



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorborg
10-13

Report from the Chair

I am very happy to greet you all in this freshly-minted revival of our Department Newsletter. I would also like to thank Stefan Linquist for taking this on. I hope you will all make sure to keep Stefan posted with updates on your research activities for future issues of PhiloNews. This is a great way to see what we're all doing and to keep up to date with important changes and events in the Department.

I would like to begin by extending a warm welcome to all of our new graduate students and a welcome back to all of our returning grads. The Philosophy Graduate Students' Association (PGSA) now has a new membership, with Kyle Novak as the new President, and I'm sure they will contribute in exciting ways to the life of the Department! Keep an eye out for upcoming events and initiatives from the PGSA.

Welcome also to all of our incoming and current undergrads! Our Society for Undergraduate Philosophers (SUP) is gearing up for an exciting and active year with Breton Van Schubert as the new President.

Thanks to all of the PGSA and SUP executives for taking on these important roles in furthering the student experience in Philosophy!

Big news this year is the addition of a new faculty member. Gus Skorborg will be officially joining the Philosophy Department in January 2020. Dr. Skorborg's research interests in AI ethics fills out the Department's existing expertise in applied ethics and the philosophy of science and bridges Philosophy's connection with the new CARE-AI centre here at Guelph. See the feature on Gus in this newsletter. We look forward to building new programming and courses in this area!



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

We have many events and initiatives coming to the Department this year. The Department is hosting the annual conference of the Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy (CSWIP) in October and I would like to thank all of the students and faculty who are giving their time to make this an excellent event! We also have an excellent Speaker Series this year and I hope to see you all out at the talks. Our graduate students are busy organizing conferences, colloquia, and film nights and our undergrads have lots of ideas for events this year—watch this space for announcements and updates!

As this new year starts, I want to say that my goal as Chair is to build on the enthusiasm and energy of our Department to further our research and teaching successes and to ensure that our Department is as welcoming, supportive, and encouraging as possible for all our members. I look forward to working with you all this year!

-Trish Sheridan

Report from the Grad Coordinator

This academic year we welcome the largest incoming group of graduate students in recent memory. It includes eight new PhD students (Haomaio, Kyle, James, Andrew, Gennady, Amber, Mesiam and Jahangir), two thesis MAs (Dylan and Austin), and 6 1yr MAs (Molly, Marim, John, Josephine, Leah and Brian). Taken together, they have a broad range of interests and backgrounds, and we welcome them to the Dept. Faculty should expect to have lots of conversations about potential graduate supervision in the upcoming weeks.

-Don Dedrick



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Student Achievements

Our grad students had a number of noteworthy achievements in 2019.

Patricia Pajunen won a SSHRC Doctoral Award. They have also been awarded a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship for Indigenous Students at Queens University.

Josh Grant-Young, Marie-Pier Lamay, and Robert Minatel won OGS Fellowships.

Rachel Elliot's dissertation, "Collaborative Temporality: Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenology of Music" was been nominated for the [Distinguished Dissertation Award](#) at the Canadian Association for Graduate Students and selected to represent U of Guelph at the national CAGS competition.

Cameron Fioret published an opinion piece in the Hamilton Spectator, "[We need grassroots activism to ensure water access.](#)" He will be presenting a paper at the 2019 Sustainability and Development Conference at the University of Michigan titled, "Water, peace, and Political Stability."





PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Recent Graduates

Over the past year we've had a number of graduates from our MA and PhD programs.

At the MA level:

- **Peter Copeland**, "A Trade-Off Analysis of the Normative Values of Deliberative Democracy" (Advisor - Payrow Shabani).
- **Michael Furac**, "Cruelty and Callousness in Virtue Ethics: Why the Virtuous Agent Acts Well Towards Animals" (Advisor - Hacker-Wright).
- **Ritika Pal**, "The Combination Problem of Panpsychism and its Possible Solutions" (Advisor - Bailey).
- **James Vander Zaag**, "The Ethical Role of Aesthetic Experience in Levinas" (Advisor - Hacker-Wright).
- **Mahdi Dadgariamdari**, "Cosmopolitanism as an Answer to Ethic Issues of Iran" (Advisor - Deveaux).

At the PhD level:

- **Brent Ables**, "A Deleuzian Theory of Eternity" (Advisor - Hacker-Wright and Lampert).
- **Shannon Buckley**, "Dignity: A Salient Concept in Philosophy of Medicine" (Advisor - Goldenberg).

Congratulations to you all!

Special notice: **Tim Fitzjohn**, who completed his MA in 2010 in our department, recently completed a PhD at the University of Kentucky on Hegel's natural Law essay. He is currently teaching at Thompson Rivers University.



