

The Dialectic

Classics & Philosophy Newsletter
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Dear Philosophers and Classicists,

Continuing our time-honored tradition, we are happily, or at least willingly, presenting this edition of *The Dialectic*. If it has been too long since you indulged in the voyeuristic delights of reading about other people's lives, then this is the newsletter for you. If it has been too long since a philosophical thought washed over your brain but you still do not want to work for it, then this is the newsletter for you. It's amateur journalism and top-notch philosophy at their finest, delivered piping hot and reasonably fresh from us to you! Enjoy!

Thomas O'Mara
President
Philosophy Club at UTA

p.s. Thanks go, again, to Mitch Hodge for his help on this issue of the newsletter.

Chad Kidd Does It Again!

Audacious alumnus Chad Kidd, after graduating in the summer of 2004 with a B.A. in Philosophy undertook the noble burden of teaching Latin to the burgeoning adolescent minds of DeSoto High School. Both challenging and rewarding, Chad recommends experience teaching in a public high school for anyone hoping to teach in higher education. "God bless anyone," says Chad, "who wants to make public school teaching their life-long career!"

However, such was not to be for our man Kidd. To slake his thirst for ever-loftier degrees, he next conquered the portentous GRE. He says, "[The GRE] is a vital part of any graduate application and should be taken very seriously. Preparation courses could be helpful, if your math or language skills are weak, but they will not make up for all the time lost watching *The Simpsons*...."

Speaking of that ferocious fray, the enviable Chad, who is attending the University of California at Irvine this fall, has imparted to us the secret to his success: "On your application, writing sample, statement of purpose, and letters of recommendation, you need to find out how to make what is special and outstanding about you and the UTA philosophy program stand out

clearly and distinctly. Also, you need to apply to many schools."

Chad applied to 18 schools and was accepted at three, a relatively large number of positive responses. By comparison, this year at the University of Texas at Austin, about 250 applications were received and only 12 were accepted. So, all things being equal, the more applications one sends out, the higher one's chances of getting accepted into a good school.

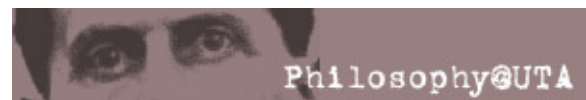
Also, the UTA Philosophy Reading Group is a valuable asset, according to Chad. "If you can't survive Reading Group, then you probably can't survive Graduate School." Chad credits it as providing one of the most helpful experiences at UTA in preparing him to enter the world of professional philosophy.

Chad was accepted with funding (i.e. a teaching stipend or fellowship with tuition remission) to two other universities, in addition to U.C. Irvine. He was put on waiting lists at five other institutions to receive funding if an accepted applicant dropped out before the deadline to accept first-round funding offers, April 15th.

At UCI, he will receive two years of Fellowship Grants, three years of Teaching Assistantship, and full tuition coverage for the period he'll be attending classes. But the application process can still be grueling. "If it were not for the hours of helpful conversation and good advice that I received from Denny Bradshaw and Charles Nussbaum, I don't think that I'd have made it. I thank them both, for their dedication and generosity," said Chad.

Cooperative Ph.D. Program Approved

Years of hard work and planning have culminated in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's approval last spring of a new Cooperative Philosophy Ph.D. Program, offered by the Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies at the University of North Texas in partnership with the Department of Philosophy and Humanities at UTA.



The program is the first general philosophy Ph.D. program in North Texas and is one of only a handful in the entire state. Its main educational objective is to train students at the doctoral level in the logically rigorous and finely styled modes of thought and expression that characterize work in professional philosophy. More specifically, the program is intended to offer a broad-based doctoral training which allows students who are interested in continuing their graduate educations in philosophy both flexibility in structuring their individual programs of study and also the opportunity to focus that training in areas of departmental strength—including environmental philosophy and ethics, the history of philosophy, and philosophy of religion.

Phi Sigma Tau Student Colloquium (Or, “Hummus, Beer, and Stoicism”!)

Opening his home to fellow students, the munificent Bill Baldwin hosted the Spring 2005 Phi Sigma Tau Student Colloquium, on April 9th. Mitch Hodge's adroit presentation of his paper entitled, “Stoicism, Cosmic Nature and Trust,” was truly one for the ages. The hummus and beer (for those over 21) were great too!



Professor Charles Nussbaum, philosophy major Ravenna Romack, and naughty Jesse B. Hodge ponder the intricacies of Stoicism

There are countless debates between scholars on the best way to describe the tenets of the ancient philosophical schools. One such recent debate is embodied in the works of Julia Annas and Lawrence Becker. The role of cosmic nature in stoicism is central to this debate. Annas argues that cosmic nature was neither foundational nor crucial to ancient Stoic ethics, while Becker—seeking a more modern version of Stoicism—argues for the rejection of cosmic teleology by modern Stoics.

