



PHI SIGMA TAU BULLETIN

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

FALL 2015, ISSUE 28

WELCOME HOME PHILOSOPHERS!

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FALL 2015

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WORDS FROM THE CHAIR

Philosophers, one and all,

Last year at this time we celebrated the opening of our new home in the Comal Building. Most of the new building issues have been resolved, and we are delighted to occupy one of the most welcoming and functional buildings on campus. If you have not visited us since we moved, please stop by when you can! This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of our Philosophy Dialogue Series, unique for the breadth of topics, number of events, variety of formats, and public outreach. In fall 2015 we will host over 60 events, involving thousands of students in philosophical reflection and conversation outside of the classroom. Seven of these events will take place at the San Marcos Public Library. Consider including a Dialogue in your visit to the department or your time in San Marcos.

We open the year with the largest faculty ever – 37 full-time faculty members – and the largest enrollment ever – over 6000 students in fall courses, an 18% increase over Fall 2014. In fact, we teach more students than any two other philosophy programs in the state – more than twice as many as UT or TAMU. We graduated over 40% of all philosophy Masters degrees in Texas, and teach over 21% of all philosophy students at public universities in the state. We are involved with the rare public university where there remains a broad commitment to a foundational core education, one where philosophy has an indispensable role.

We also open this year with some good byes. Two treasured and irreplaceable members of our faculty have moved into retirement – Gil Fulmer and Jeff Gordon. The current flourishing state of the department owes much to their efforts over the years – tireless advocates for more reflective living, clearer thinking, better reasoning, and continual learning. We miss them in the day-to-day life of the department, and look forward to their visits.

We also say goodbye to our colleague, student, and friend Victor Holk. Victor passed away in August after suffering severe burns while rousting his family, friend, and dogs from their burning San Marcos house in June. Victor was an irrepressible spirit, sharing his joy in living, his love of music and creativity, his delight in philosophy and reflection with everyone he encountered - changing, growing, and becoming more vibrantly Victor in our midst. Many of us were privileged to know or work with him, and his energy and commitment stand as inspiration across the department and the broader community. We will honor Victor's love of learning and teaching by establishing a graduate scholarship in his name for a MAAPE student.

Perhaps more than other professions and avocations, we philosophers are asked why we do what we do (and not infrequently by ourselves). As has been the case since Socrates, our presence is sometimes discomfiting to others. Why do we do what we do? Why philosophy? I share one answer, words from one of my first philosophy teachers, John J. McDermott: "Philosophy teaches us that every day, everyone has access to the depth of being human.... Philosophy sanctifies our reflective effort to ask why and, above all, philosophy makes an effort to tell the truth. In our time, what could be a more outlandish and coveted activity?"

-Craig



PHILOSOPHY DIALOGUE SERIES

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY DIALOGUE SERIES

The Texas State Philosophy Department, in conjunction with *The American Democracy Project*, is proud to present **The Fall Dialogue Series at Texas State**. The Series is a platform for open, critical discussion of a number of topics and is returning for its 20th year, kicking off on Monday September 21, 2015 in our spacious Dialogue Room in the Comal Building. Some highlights for the upcoming semester will include:

A dialogue with Jo Ann Carson (TXST) and the students of the Philosophy Dialogue course on September 22rd, 12:30P on Crossing the River: Bridging Builders. Wednesday dialogues at the San Marcos Public Library* will also begin this week, a dialogue with Dr. J.F. de la Teja on

Wednesday September 23, 3:30 p.m. on *Toward a More Inclusive Texas History: Rereading the Lone Star State*.

For more information on the series, and to pick up your own copy of the full Dialogue Calendar, come by the Philosophy Main Office (Comal 102.) *The San Marcos Public Library portion of the Dialogue Series is sponsored by the Philosophy Dialogue Series, San Marcos Public Library, Texas State Common Experience, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Located at 625 E. Hopkins Street.

TXST EXCELS AT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ETHICS COMPETITION

Coleen Watson, TXST Faculty

This past April students from the philosophy department and beyond made a great showing at the 2015 International Business Ethics Case Competition (IBECC) in New Orleans, LA. IBECC gathers students from universities around the world, including prestigious schools like Oxford and Fordham, and asks teams to develop a case for correcting an ethical problem a company might face in the business world. The competition is divided into rounds of 30 minute, 10 minute, and 90 second presentations, and requires a formal executive summary to be submitted six weeks before the competition.

Both our undergraduate and graduate teams decided to address the Coca-Cola Company as sponsors of the organization that puts on the World Cup, FIFA. We argued that Coca-Cola could play a large role in pressuring FIFA to stop dealing in corruption and human rights violations when putting on events like the World Cup. Little did we know that that U.S. Department of Justice was also building a damning case against FIFA at the same time we were, and that many others would be calling for sponsors to take an active approach in influencing corruption in the organization.