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Faculty News (in 2019)

Andrew Bailey added to his list of Broadview introductory textbooks with his [Introduction to Philosophy](#). He also gave a talk called “Artificial Selves” about the moral status of AI systems at The Science of Consciousness (TSC 2019), Interlaken Switzerland, June 2019.

Don Dedrick recently published an article in *the Journal of Informal Logic* titled, "[Is an appeal to popularity a fallacy of popularity?](#)" Thanks to those attending his talk in our 2018-19 speakers series for their helpful comments!

Monique Deveaux recently published an article on climate change activism in [The Conversation Canada](#). It offers an interesting reflection on the ethics surrounding Greta Thunberg’s political message, recent student protests, Trudeau’s pipeline purchase and related issues.

Maya Goldenberg was featured on the [Food Focus podcast](#), an initiative of Mike von Massow, OAC Chair in Food System Leadership. It discusses epistemic trust and social epistemology in order to highlight parallels between vaccine hesitancy and public mistrust of food industries. On November 14, 2019 Maya will be speaking at the London Public Library philosophy lecture series on evidence and belief. Her talk will be on the so-called “death of expertise.”





PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Karen Houle's recent book, *The Grand River Watershed: A Folk Ecology* has been selected as a 2019 finalist for the [Governor General's Literary Award](#) for Poetry and was included in the Toronto Star's list of four of the best new poetry books. Congratulations Karen!

Stefan Linquist published a collaborative paper in *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, "[Past, present and future approaches using computer vision for animal re-identification](#)," which involved (among others) Graham Taylor the Director of CARE AI. Stefan also published a co-authored chapter, "[Scientists' concepts of innateness: Evolution or Attraction?](#)" in Wilkenfield & Samuels (ed.s) *Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Science*. There was a session at the 2019 meeting of the Pacific APA on his (2017) co-authored book, *Defending Biodiversity: Environmental Science and Ethics*. His response to critics, "Two (and a half) arguments for defending biodiversity on aesthetic grounds," is forthcoming in *Biology and Philosophy*.

John Russon had two book manuscripts accepted in 2019: *Adult Life: Aging, Responsibility and the Pursuit of Happiness*, forthcoming 2020 from SUNY Press, and *Politics, Money and Persuasion: Democracy and Opinion in Plato's Republic*, forthcoming 2021 from Indiana University Press. In June, he hosted a week-long Toronto Summer Seminar in Philosophy titled, "Desert Courage and Urban Craft: Character and Culture in *The Muqaddimah* of Ibn Khaldûn." He also gave a keynote talk at the "Our Futures" conference at Quest University in addition to presentations at St. John's University (Annapolis), The University of Toronto, and Memorial University.



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Coming Events

Workshop: **Theoretical Approaches to Ecosystem Evolution.**

October 20, 10am to 3 pm @10C.

W. Ford Doolittle (Dalhousie University), "Recasting patterns of interaction as units of selection: advantages (and some disadvantages) of "It's the song, not the singer's) thinking."

Kevin S. McCann (UoGuelph), "Persistence and the role of population growth in ecological systems."

Organizer: Stefan Linquist

Conference: **Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy.**

October 25- 27th, 2019 @ UofG.

This conference asks participants to consider how food, as a topic worthy of philosophical investigation, is related to feminist challenges to traditional discourse. How has food been discussed in the history of philosophy, or overlooked? How has feminist philosophical scholarship taken into account issues including the ethics and politics of food production, availability, and consumption? What counts as food, and how are metaphysical claims regarding the nature of food related to our attitudes to animals, to climate, and to cultural geographies?

Organizers: P.M. Sheridan, S. Brennan, K. Freedman, M.Deveaux.





PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Conference: **Fluid Thinking: Water Justice in a Changing Climate.**

April 3, 2020 @10C.

Speakers:

Nancy Doubleday, (Hope Chair in Peace and Health, Department of Philosophy, McMaster University).

Arlene Kwasniak, (Professor Emerita of Law, Canadian Institute of Resources Law, University of Calgary).

Brittany Luby, (Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Guelph. Dr. Luby will present with her research associates).

Andrea Bradford (Professor, School of Engineering, University of Guelph).

Samantha Mehlretter (Master's Candidate, School of Engineering, University of Guelph).

Organizer: Cameron Fioret





PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Philosophy Department Speaker Series



November 1, 2019

[Natalie Stoljar](#)

Associate Professor and Interim Director for
Health and Social Policy, McGill University .



November 29, 2019

[Jacqueline Feke](#)

Assistant professor of Philosophy, University
of Waterloo. History and Philosophy of Science.



January 31, 2020

[Rebecca Comay](#)

Professor of Philosophy and Comparative
Literature, University of Toronto.