From this particular debate two questions present themselves: specifically, “Did stoics view cosmic nature as foundational to their ethical theory?” and “Could a Stoic reject such a crucial tenet without forfeiting his or her

Stoicism?” Solutions were offered and debated with the nuanced eloquence that we have come to expect and admire in *Phi Sigma Tau*. Mitch concluded that the Stoics did indeed view cosmic nature as crucial to their ethical theory and that one could not hope to reject cosmic teleology and remain a Stoic.

After the presentation, members of *Phi Sigma Tau's* Texas Mu Chapter had their Spring New Initiates Dinner at Mac's Bar and Grill in Arlington. In attendance were the aforementioned Baldwin and Hodge, as well as *Phi Sigma Tau* members Brian King and Mindy Hutchinson, Thomas O'Mara and his brother Brian, the young and naughty Jesse B. Hodge, Lloyd Herring of Philosophy Club fundraising fame, and the esteemed professors Nussbaum and Bradshaw.

Philosophy Club Potluck Dinner and Cinema “Stinkfest” Rawking Good Time

Philosophers young and old, short and tall, gathered last March at Micah Adams's spartan-esque apartment (though I suspect that the Spartans had more furniture!) to enjoy a potluck dinner and revel for an evening in a quagmire of bad pop-philosophy films. Shown were two films sure to activate the gag-reflex in any analytic philosopher; a docudrama on Jacques Derrida, and the highly overrated animated film with an existentialist bent (that is, bent on suicide!) *Waking Life*. Those who were not bent over from the pain at the conclusion, commented that they were nonplussed.



Micah Adams and Jesus Trevino are nonplussed at having survived Stinkfest 2005!

There was great frivolity to be had, however, laughing at the many bad jokes and arguments. But, it was not all stinky. Served up before the cinematic stinkers were delicious comestibles (including our own Professor Denny Bradshaw's delectable pork roast) and plenty to imbibe of which all partook. It just goes to show, when it is really bad, it can be really good!

And the Oscar goes to...Lloyd's girlfriend's cheesecake!

Dr. Miriam Byrd Begins Professing at UTA

Joining us this fall from Western Michigan University is our newest assistant professor, Miriam Byrd. The process which brought her to us was a long one. Last fall, the Philosophy Department began the search process by placing ads in *Jobs for Philosophers* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Later, Charles Nussbaum and Denny Bradshaw flew to Boston to interview candidates at the A.P.A. conference. Dr. Byrd was one of the chosen few invited to campus to meet with philosophy majors as well as the rest of the faculty—all of whom enjoyed a smorgasbord of baked goods during the “job candidate reception” despite the lack of an open bakery on President’s Day.



Professor Miriam Byrd takes her place, front and center, at a recent gather of Department Faculty

Captivated students crunched cookies and listened in awe as Dr. Byrd gracefully outlined the intricacies of her paper, as well as the gist of her pedagogical style. Though all present were intrigued by her thesis, the latter information was of particular interest to those who would be her students in the prophesied Biomedical Ethics course as well as the long-missed Philosophy of Literature course and the steadfast Ancient Philosophy course.

Religion is “Good to Think”! *Philosophy Lecture Series*

Professor Robert McCauley from Emory University presented a paper, “Cognition, Science, and Religion: The Naturalness of Religion and the Unnaturalness of Science,” as the Spring 2005 installment in the Philosophy Lecture Series last February 4th. McCauley argued that science is a fragile social construction, whereas religious thinking is firmly embedded in the human mind.

Our cognitive capacities, he argued, are geared more toward the modestly counter-intuitive claims of religion as opposed to what he called the “radically” counter-intuitive claims of

science. Because of this, religion, for humans, is a natural enterprise. Science, on the other hand, is quite unnatural (even for the scientists themselves) and requires much training and institutional support to succeed.

McCauley based his claims on the latest evidence from research in the fields of cognitive science, psychology, cognitive anthropology, and philosophy of mind. His lecture was an extension of his previous works, co-authored with Thomas Lawson, *Rethinking Religion* (1990) and *Bringing Ritual to Mind* (1999). Both works demonstrate that religious practices naturally appeal to cognitive processes present in the human mind. Because of this, McCauley concludes, religion is here to stay, and science poses no threat to religion’s continued flourishing among human cultures.



Professor Robert McCauley answers questions

Science, on the other hand, is a fragile social undertaking by human cultures, and its continued success is dependent upon continued formal instruction as well as continued social and institutional support. “Without those,” McCauley warns, “science, as a product of the human mind, could easily become extinct.”

Feeling grateful...nostalgic...generous?

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