Greetings from the Department Head

The number of students majoring in philosophy (and the humanities more generally) at U.S. colleges and universities continues to decline. From 2014 to 2017, the number of philosophy majors declined by almost 15% nationally. During this same period, the number of both majors and minors in our department increased by over 200 percent. This is not a fluke. Aware of the trend away from the humanities, our faculty decided that we would not sit by passively and watch our enrollment shrink. We agreed that we needed to increase the visibility of the department and to inform students of the importance of majoring/minoring in philosophy, focusing on the ways in which philosophy is intrinsically interesting and teaches the skills that employers want. At the same time, we developed a variety of new courses aimed at students who might never have chosen to take a philosophy course. In addition to our standard offerings, including courses in ethics, logic, the history of philosophy, philosophy of religion and philosophy of mind, we now offer: Happiness and Well-Being, Artificial Intelligence and Philosophy, Philosophy of Dreams, Social Media Today, Animal Ethics, and other courses relevant to the lives of both philosophy majors and non-majors. In addition, we recognized the need to develop a robust online presence, and we now offer an online philosophy minor. (We are currently discussing whether to develop an online certificate in ethics or practical philosophy.) Other programmatic changes included introducing a Pre-Law track and a Pre-Ministry track for majors. Finally, this spring we created an option for students to work on a capstone project during their senior year.

College life is more than academics, and the Philosophy Department recognizes this. For over thirty years, the undergraduate philosophy club, Friends of the Forms, has organized several talks every semester, open to all, of a philosophical nature. During the past few years, in an effort to create a student focused culture, we opened a student lounge and developed several programs. Responding to students' requests to have the opportunity to meet with faculty members on an informal basis, three years ago we initiated the First Friday Pizza Forum. On the first Friday of every month, a faculty member meets with students to informally discuss a relevant topic; e.g., the importance of democracy, is ethics purely relative, and what is implicit bias. During the same year, we began recruiting students to participate on an ethics bowl team, and as you'll read later in this letter, the team has thrived.

Personally, I continue to pursue research in bioethics. Last month I presented a paper at a regional conference in San Antonio, and I was recently informed that I will be presenting my research at an international conference in Paris. I plan to talk about the Nocebo Effect. The nocebo effect, which is the mirror image of the placebo effect, is a phenomenon whereby learning about the possible side effects of a medical treatment increases the likelihood that one will suffer these side effects. The nocebo effect poses a problem or dilemma for physicians. If they tell patients about the side-effects of medications that are strongly associated with nocebogenic effects, they risk unnecessarily harming their patients. If, on the other hand, they withhold side-effect information (in an effort not to harm their patients), they are not
Greetings from the Dept. Head cont.

fully informing their patients and thereby not obtaining informed consent. I propose a practical means of managing this dilemma.

The philosophy department will continue to anticipate the needs of our future students and provide programming, consistent with our values, that addresses these needs. Have a great year and don’t forget to stay in contact with us. We especially appreciate updates and quick emails that let us know you are thinking of us, and of course your donations help us with everything we do.

David Allen is an executive and entrepreneur focused for more than 30 years on the intersection of ambitious problems, technology that is enabling, and sustainable business models. At Google, Allen focuses on digital transformation and bringing the benefits of cloud computing to enterprises around the planet. Allen has started and/or contributed to six successful company exits and is currently an investor and advisor to 14 startups.

Having served as a CEO, CTO and member of senior staff for companies such as Google and Fujitsu, Allen has expertise across multiple industries including media and entertainment, telecommunications, financial services and high-tech. He has advised a diverse portfolio of companies and organizations including the British Broadcasting Company, Starbucks, T-Mobile, Verizon, JP Morgan Chase, Freddie Mac, the U.S. Department of Education, Lloyds, Amazon, HP, Disney and others, delivering on business transformation, ecosystem strategy and technology vision.

He graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor of Arts and holds a Master’s in Innovation and Entrepreneurship from HEC Paris. Allen and his family reside in Portland, Oregon, where they are active members of their community including service on local boards and volunteer activities. In their spare time, they enjoy travel and working on the family treehouse.

