004 through 2007, eight of the eleven students completing PhDs have received tenure track appointments (at Binghamton University, University of Guelph, Washington College, Cleveland State University, University of Rhode Island, York College of Pennsylvania, Creighton University Medical Center, and Simpson College). More recently, in 2008, three students have been placed with the help of placement directors Hilde Lindemann and Lisa Schwartzman:

**Ken Parsons:** a tenure-stream job to teach in (and chair) the Philosophy & Religious Studies Department at Avila University, Kansas City, Missouri.

**Noel Boyle:** a tenure-stream job in the Philosophy Department at Belmont University, Nashville, Tennessee.

**Jennifer Sproule Swindell:** a tenure-stream job in The Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas.

As the department's reputation continues to climb, our graduate students will continue to benefit.



## Other Faculty Activities

- **Tamra Frei** delivered a paper titled “Kant and the Principle of Instrumental Rationality: Is There More Than One Categorical Imperative?” at the 2008 Pacific APA.
- **Fred Gifford** published several papers on “Clinical Equipoise”—a topic that deals with methodological, epistemological, and ethical issues concerning randomized clinical trials.
- **Hilde Lindemann** edits *Hypatia* and published several papers in other journals. She maintains her special focus on “‘holding one another’—the attitude we take up toward other persons that contributes to maintaining their personhood.”



Matt McKeon

- **Matt McKeon** has recently had “A Plea for Logical Objects” accepted by *Synthese*.
- **Jim Nelson** published a number of articles in 2007, including “Philosophizing in a Dissonant Key” in *Hypatia* and “What families Say about Surrogacy” in the *Journal of Clinical Ethics* (with Hilde Lindemann).

- **Dick Peterson** published papers on human rights and political violence. He also spoke on these themes in Japan last June.
- **Fred Rauscher** continues “to promote interaction between Kant scholars in the U.S. and Brazil.” Fred has arranged for a number of Brazilian Kant scholars to travel to the U.S. to pursue their work.
- **James Roper** had eight publications in 2007 and presented five different papers at national and international conferences including the Central APA and the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics.
- **Lisa Schwartzman** responded to three critics of her widely reviewed 2006 book *Challenging Liberalism: Feminism as Political Critique* in an “author meets critics” session at the 2008 Central APA.
- **Paul Thompson** published many articles focused, broadly, on problems in the ethics of agriculture. A number of these articles dealt with the role of nanotechnology. Sustainability is also a persistent theme of Paul’s work.

## Greetings from the Chairperson continued from page 1

to report that we’ve been designated as one of five “women-friendly” philosophy departments in the US and the UK (by SWIP/UK).

News like this is now available on our improved website, the proverbial “work in progress.” Thanks to Carolyn Schaffer, we have a new design and we have been working to expand and update content. Eventually we plan an online version of *Language, Truth and Gossip*, in order to provide a fuller report of departmental events and to include more information about our many alumni and former and retired faculty. Toward that end, we invite you to send us material we can post about what you have been up to; of course, we welcome pictures as well.

MSU remains under great budgetary pressures as state support continues to diminish and this has translated into pressure on our College and Department to strengthen our distinctive profiles in order to attract good students and justify continuing support from inside and outside the University. We have participated in debates over College priorities, in which the current themes – global studies, creativity, and inclusive democracy – represent areas in which we think we are making considerable contributions.

Before closing, let me note our great debt to our staff. As usual, this has been a year of change: a bit earlier than expected, Julianne Fent started her projected maternity leave with the arrival of a beautiful

daughter, Samantha, who has proven to be a voluble prospective philosopher on her visits to the Office. During Julianne’s absence, we have had the energetic and insightful services of Deb Mansel, who otherwise runs the office in Art and Art History. We are looking forward to Julianne’s return and thank Jill Perez for her cheerful readiness to take on new responsibilities in this period. We thank Delphine Witten as well for her competent and good-humored help with office work during this period.

