

PHILONEWS

April 2005

From the chair

I am delighted to report that Dr. Karen Houle will join our department in July as an Assistant Professor. Dr. Houle specializes in Philosophy of the Environment.

Congratulations to our new Undergraduate Students' Philosophy Club for its inaugural event at the Grad Lounge on April 14. Francis Côté (President), Sheeman Barakzai (Vice-President) and Eric Seaman (Secretary) organized a highly successful evening featuring Professor John Russon and his band. We look forward to more USPC activities next year.

Congratulations are also due to our graduate students. M.A. student Michelle Ford, incoming M.A. student Jennifer Rinaldi, Ph.D. student Cherilyn Keall and incoming Ph.D. student Anthony Vander Shaaf have all won Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) awards. SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship awards have yet to be announced, and I have my fingers crossed.

Nor should faculty be left out. Congratulations to Peter Loptson on his election as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. Finally, congratulations to Don Dedrick for winning a SSHRC research grant (see below).

The academic year is drawing to a close as we grade (or write) term papers and exams. Best wishes for a relaxing and productive spring and summer. - *Andrew Wayne*

Lorraine Code on Ecological knowing

On Friday, March 18, Dr. Lorraine Code presented a lecture entitled "Knowing Ecologically: Remapping The Epistemic Terrain." Dr. Code is a distinguished Professor of Philosophy at York University. She also teaches Women's Studies. Her lecture was eagerly attended by philosophy faculty and students and her reputation as a feminist also attracted students and faculty from Women Studies.

Dr. Code emphasized the need for adoption of the model of ecology in epistemology. She drew from the work of the mid 20th-century American ecologist Rachel Carson and the Canadian biologist Karen Messing. Dr. Code saw in the works of these two natural scientists creative restructuring possibilities for ecological thinking that are yet to be realized in spite of the widespread use of ecological discourse.

Ecology as envisioned by Carson questions instrumental rationality, abstract individualism, reductivism and exploitation of people and places endemic to modern scientific knowledge.

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Dr. Code concluded her paper by maintaining that ecological thinking generates a model epistemological methodology which can reveal human and environmental harms that epistemologies of mastery have caused.

The lecture was followed by an enthusiastic question and answer session. - *Basharat Tayyab*

Don Dedrick on colour categorization

Professor Don Dedrick has been awarded a \$60,000 SSHRC grant to study fundamental questions related to colour naming and categorization.

There is a large and controversial literature on colour naming and categorization drawing from psychology, linguistics, anthropology, vision science, neurophysiology, and philosophy. This research projects addresses two main issues: [1] What is the nature of relationship between the non-linguistic perception of colour and linguistic colour classification? [2] What is the cognitive processing of colour categorization like?

M.A. seminar conference: notes from beyond the classroom

We've gone beyond. For many of us, the M.A. Seminar conference was our first opportunity to test ourselves by taking our place behind the podium and presenting our ideas. It was a success. Each of us presented a paper on which we had been working over the past semester. Each of us were presented with ways in which we could improve our work and challenges that our projects face. It was a valuable learning experience, both in relation to the particularities of our work,

as well as in relation to the realities of an academic career.

We would like to thank Professor Omid Payrow Shabani for his guidance and criticism over the past two semesters as well as Professors Ken Dorter and Jeff Mitscherling for contributing their time in chairing the two sessions of the conference. Their input added to the quality of the question periods and to our learning experience. Also, we would like to thank all of the professors and students who attended, especially those who contributed to discussion. It was a pleasure to share our ideas with those present, to see that we engaged our audience, and to consider the thoughtful questions and comments which were offered. Lastly, a "Thank you" to those of you who were unable to attend, but who made your support felt.

For those not in attendance, a brief summary follows:

- Coffee, 9:30, a little more coffee. Professor Dorter moderating.
- Andrew Robinson: Can Foucault's ethics offer us an example of answering the question of spiritual hunger without an appeal to transcendence? Yes. (Challenging and not wholly unproblematic questions from, among others, Professor Dorter.)
- Adam Loughnane: Does Heideggerian or Buddhist philosophy offer a practical method for moving beyond the dichotomous thinking of modern consciousness? Buddhism, yes. Heidegger, not explicitly. (Professor Lampert raises a problem.)
- Fraser Birt: Is Iris Marion Young's suggestion to legitimate rhetoric in an attempt to expand the inclusive nature of deliberative democracy unproblematic? No, rhetoric is dangerous.

Philosophy calendar

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

Apr. 22 - 23. Tri-University Ph.D. Seminar Conference, room TBA.

Apr. 29 - May 1. Zenon Pylyshyn Conference on the foundations of cognitive science. See www.zencon.ca for more information.

(Once again Professor Lampert presents challenging criticism.)

- Lunch, a little more coffee, and a better turn out. Professor Mitscherling moderating.
- Jeff Spring: Are capabilities theories compatible with more traditional rights-based theories? Of course they are. (Professor Mitscherling manages to pertinently relate Aristotle and Cheers in a question that takes most of us the better part of the afternoon to decipher.)
- Dan Mullin: Has our exaggerated dependence on visual metaphor in relation to cognitive functions caused us to illegitimately devalue everyday knowledge? Yes, but this may be countered by a return to aural/oral metaphor. (Professor Newman's knowledge of the relation between Ong, McLuhan and the latter's intellectual predecessor leaves us all a little befuddled.)
- Michelle Ford: Is it our actions or our intentions that exemplify the moral character of our devotion? Intentions, but not unproblematically. (Professor Newman, again, raises a very important point.)
- 4:00, beer (Happy Birthday Jeff!), a little more beer (Congratulations Ileana!). - *Andrew Robinson*