Undergraduate Advising

Anthony Valentine

I was recently contacted by an alumna, currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Public Affairs and Policy in Portland, who read with great interest about our hope to develop a public policy option for the degree. She mentioned the importance of critical thinking in public service, and how frequently she draws upon her education in philosophy. Her mention of willingness to speak to undergraduates about her experience in public sector work and how she utilizes her degree in public affairs is a reminder of the tremendous value of our alumni.

The testimonials and perspectives our alumni have to offer are invaluable to majors eager to put their education in philosophy to work. I want to beseech alums reading this article to please consider the expertise and resources they have to share with the people who now walk in the halls they once trod. I hope you will reach out to the department and our majors with your stories, expertise, potential contacts, thoughts about internships, or anything you think might be of value to your fellows.

I also wanted to introduce our newest career consultant, Jamie Rogalski. I know Jamie has already met with a few of our seniors, and I invited her to tell us about her aims.

“As a career consultant in the College of Arts & Sciences, I assist Philosophy majors and minors with their career-related needs. From exploring potential careers to developing resumes, cover letters, and interviewing skills, I can help students along their career development journey. My goal is to provide tools for students to find a career that they are passionate about and allow them to define their next steps after graduation. Please visit HireOSUGrads.com to make an appointment, view our career services event calendar, and locate resources that would be helpful in your career development.”

Like me, Jamie is located in the CAS Student Success Center in 213 Life Sciences East.

Finally, a reminder to those who have students or friends inquiring about major or minor requirements and sequencing: please ask them to call (405) 744-5658 or to e-mail anthony.valentine@okstate.edu for an appointment.
2019 Outstanding Philosophy Junior Emma Farha

The past three years at Oklahoma State have been trying but rewarding. I began my education at OSU with aspirations of becoming a doctor, then I took chemistry. After experiencing what many freshmen do—self-doubt, overwhelming change, and the acquisition of an additional fifteen pounds—I went home for winter break and reimagined my entire future. I decided I wanted to go to law school and accordingly chose to pursue a degree in Philosophy and in Political Science. Since this decision, I have been blessed to earn and receive affirmation of this choice. I have since been on the Dean and President’s Honor Roll, awarded the OSU Academic Excellence scholarship for six successive semesters, awarded a $10,000 endowment for pre-Law students, as well as awarded $30,000 in scholarship from the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma. I am extremely grateful for the experience and education I have received at Oklahoma State thus far. I am looking forward to continuing to learn from brilliant and dedicated professors.

After graduating from OSU, I plan to attend law school. Currently, I do not have a specific legal career in mind, but I am eager to learn about the many facets of law. Ideally, I would like to pursue an area of concentration that would allow me to become an advocate for human rights, especially women’s rights, in less developed areas of the world. This is my broad and long term goal that I hope I will one day be able to achieve.

2019 Outstanding Philosophy Senior Briah Bennett

During my time at Oklahoma State University, I had the honor of serving as the programming director for Camp Cowboy, an organization for which I have volunteered approximately 428 hours over the past three years. I qualified for the President’s Honor Roll five times and received both the Noble Foundation and Wentz Honors College scholarships. I was also a recipient of the Bailey Family Memorial Trust Scholarship, and had the privilege of spending fall 2018 at The University of Bologna in Bologna, Italy. In addition to my academic endeavors, I am a member of the women’s fraternity Kappa Alpha Theta. I have served my chapter as a Freshman Follies Vocal Director during the fall of 2016, as a Spring Sing Director in the spring of 2018 and 2019, as a member of both the New Member Committee (fall 2017) and Member Development Committee (spring 2019), and as Facility Director during the academic year 2017-18. In the summers of 2016 and 2018, I interned with Upward Bound of El Reno; where I created team-building activities and tutored English.

I am pursuing a Bachelor of Science in psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy. I plan graduate in May, and begin law school at The University of Tulsa - College of Law this upcoming Fall, where I received a full tuition scholarship. Piece by piece, the past few years and the faculty members, who invested in me, facilitated my development into an educated and confident woman. Grateful does not begin to describe how I feel about my time at Oklahoma State University. I am incredibly honored to have been selected as the outstanding senior philosophy student.
**Faculty News and Updates**

**Dr. Rebecca Bensen Cain**
Over the past year, my research has coincided with a paper that I wrote for a panel session on the limits of transgression in comedy. The paper, on Aristophanes and the art of comedy, was presented in October 2018 at the American Society of Aesthetics meeting in Toronto.