Putting together our IBECC presentations took most of the spring semester. We met at least once a week, and everyone put in hours of research, writing, and speech practice, while also balancing responsibilities for their regular classes.

There were three members of each team, and all took home some trophies.

Graduate Team: David Tamez-MAAPE student, Shaula Rocha -English Master's Program, Travis Stockton-MAAPE student; 2nd place Full-Presentation round, 1st place 90 second presentation round.

Undergraduate Team: Jennifer Meyer-Public Administration, Sean Daniel Johnson-Philosophy, Curtis Knicker-Business Management; 2nd place 90 second presentation round.

We are tremendously excited looking forward to competing next April in Boston.

If anyone is interested in being part of the IBECC team next year please send me an email at cmw129@txstate.edu.



PHILOSOPHY ALUMNI BANQUET

Our annual Alumni Banquet will be on Friday, November 6, 2015 from 5:30-9:00PM. This is a catered event, with dinner options for both omnivorian and vegetarian diets. The tickets this year will \$20.00 for attendees. It is being held at Texas State University in Flowers Hall room 230. Please contact Camrie Pippier at cp1292@txstate.edu for more information.

NEW FACES IN THE PHILOSOPHY DEPT.



Matt Bower

I enjoy running and biking. I am an avid music listener (being near to Austin is a plus), and I like

to go to the beach (or river!) with my family as much as possible.



Rebecca Farinas

I am most passionate about playing with my two grand-daughters. We like playing "family" with our American girl dolls.

I also love viewing films, and while interested in most genres and socially important independent films, I especially like fiction and historical dramas. Recently I have not been painting, but I would like to begin again in the near future as I find landscapes and seascapes particularly wonderful and fascinating. I love to swim, take long walks and ride my bike. I also love to travel.



Michael Istvan

Fortunate to have been banjoed to several times by Pete Seeger in elementary school, M.

A. Istvan Jr. was born and raised in what is arguably the psychic hub of North America (New York's Hudson Valley), where it is not uncommon for a baby's first words to be "futhark" or "astral." Istvan enjoys writing, running, swimming, and hanging out with his six-year-old son in Austin, where they both now live.



Carrie Crisp

In my free time I prefer to hang out with my dog, Goliath (the love of my life). I also enjoy traveling, reading, writing,

studying history, attending live theatre, watching professional football and basketball, camping/hiking (when it's not 100 degrees outside), playing darts, socializing with other humans, and watching Game of Thrones, Vikings, The Big Bang Theory, and environmental or historical documentaries."



Olga Gerhart

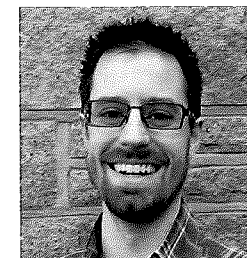
If I am not working or caring for my family, you will likely find me at the gym, where I squander

most of my free time. I also read purely for fun; this summer I read the Harry Potter series. In what time remains, I garden and loiter at the Farmer's Market.



Jennifer Thorington

I like hiking, reading, and riding bikes. I am also enjoy baking and watching horror movies.



Isaac Wiegman

I enjoy reading novels, playing board games (e.g. Settlers of Catan), hiking, mountain biking, eating out, working out, and going on outings

with my wife and daughters.

CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT MEETING

Coleen Watson, TXST Faculty

I accompanied MAAPE students Dylan Daniel, Blake Edwards, and Travis Stockton in promoting our Dialogue Series in New Orleans, LA this past June at the Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement Meeting, hosted by the American Democracy Project and The Democracy Commitment. These organizations work to utilize universities and community colleges as institutions promoting democratic ideals, especially in the goal of producing well rounded and informed citizens. We hosted a small session called "Higher Education's Civic Duty in a Democracy to Promote Dialogue." Instead of giving a speech or presentation about what the Dialogue Series does we held a mini-dialogue discussing the importance of using philosophy and discourse to engage students and citizens of San Marcos.

We gathered about twenty other conference attendees in an informal circle, and discussed the need to engage university communities in philosophical questioning, and how dialogue can encourage students to evaluate the relevance of democratic engagement in their own life. We chose to highlight the Dialogue Series as a community resource offering a threefold benefit: giving philosophy faculty and students an avenue to showcase and workshop their work; offering the wider Texas State campus a venue for students and employees to come engage in philosophical discussions where they may not otherwise have the opportunity; and hosting the Dialogue Series once a week at the San Marcos Public Library we invite the greater San Marcos community to participate in discussing important philosophical topics. We also reminded attendees that while we were all at a conference committed to upholding democratic ideals, we don't leave the institution of democracy as an exception to philosophic critique.