Let me close with a request. We see this newsletter as a way to keep in contact with our graduates and other friends and to use it as a medium to report our activities and the accomplishments of our students and former colleagues. We are also increasingly pressed to engage in fundraising, and the newsletter is a way to let people know that there is yet another worthy cause on hand. We are especially concerned to finish the funding of the Hall-Hanna endowed scholarship fund and ask that you consider contributing to that. In any case, we ask that you stay in touch and let us know what you are up to so that we can use this newsletter and the website as a means of following the efforts of MSU philosophers.

With sincere best wishes,

*Dick Peterson*

## “The End of the Beginning”: Recent PhDs

Congratulations to the following recent philosophy PhD’s: **Noel Boyle** (“Physicalism and Qualitative Facts: A Critique of Frank Jackson”); **Anna Gotlib** (“Identity, Illness, and the Normativity of Stories”); **Jennifer Sproul Swindell** (“Respecting Autonomy in Cases of Ambivalence Regarding End of Life Decisions”); and **John Zillmer** (“The Unity of Identity: A Defense of an Ideal”).

## DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM: *A Report From Dan Steel*



Dan Steel

I took over the reins as the undergraduate advisor from Matt McKeon in the spring of 2007 and have been very busy since then! Many exciting new developments have transpired for undergraduate studies in the MSU Department of Philosophy during this time. In May, the undergraduate speech at the graduation ceremony for the College of Arts and Letters was given by a philosophy major, LeAnna K. Gingras. In the fall semester, the new philosophy minor began enrolling students, and I am happy to report that it has been attracting a steady stream of new students. I'm especially thankful to faculty and graduate students in the Philosophy Department who have helped spread the word and recruit students to the minor. This spring I'm proud to announce the creation of a new tutoring program in which accomplished philosophy undergraduate majors have been hired to provide tutoring to any students enrolled in philosophy courses. Sophie Vick, a philosophy graduate student, deserves praise for her initiative and enthusiasm that spurred this project along. The first tutoring sessions began in April and we plan to continue them in the fall. We hope that the tutoring program will be a source of valuable experience for the tutors and will enhance the experience and learning of students who take our classes!

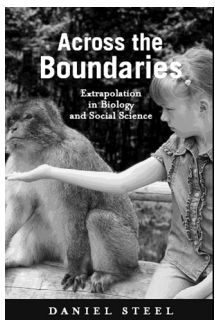
## Fundraising

Given the stresses on university funding, the Philosophy Department is actively seeking support for various teaching and research projects. The "Hall-Hanna Young Scholars Fund" was started when Richard Hall and Joseph Hanna retired. Its purpose is to support undergraduate and graduate students who plan a philosophy career. Scholarships, teaching awards, grants for travel, and so on are anticipated. The target for this "Hall-Hanna Young Scholars Fund" is a \$30,000 endowment. Currently, the endowment has about \$20,000, so about \$10,000 more is needed to complete the endowment.

The Department expresses deep gratitude to all those who have provided support with large and small gifts. We anticipate that this on-going involvement will help promote and increase the engagement of the MSU Philosophy Department in both the University and the larger community.

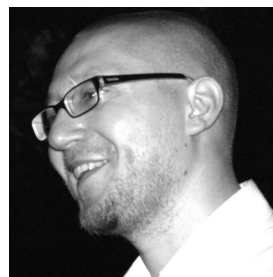
## BOOKS BY MSU PHILOSOPHERS

Four books by faculty have appeared since the last newsletter: **Dan Steel** and **Christian Lotz** have each published new

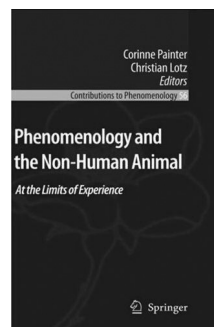


works. Dan Steel's *Across the Boundaries: Extrapolation in Biology and Social Science* (Oxford University Press, 2007) deals with the question of how inferences about humans can be justified using animal studies. Christian Lotz' *From Affectivity to Subjectivity: Husserl's Phenomenology Revisited* (London: Palgrave, 2007) "shows that Husserl's Phenomenology and its

key concept, subjectivity, is based on a concrete anthropological structure, such as self-affection and the bodily experience of the other. The analysis of the sensual sphere and the lived Body forces Husserl to an ongoing correction of



Christian Lotz



his strong methodological assumptions."

