

## PhiloNews

*Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy*

# ΦΙΛΟΝΟΥΣ



March 2010

### Report from the Department Chair

The news from tertiary education around the globe has been fairly bleak in recent months as the after-effects of 2008–09's financial crisis continue to be felt and governments take stock of their finances after the fiscal stimulus, monetary policy expansion, and institutional bailouts of the past year. Stories about cuts, including faculty cuts and including some threats to very well-established philosophy departments, particularly in the UK and US, have been appearing with increasing frequency (such as the dismissal of senior faculty at King's College London and elsewhere, unpaid furloughs at more than one state university system, and freezes to graduate admission in, for example, California and Florida).

We have not, so far, been under nearly as much budget pressure as some of those places in the news, but we are far from out of the woods and much of the work of the chair and the departmental front office in recent months has involved dealing with some fiscal realities for the College that are beginning to bite harder.

In 2008–09 we filled 14 Sessional contracts for regular in-class courses. In 2009–10 that number is 4, and in 2010–11 we plan to hire no regular Sessionals at all. This means that the proportion of our regular undergraduate classes taught by Sessionals will go from 22% to 0%.

In 2008–09 we taught 63 regular undergraduate courses, and in 2010–11 that number will be 58 (an 8% reduction). For 2010–11 we have cancelled, for budgetary reasons, four of the twelve sections of Distance Education courses that we had planned to offer.

The graduate funding picture, by contrast, has been less bleak than one might have feared over the past couple of years, but that may be about to change. The amount we spent on GTAs went down (by some 15%, \$70,000) between 2007–08 and 2008–09, but increased again, driven by larger class sizes, in 2009–10 (though not back to the level of 2007). We expect to see similarly large class sizes next year, but it is not yet clear whether we will be able to keep our GTA budget at close to the level required to continue providing TA support at current levels. We also expect to see reductions in other areas of graduate funding.

Connected to this, we have been required to slash our offers of graduate admission to half the level that we had planned on and that would have been required to keep our graduate numbers at a 'steady state.' We can therefore expect to see a, hopefully temporary, reduction in the size of our graduate programs.

Finally, to complete this rather bleak picture, changes in accounting practices in the College will lead to a very drastic reduction in the amount

of money we are able to use to top up the department's 'discretionary fund,' which is the only source of internal funding for departmental activities such as conferences.

Despite all this doom and gloom, however, the department continues to flourish. Our collegial spirit is alive and well, faculty and graduate students continue to research and publish, and once again the last round of glowing student evaluations was a testament to our collective commitment to teaching (and the power of philosophy to attract bright young minds). Hopefully the financial clouds will lift, sooner rather than later, and until then I am confident that we can keep the central business of the department not only ticking over but positively thriving.

*Andrew Bailey, Department Chair*

### Report from the Associate Chair

These days I've mainly been making arrangements for this year's *Guelph Lecture in Philosophy*, which is to be delivered on March 18<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. by *Dr. Paul Franks* of the University of Toronto. The title of Dr. Franks' talk is "German Idealism, Anti-Semitism, and the Significance of Jewish Philosophy in Multicultural Modernity."

Dr. Franks is an accomplished scholar of Kant, Jewish philosophy and German Idealism, and author of the recent book *All or Nothing: Skepticism, Transcendental Arguments and Systematicity in German Idealism*. A group of interested graduate students and faculty have formed a reading group around this book and have begun meetings to discuss it. Interest in Professor Franks' visit is high. For more information, please see the *Guelph Lecture in Philosophy* page on the department website. It should be an interesting talk, accessible and open to the public, and everyone's invited to a reception afterward.

We also had another successful installment of the *Philosophy Goes Public* speaker series, on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Guelph Public Library. Aaron Masecar, a PhD candidate in our department, gave a lively talk entitled "It's Just a Bad Habit and Other Misconceptions About Habits."

*Mark McCullagh, Associate Chair*

### Report from the Graduate Coordinator

It's graduate admissions time, and the graduate studies committee has been busy reviewing files. The good news is that we have had a lot of really interesting candidates applying to both our MA and PhD programs; we plan to get our offers of admission out soon, and we are looking forward to another great crop of new students next year.

In other news (and hold on tight to your seats for this one), we have a course title change to announce: Continental Theory I (Phil 6140) has been changed to Contemporary European Philosophy I, and Continental Theory II (Phil 6150) has been changed to Contemporary European Philosophy II.

Finally, I am happy to announce that in the fall we had a number of MA and PhD students successfully pass their Final Oral Examinations:

*Jeremy Hogg* defended his MA thesis, "Against Instrumentalism," on October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

*Scott Marratto* defended his PhD thesis, "The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity," on November 20<sup>th</sup>.

*Jason Robinson* defended his PhD thesis, "A Hermeneutical Reconstruction of the Natural Sciences and Objectivity: Theory, Practice, and Progress," on November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

*Alexandra Morrison* defended her PhD thesis, "The Death That is Mine: Ambiguity of Authenticity in *Being and Time*," on November 26<sup>th</sup>.

Congratulations & best wishes to you all for future success!

*Karyn Freedman, Graduate Coordinator*

### Report from the Undergraduate Coordinator

The Undergraduate Studies Committee has begun collecting information, in preparation for a curriculum review. We're surveying several other similar-size departments with graduate programs,

to see what their requirements for majors are, how many courses they offer at each level, how many courses they have in each of the areas of philosophy, and so on. This will give us a basis for comparison with our own offerings and requirements. The next steps will be to summarize our findings, discuss different levels of curriculum review we can engage in and begin the process. Stirring stuff!

On Thursday, March 4, I'll be speaking to the Undergraduate Philosophy Students Club about what you can do with a philosophy degree (quite a lot, in fact).

*Professor Karen Wending, Undergraduate Coordinator*

### Report from the Graduate Student Association

The PGSA is having their annual graduate student conference on March 13th. The theme of the conference is "Bodies in the World". It will take place from 9:30a.m. - 4:30p.m. in MacDonald Stewart Hall and include a keynote speech by Professor Hasana Sharp (McGill) at 7:00p.m. called: "Men have nothing less in their power than their tongues': On spoken passions." A reception will follow (see poster for details; full program available on the department website). Also, stay tuned for information regarding another poker night fundraiser sometime in March.

*Kelly Jones, PGSA President*

Philosophy Graduate Students' Association  
Annual Graduate Conference  
**Bodies In The World**

March 13th, 2010  
MacDonald Stewart Hall  
Room 121 & 129  
9:30 - 4:30

Keynote Speaker:  
Prof. Hasana Sharp (McGill)  
"Men Have Nothing Less in Their Power  
Than Their Tongues: On Spoken Passions"  
P.J.'s Atrium (MACS) 7:00 p.m. Reception to Follow