Of course, we attended many sessions on our own, gathering new ideas about teaching and writing with democratic engagement in mind. We also made time to explore the great city of New Orleans while there.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

USC-UCLA Graduate Student Conference in Philosophy
February 20, 2016; submissions due November 1, 2015

The graduate students of the University of Southern California and the University of California, Los Angeles, invite graduate students to submit papers in all areas of philosophy to be considered for presentation at the 2016 USC/UCLA graduate student conference. Full consideration will be given to papers on topics that engage with under-represented minority literature/approaches. Papers should be suitable for a 25-30 minute presentation (less than 4,500 words). Submissions should be suitable for blind review and include a separate cover letter listing author name, institution, paper title, abstract, keywords (up to five), and contact information. Please email papers as .doc or .pdf attachments.

Website: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/phil/>

Pacific University Undergraduate Philosophy Conference
April 15-16, 2015; submission due February 20, 2016

Papers are required to be of philosophical content, but there are no specific restrictions on subject matter within the arena of philosophical discussion itself. Papers should be approximately 3,000 words (10-12 pages). Electronic submissions (as Word documents) are required and should be sent to David Boersema at boersema@pacificu.edu. Submissions should include both the paper and an abstract (that is, a 100-200 word summary of the paper). Selected papers from the conference will be published in Volume 7 (2016) of the journal *Res Cogitans*.

Website: <http://www.pacificu.edu>

Society of Christian Philosophers Pacific Regional Conference

March 17-19, 2-16; submission due January 16, 2016

The End of Religion? The US is currently in the midst of what pundits are calling the 'Great Decline' in religiosity. Data suggest that the US is, in this respect, catching up to secular Europe and that within our lifetimes we may expect to see a world in which secularism is the norm in affluent countries, including the US, and where religious believers have become a small, shrinking, and increasingly marginalized minority. We invite submissions exploring the current theme or any topic of interest to Christian philosophers. We welcome participation by individuals regardless of their religious beliefs or lack thereof as presenters and participants. Papers (no more than 3000 word should be submitted to babers@san-diego.edu

Website: <http://home.sandiego.edu/~babers/SCP2016/>

STUDENTS IN PHILOSOPHY

TXST SYMPOSIUM & TEXAS PHILOSOPHICAL CALL FOR PAPERS

19th Annual Texas State Philosophy Symposium

Hosted in April 2016. Undergraduate or graduate papers on any philosophical topic are welcome. Papers should be suitable for a 20-minute presentation, submitted for blind review (author's name on cover page only), and are due in February 2016. Send by email (.doc or .docx file) to Amelie Benedikt, ab53@txstate.edu

Texas Philosophical

This journal is open to any philosophical essays written by Texan undergraduate students during the FY15-16 school year. Deadline for consideration is noon on 31st May 2016. Please check TexasPhilosophical.com for information regarding submission. Papers are to be emailed as a word document or in rich text format to TXPHIL@txstate.edu.

ΦΣΤ ACTIVITIES

In addition to our regular dialogues, Phi Sigma Tau members will be coming together this fall for several fun activities. Members will join in movie nights, bowling at Sunset Lanes, participation in the Talk of the Times, and fundraising with our Book/Bake Sales.

TALK OF THE TIMES

Talk of the Times, an activity of the *American Democracy Project* at TXST University, is a weekly open forum on current events and issues led by members of Phi Sigma Tau.

Discussions are held on Fridays in the Comal Building.

ALUMNI UPDATES

Alan Alanís (MA'14) is starting his Ph.D in Humanities, Major in History of Ideas, at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Jason Brazil (BA'14) is working as a communication specialist for Cabela's at their headquarters in Sidney, NE.

Evan Bennett (MA'10) will be teaching in China at the Shanghai High School, an international baccalaureate school.

Carrie Crisp (BA'07) is a lecturer for the TXSTATE Philosophy Department.

Dylan Daniel (MA'15) is a per course lecturer for the TXSTATE Philosophy Department.

Riley Inks (MA'13) will be teaching in China at the Shanghai High School, an international baccalaureate school.

Jenn Thorington (MA'13) is a lecturer for the TXST Philosophy Department.

Shaula Rocha (BA'14) recently began working in the administration for the English Department at Texas State University.