**Dr. James Cain**
This year Dr. Cain is teaching Philosophy of Religion, Philosophy of Language, Symbolic Logic, and Ancient Philosophy. He has been working on papers on free will and is engaged in research in logic.

**Dr. Marty Heitz**
In addition to his regular teaching of Asian Philosophy in the spring, summer and fall, Dr. Heitz led meditation for the Buddhist Association and has recently expanded the weekly meditation sessions to include the practice of chanting. Having led a class for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) in Bohmian Dialogue this past spring, he was pleased to see that a number of the students wished to continue to hold discussions and to inquire into the nature of the mind and Eastern, spiritual practices, and now hosts Dialogue every other week at his home. In the fall he led another OLLI class on Traditional Chinese Medicine and looks forward to doing more courses for them in 2019. He also continues to work on his book, “Heart of Wonder,” and to lead Tai Chi at the Colvin and in Couch Park.

**Dr. Justin Horn**
Dr. Horn’s work focuses on issues in metaethics, which attempts to understand the place of morality in the world. In 2018, his research addressed questions like these: Do historical changes in moral attitudes toward practices like slavery suggest that we are slowly converging on some objective moral truth? Does the (putative) fact that our moral faculties are the product of evolutionary processes cast doubt on the notion of moral objectivity? Is there something morally suspect about thinking that moral questions have fixed, determinate answers? He regularly teaches Introduction to Philosophy and Biomedical Ethics, and is the organizer of the First Friday Pizza Forum, a monthly discussion series aimed at cultivating philosophical discussion among undergraduates.

**Dr. Apple Igrek**
This year Dr. Apple Igrek's book *Entropic Affirmation: On the Origins of Conflict in Change, Death, and Otherness* was published. In this book Dr. Igrek develops a new methodological approach to otherness, one which stipulates a close association between our affirmations of otherness and the inevitable fragmentation of social and moral values. He also gave a paper on Derrida at the *Derrida Today* conference held at Concordia University in May of 2018 and will present another paper on Foucault in April of 2019 at the 70th Annual New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society Meeting.

**Dr. Brian Kim**
I continue to explore questions about the value of knowledge and the role that knowledge plays in deliberation and choice. However, I have begun to focus more on issues that lie at the intersection of theory and practical application. One way I am doing so is by exploring how the diversity of groups hinder or facilitate the production of knowledge and the selection of good choices. Another way I am doing so is by exploring some of the insights of and theoretical problems with machine learning.

**Dr. Lawrence Pasternack**
Many of Lawrence Pasternack’s pending publications appeared in print in 2018, including his co-edited collection on Pascal’s Wager with Cambridge UP as well as chapters on Kant’s philosophy of religion for three other Cambridge UP volumes. His paper on Kant’s Ontological Argument was accepted for a volume on Kant’s Philosophy of Religion by De Gruyter Press and he is working on a number of further projects, including a chapter
on Kant’s Perpetual Peace for a Cambridge volume on International Law, the third volume of his Kant’s Sources in Translation Series, and his monograph on the Highest Good for Routledge. In addition, after a series of op/eds, Dr. Pasternack was recruited by the Department of Health and State Legislature to help develop regulations for the implementation of SQ 788.

**Dr. Doren Recker**
The highlight of the past year was a trip to England during June, 2018. Nancy and I visited London and Cambridge, and Laurel met us for part of the trip (rare opportunity for the three of us to do such things). I got photographs from the Cambridge Natural History Museum and from the British Museum for class use. Otherwise I taught a lot of classes and submitted two papers, one on Demarcation and one on Religious Truth (I especially like the 2nd one, and plan to revise it; the 1st needs to be broken into several separate pieces). I plan to work on this during the upcoming summer.