Christian Lotz has also co-edited with **Corinne Painter** *Phenomenology and the Non-Human Animal. At the Limits of Experience* (Berlin/Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), which explores "how phenomenology can contribute to" recent debates about "the relation between human and non-human animals in theoretical, ethical and political regards."

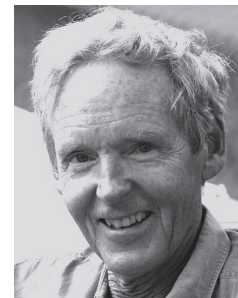
Finally, **Debra Nails'** book, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*, has appeared in a Romanian translation, from Humanitas.

Debra Nails / *Oamenii lui Platon*



## Update From Our Emeritus Faculty

- **Barbara Abbott** reports that she is “wrestling with reference and noun phrase interpretation amid the beauties of the Leelanau Peninsula.”
- **Judy Andre** continues to teach part time despite her official retirement in 2006. Besides developing a new course addressing ethical issues in global public health, she has redesigned the “Medicine and Spirituality” module offered to medical students. She is also working on a book on “cosmopolitan virtue,” “drawing from our own and other ethical traditions to think about the moral excellences required in the new global village.” In her spare time? Judy travels. To Africa last year, and Croatia and Korea next year, and she reads, develops her skills at ice skating, studies French, and gardens. She also continues to parent the niece who came to live with her a few years ago. Finally, she takes more naps. “The result is that for the first time in years I do not fall asleep during talks given at noon or after. I’m no longer exhausted. Life is so surprising. And these years seem to me even more golden than promised.”
- **Rich Hall** published “Phenomenal Properties as Dummy Properties” in *Philosophical Studies* and has had a paper accepted by the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*. In addition to teaching an introductory ethics course at Hiram College, Rich has recently lectured there on how evolutionary accounts undermine human morality. He recommends Richard Joyce’s *The Evolution of Morality*. He is going to Turkey this May with a Hiram College group, where he will lecture on the beginnings of philosophy at Miletus. He also likes to read Greek history.
- **Don Koch** will play a significant role in creating a CD-ROM definitive version of John Dewey’s lectures, which will be available to university libraries and the text on their web pages. “[T]his publication will significantly change traditional interpretations of Dewey. ... The new philosophical task is to develop a better attitude towards dealing with the whole, including a scientific treatment of all inquiry, and an instrumentalist attitude concerning the function of psychological processes and social institutions. ... This need is especially significant today.”
- **Charles McCracken** has published “Berkeley’s Realism,” in *New Interpretations of Berkeley’s Thought*, ed. Stephen Daniel, (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2008), a volume in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Book Series.



Rich Hall

### NOTES FROM THE CENTER FOR ETHICS AND HUMANITIES IN THE LIFE SCIENCES:

- Profs. **Ann Mongoven** and **Tom Tomlinson** will travel in May to Zhengzhou University and meet with directors of programs in bioethics, public health, education, and science studies to discuss collaborative research and scholarship, ethics teaching, faculty and student exchanges, and other matters. Funded in part by an Asian Studies Program grant.
- The NIH-funded Research Ethics Master’s Program, run in collaboration with the College of Medicine, University of Malawi, is ending after four years. Five Fellows have completed or nearly completed the program. The Center and College of Medicine have applied for renewed funding for four more years.



JILL PEREZ

### OFFICE STAFF



JULIANNE &amp; SAM FENT

### In The Spotlight

JAMES ROPER  
New Editor of *Language, Truth and Gossip*