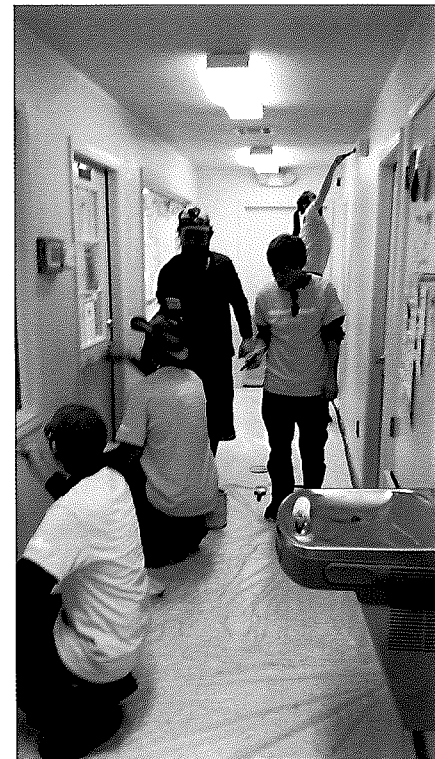
Joseph Edmondson (MA'15) is attending North Texas.

David Tamez (MA'15) is attending Kansas.

BOBCAT BUILD 2015

Rebekah Ross, TXSTATE Faculty

On March 28, 2015, members of Phi Sigma Tau joined the nearly 4,000 volunteers of Bobcat Build in a day of service to the San Marcos community. This was the first year for the philosophy students to participate, but Phi Sigma Tau hopes this is the beginning of an annual event. The group painted the walls and cleaned out a storage shed for the PODER Learning Center. PODER is a community center for San Marcos Housing Authority where children go after school to get homework assistance and a meal.



IN MEMORY OF
VICTOR GEORGE HOLK:
WARRIOR AND PHILOSOPHER

Prof. Peter Hutcheson

Victor cared about learning and philosophical problems in particular. Victor wanted to state arguments with precision and insight.

Victor had a sense of humor. He sent the cartoon, God as a Three-legged Table, about the problem of evil to me. It so well encapsulates much of the debate in that course that I posted it on my course website.

Victor wrote kind things about his parents. I hope my kids, most of whom are close to Victor's age, think the same of me.

One of the last times I spoke to Victor was at his wedding. Caitlin and Victor had exchanged some personal statements during the ceremony. Victor spoke to Bob Fischer and me after the ceremony, and he expressed regret that his vows were not as eloquent as Caitlin's. At the time I told him not to be concerned, that it was no contest. Later I reconsidered. Victor had expressed regret because of admirable qualities he had: sincerity, and a passion for precision. He wanted to state precisely how he felt about Caitlin, and he wished his words had conveyed the depth of his commitment and love.

Well, even I understood, as I'm sure his parents and Caitlin do.

Prof. Amelie Benedikt

Let us stop a minute to honor the arête of the young philosopher, Victor Holk.

Did you know that Victor was one of our first Master's students in Applied Philosophy? Do you friends and teachers of Victor recall how Victor was so very calm and surging with energy at the same time? Did you see how Victor seemed to stop breathing when listening to others, how his eyes remained locked on the faces of those speaking to him? Did you see how when Victor was quite sure the other person had finished speaking, his face would relax, and he would offer a sincere "Right on?" Did you notice that Victor's "Right on?" was not offered as an idle affirmation, but as a true question signifying his full participation and consent to be in the moment? Did you see how effortlessly Victor moved from the music world to the world of abstract thought? Did you also marvel at how Victor could criticize institutions without anger? Did you see how Victor could give himself to music and philosophy and wife and family and friends and pets and still remain open to the person standing in front of him?

Victor, your friends and teachers do miss your excellent mind and soul. We are saddened to think of all the fine lessons we will not receive from you.

Now, in answer to your perennial question "Right on?" I say emphatically "Right on, Victor, Right on!"

Travis Stockton

Today, I unfortunately have the honor of saying a couple words about our amazing friend and coworker Victor George Holk, who passed away earlier this year. I always think back to him and our conversations we used to have ranging from music to philosophy to life. We had a particularly interesting encounter in which we discussed what it truly meant to be a philosopher, and I feel that our conclusions are indicative of who he is as a person. We passed quickly over the simple answers of those who pursue knowledge, and lovers of wisdom and we found that it always had to be something more than that. For me it was always someone, whether it be beneficial or not, who gave truth and validity its fair shake among all things. Philosophers, like Victor, were not people who looked for easy or convenient answers. Philosophers were the people who had an earnest pursuit of truth as their overall end. It was in this regard that Victor was so diligent. It didn't matter if the truth was scary, or if truth destroyed your entire way of life. Philosophers have an undying passion to follow the truth wherever it goes. This to me, is what it meant to be Victor Strong. Being Victor Strong is being able to take what you have, good or bad, and love it for being what it is. Victor was truly a great friend and philosopher and never fled from the tough questions, the hard information, or the inconvenient truths. He took them, fought them, used them, and loved them. This is what it means to be a Warrior. Out of everything Victor has taught me personally, and all the people whose lives he touched, this is the strongest gift he gave. Life is crazy, thanks for teaching all of us how to cope and keep fighting..

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

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