

# PHILONEWS

September 2004

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## From the Chair

Welcome to the new academic year. Fall is shaping up to be a busy semester. Patricia Sheridan has put together an excellent speaker series (see over), and the conference in social and political philosophy organized by Omid Payrow Shabani promises to be outstanding. A few other events are in the works. Best wishes for a productive and successful year. - *Andrew Wayne*

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## John McMurtry retires

John McMurtry has been a member of our department since 1970, after getting his Ph.D. from the London School of Economics under Jerry Cohen. In his teaching, publications, and public advocacy he has always been a champion of the underdog and a challenger of the overdog, whether at the level of global economy or university politics. He is a person of strong convictions, but he has also been flexible enough to learn from experience. In the early part of his career John was so infused with the spirit of the sixties that he regarded grades as an unnecessary evil, and would have allowed the students to assign their own grades if he could have. It would be hard to recognize that academic anarchist in the rigorous mentor that he has become, who holds his students to demanding levels of achievement and assessment.

Just as he was flexible in his development as a teacher, as a theorist he avoided any rigid, uncritical commitment to a party line. He began life as a Marxist, but had enough intellectual curiosity and openness to other ways of doing things to be able to appreciate non-Marxist philosophies as different as Nietzsche, Mencius, and the Bhagavad Gita. In fact, far from seeing Asian philosophies as opiates of the masses, John was the one who kept Oriental Philosophy on the books when no one else was interested in teaching it, and was responsible for expanding it from a single course to two separate courses. However strong he may be in his convictions, those convictions always spring from independent inquiry rather than from blind adherence. - *Ken Dorter*

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## From the Graduate Co-ordinator

Greetings to all graduate students! Welcome to the new academic year and for those who are just joining us, welcome to your graduate programme in philosophy. I am the Graduate Coordinator and Dr. Karen Wendling is the MA Programme Assistant so you will be seeing one or both of us at various times during your programme. (And of course let us know if you have a question or a problem, since we can very often help.) The week before classes has quite a number of special events, including

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some that are particularly for grad students, e.g., the university's Wednesday afternoon barbecue, the PGSA's Friday lunch, the party at Jeff Mitscherling's on Saturday. (For information on all of these and more, please see your emails.) It's been an excellent summer for our graduate students with two doctoral students successfully taking their Oral Qualifying Exams, so they are now in their final stretch, working closely on their theses. Also a number of Master's students have successfully taken their Final Master's Oral Exam, the last academic event before graduation. Congratulations to all! I've spoken with all incoming graduate students and I already see a whole new set of exciting research projects beginning to shape up. I hope you find your time here both challenging and rewarding! - *Jean Harvey*

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### Philosophy Graduate Student Association

Hello philosophers! We are the Philosophy Grad Students Association (PGSA). Our mandate is to help ensure the well-being of the grad student body, and represent it. In the 2003-4 year, we had many interesting projects and achieved several goals: the grad office in MacKinnon 303 now has a phone, several computers, Internet access, a microwave, and is looking snappier than ever with its new desk arrangement (thanks to everyone that helped out!); also we committed \$1,000 of our budget for travel grants. We have also brought to the Chair's attention some of the issues grads are facing. We are currently working on finding a more accessible photocopier in the MacKinnon building, and we have several ideas on the go (student confer-

ences, visiting speakers, dissertation group, etc.).

Some of these activities and ideas will have to be continued by the new board of the PGSA that will take over in September, which brings us to the subject of elections. Student reps are needed for several committees in and outside of our Department. Contact us to get a list of current representatives. These reps will change in September, and we are counting on YOU to help us take their place. Get involved in the Department's life, and talk to the people that are now your reps to find out what they do. Contact the PGSA and tell us your ideas, projects, and concerns, we might be able to help! To learn more about us, visit:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/pgsa.shtml> - *Ileana Szymanski*

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### Undergraduate Philosophy Association

I've graciously been offered some space in this newsletter to introduce the undergraduate philosophy club to many of you. Our club reemerged last year, after a hiatus of several years. Recognizing the importance of tradition, the club's executive is trying to establish a foundation for the club that will add resonance, not only to the experiences of its club members, but *eventually* to the Guelph campus as a whole.

Our main venue for meeting is the Grad Lounge, every Wednesday at 5:30 pm during the school year. We call it "Phight Club". While the specific details are still forthcoming, the executive is also happy to announce that this November we will be holding the 2nd Annual Philosophy Club Toga Party. We are planning "Movie Nights" to take place several

### Philosophy calendar

Contact the Philosophy office at 824-4120, ext. 53272 for more information.

**Sept. 20, 2:30-4:00 p.m.** Department meeting, MacKinnon 305.

**Sept. 24, 3:00-5:00 p.m.** Proemial Lecture. David Hitchcock (McMaster), "Does God Exist?", at Wilfred Laurier University, Dr. Alvin Woods Bldg (DAWB), room 5-303.

**Oct. 8, 3:00-5:00 p.m.** John Russon (Guelph), "Recollection in the MENO: Knowledge is Virtue", MacKinnon 308.

**Oct. 22, 3:00-5:00 p.m.** Tim Kenyon (Waterloo), "Weakness of Will and Motivated Inference", MacKinnon 308.

**Oct. 25, 2:30-4:00 p.m.** Department meeting, room TBA.

**Nov. 13-14.** International Conference in Social and Political Philosophy. Jeremy Waldron, Will Kymlicka, James Tully, Jeremy Webber, Charles Taylor, Thomas McCarthy, Douglas Mog-gach, Michel Rosenfeld, Courtney Jung, Simone Chambers and Kenneth Baynes. For more information, see [www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/spp](http://www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/spp).

**Nov. 19, 3:00-5:00 p.m.** Byron Williston (Wilfred Laurier), "Blaming Agents in Moral Dilemmas", MacKinnon 308.

**Nov. 29, 2:30-4:00 p.m.** Department meeting, room TBA.

times throughout the year. We also hope to introduce a sort of literary club, where members come together and read aloud their essays. Other students would then critique them, giving them the chance to edit their pieces before they were submitted to a professor.

If you have any questions about our club, please don't hesitate to contact me ([jvanderj@uoguelph.ca](mailto:jvanderj@uoguelph.ca)) or another member of the executive. - *Joseph van der Jagt*