**Dr. Eric Reitan**
Over the past year Eric Reitan has been developing the philosophical work on marriage that he began in his 2017 book, *The Triumph of Love: Same-Sex Marriage and the Christian Love Ethic*. Among other things, he has developed a paper critically assessing the claim that the central arguments in support of same-sex marriage also support “plural marriage” (polygamous or polyamorous marriage). A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the Central States Philosophical Association meeting in October, 2018. He has recently started work on a related paper examining the growing body of literature arguing that fidelity to political liberalism requires the abolition of state-recognized marriage altogether. Dr. Reitan has also been pursuing his fiction-writing interests, and has over the last two years published numerous short stories and was a winner in the 2019 Writers’ Digest Short Story Competition.

**Dr. Shannon Spaulding**
Dr. Spaulding had a busy Spring semester last year. She participated in a two-week long summer seminar in neuroscience and philosophy. She received a $30,000 grant to run an fMRI study on children’s development of empathy. She also published two articles: a review of a book on implicit bias for *The Philosophical Review* and a paper laying out a new view on how we understand others for *Philosophy Compass*. She also published her first book with Routledge Press. The book was positively reviewed in *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* and *Mind*. In addition to research, she kept quite busy with the APA’s committee on Lectures, Publications, and Research, the APA Executive Committee, reviewing for various journals, and being an associate editor at Ergo. In the Fall, Dr. Spaulding was on maternity leave for the birth of her second daughter, Clara. Dr. Spaulding is looking forward to teaching a new course on Philosophy of Psychology in 2019 and working on several new and exciting research projects.
Dr. Spaulding and her collaborators at Duke University received a $30,000 grant to fund an fMRI study on the development of empathy in children.

The overarching goal of this project is to investigate the development and neural basis of human empathy. Very basically, empathy is the capacity to imagine oneself thinking, feeling, and experiencing what another person thinks, feels, and experiences. This capacity appears to be a building block of moral competency as it seems to enable caring about the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others. But empathy has moral limitations and downsides, as well. It can be influenced by in-group bias and seems ill-suited for motivating us to address large-scale moral problems. We aim to examine the nature and limitations of empathy in children and adults. While undergoing fMRI scanning, children and adults will remember personal emotional experiences and imagine others having the same experiences. We predict that young children will recruit overlapping emotion-processing regions for their own and others’ emotions, indicating that they mentally simulate others’ emotions. In contrast, adults’ neural response to others’ emotions will be more distinct from their own, and more mediated by activity in cognitive-mentalizing regions, indicating more cognitively-based mechanisms of empathy.
Diversity

Oklahoma State University’s philosophy department continues to push for conversations about race and inclusion. Over the last academic year, we discussed topics as diverse as the complexity of the psychological effects of white supremacy on marginalized communities to the question of identity politics through the lens of black masculinity.

Teaching Assistant Professor, Diversity Coordinator, and Co-Director of The Center for Africana Studies Lawrence Ware gives leadership to these series of events. Critical Conversations are panel discussions, film screenings and invited talks from of scholars, activists, and students about issues centering around inclusion found in the news, while Critical Colloquia, like the talk from Kiese Laymon, are academic talks from scholars doing work that touches upon diversity. The average attendance of conversations is around 170 while the attendance for colloquia is around 100.

Critical Conversations

“A Discussion on Implicit Bias, Body Cameras and Racism” with Bill Citty, OKC Chief of Police
10/30/2018

“White Scripts and Black Supermen: Black Masculinities in Comic Books”
11/13/2018

“A Critical Conversation with Rodney Barnes about Race and Popular Culture”
1/24/2019
Friends of the Forms

Friends of the Forms, our student philosophy club, was formed in 1975 by Dr. Edward Lawry, who retired from the department in 2006. The organization arose from students interested in extra-curricular philosophical discussions. The name alludes to Plato’s Sophist. The group schedules talks and discussions by on-campus faculty from a wide variety of Colleges and Departments. Every Spring semester, they host a special “Philosopher-in-Residence” program. We invite a philosopher of national reputation to come for three days, give two lecturers, and meet informally with students.