February 28, 2020

[Samantha Brennan](#)

Dean of the College of Arts, University of Guelph.
Contemporary Normative Ethics & feminist
Philosophy.



March 27, 2020

Dale Turner

Program in Native American Studies,
Dartmouth College. First nations Issues and
Philosophy of Law.



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Feature: Gus Skorburg

I asked Gus, our new faculty member, some questions about his research and teaching.

What project(s) are you currently working on in your research?

Broadly, I'm interested in the implications of our *interdependence* with other agents and with various technologies for a variety of issues in applied and normative ethics.

More specifically, I'm working on a few projects at the intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and bioethics. I just finished a draft of a paper (co-authored with Phoebe Friesen, at McGill) which lays out some of the ethical issues with using large-scale text mining – e.g. social media posts or electronic health records - to make inferences about mental health. We're planning to follow this up with another paper about ethical oversight (or lack thereof) for these text-based approaches, and also other kinds of emerging tech, including wearables, smartphone mental health apps, voice recognition, and other pervasive sensors. I'm writing a few other papers with my post-doc advisor (Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, at Duke) about how AI applications could bolster traditional methods in bioethics, where we look at the algorithms governing kidney exchanges as an interesting test case.

I've also got an assortment of other projects and collaborations: Some empirical work on perceptions of personal identity and identity change; some empirical work about online discourse and political polarization; some theoretical work in virtue ethics about the role of organizations in shaping moral character.



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

What sort of contact have you had with the folks at CARE AI? Do you foresee any specific collaborations?

For me, one of the most exciting parts about joining the Philosophy Department at the University of Guelph is the CARE-AI initiative. There is so much research, so much funding, and so much hype surrounding AI right now. And yet, in most cases, the ethical and legal frameworks have not kept pace with the technology. But it seems like CARE-AI will be very well positioned to tackle this problem.

What has impressed me most so far is that Graham Taylor (Academic Director of CARE-AI) has a vision for the Centre where the technical side of AI is on equal footing with the ethical side – where computer scientists can work wide-by-side with philosophers. Too often, ethical considerations are treated as afterthoughts, or outside the proper scope of AI researchers and practitioners. But if the technical and ethical issues are treated as inextricably intertwined (which in my view, they are), then I think we will have the opportunity to make meaningful progress on developing ethical and responsible AI, as the title of the Centre suggests.

In terms of collaborations, we're very excited to bring together folks from the technical disciplines with folks from the humanities. We're strategizing about how to effectively integrate ethics into the AI curriculum (rather than treat it as an afterthought). We'll be working on building connections with industry partners so that philosophers who work in applied ethics, social/political philosophy, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and other areas, can play a meaningful role in the ongoing dialogues about the role of AI in society.

But the Centre is just getting off the ground, so it's a great time to be involved. I hope anyone that is even remotely interested will be in touch!



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

Will you be teaching any courses in the fall?

Yes, I'll be teaching a graduate course on Science & Ethics which will be mostly focused on issues surrounding Big Data and AI. We'll explore some epistemological questions (Are you justified in believing what you googled? How is knowledge distributed in social networks?), some questions in the philosophy of science (Is there a replication crisis in Machine Learning? Does Big Data render causal explanation obsolete?) And of course, we will spend lots of time on ethical, legal, and social implications: machine bias; programming morality into AI; the future of work; fairness, accountability and transparency in machine learning, etc.

Can you tell us about any recent publications or conference presentations (from the past 12-18 months)?

Sure. This summer I attended the Society for Philosophy and Technology conference for the first time. The conference is held every two years, and this year it was at Texas A&M University. It was quite an interesting experience because there were so many different approaches and methods represented. Overall, the papers and presentations tended to skew towards a more "Continental" orientation, but there was also lots of interesting empirical work from sociologists and psychologists, some old-school philosophy of action, some pragmatism, and also lots of Science and Technology Studies (STS) work. I gave a presentation entitled, "From the extended mind to the distracted mind: Some ethics of addictive design". The talk examined the recent claims being advanced by Tristan Harris (former "Design Ethicist" at Google) and others that smart-



PHILO NEWS

Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy
University of Guelph

Fall 2019

Report from
Department Chair
1-2

Report from
Grad Coordinator
2

Student Achievements
3

Recent Graduates
4

Faculty News
5-6

Coming Events
7-9

Feature:
Gus Skorburg
10-13

-phone apps are increasingly designed to exploit our psychological vulnerabilities and hijack our minds. I think there is some truth to this. But my main argument in the presentation was that these kinds of claims tend to rely on an under-examined and somewhat implausible view of our cognitive and affective processes.



Gus Skorburg.