2018-2019 Officers

Fiona Byrd, President
Hannah Feddersen, Vice-President
Victoria Segui, Chief Operations Officer
Dr. Christopher Drohan, Faculty Advisor

Dr. Christopher M. Drohan,
Friends of the Forms Faculty Advisor & Teaching Assistant Professor

Dr. Chris Drohan teaches Philosophies of Life, Logic & Critical Thinking, and Biomedical Ethics in the department. As Faculty Advisor, Dr. Drohan is works with both our undergraduate philosophy club, the Friends of the Forms, as well as our Ethics Club. He also served as a lead organizer for the Statewide Ethics Bowl Championship that OSU hosted for the first time ever this past fall. This past year the Friends of the Forms organized a monthly series of philosophic speakers on a variety of topics, including: ethnic diversity, the ethical dimensions of conflict, medicinal marijuana and ethical activism, as well as homosexuality and Christian love. The Friends of the Forms also hosted Dr. Karma Lekshe as our Philosopher-in-Residence during the spring semester. Dr. Lekshe is a Buddhist nun, who spent time on campus attending classes, meeting with students and professors from the department, and delivering a well-attended public lecture on “Living and Dying in Buddhist Cultures”.

44th Annual Philosopher in Residence

Robert Gressis is Professor of Philosophy at California State University, Northridge, where he has been teaching since August, 2008. In his research, he focuses on Kant's and Hume's philosophies of religion, the epistemology of disagreement, meta-philosophy, and applied philosophy of education. He has published in such journals as Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie, British Journal for the History of Philosophy, Philosophical Psychology, and Philosophy Compass. Dr. Gressis served as our 44th annual Philosopher in Residence, guest lecturing at Oklahoma State and spending time with undergraduate and graduate students on campus.

2018-2019 Friends of the Forms Talks

No Passport Required: The Ethnic Component of Diversity in America, from Academe to Popular Entertainment
Dr. Randi Eldevik, OSU English 9/19/2018

On the Necessity of Conflict
Dr. Apple Igrek, OSU Philosophy 10/24/2018

State Question 788 and ISIS: Two Sides of the Same Coin?
Frank Grove, co-author of SQ788 11/28/2018

Queer Identity, Spirituality, and the Christian Bible
Dr. Eric Reitan and Andre Durham 2/21/2019

The Placeholder View of Disagreement
Philosopher in Residence Dr. Robert Gressis, California State University 2/28/2019

Looking after Dogs: Friendship and Alterity
Dr. Martin Wallen, OSU English 4/10/2019

Visit our Events page to watch recorded lecturers online! philosophy.okstate.edu/events/events
Daniel Trippett, 
Ethics Club Faculty Advisor, Ethics Bowl Coach & Lecturer

Daniel Trippett teaches Philosophies of Life, Philosophy of Dreams, and Animal Ethics. During the fall 2018 semester, Mr. Trippett coached Oklahoma State University’s Ethics Club team and became the advisor for the club.

The Ethics Club had two teams which competed in a state competition hosted by OSU in Stillwater and a Texas regional competition at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio Texas. OSU took third place at the regional competition and qualified to compete for the Ethics Bowl National Championship which took place in Baltimore, Maryland on the first weekend in March. This was the first time that OSU has competed for the Ethics Bowl Championship.

The team members of OSU’s Ethics club are Rounak Bastola, Collin François, Taylor Gladney, Jennifer Maupin, Xander Olson, Katie Victor and Leigh Welch. The team was thrilled to travel to Baltimore to represent OSU. Faculty members and graduate students are more than welcome to help the team by reading over the Ethics Bowl cases and providing insights and arguments related to the cases. The team usually meets for practice on Thursday evenings at 5pm in Stout Hall 035, and we are always looking for guest judges.
Students from across Oklahoma gathered at OSU for the Oklahoma Statewide Student Ethics Challenge — 10/13/2018

OSU Ethics Bowl members at the Oklahoma Statewide Student Ethics Challenge — 10/13/2018

Phi Sigma Tau initiating new members into the honors society — 4/22/2019

Dr. Apple Igrek discussing the Necessity of Conflict with faculty and students — 10/24/2018

Friends of the Forms spurs political conversations with guest speaker Frank Grove, co-author of SQ788 — 11/28/2018

Dr. Marty Heitz brought Dr. Peter Wayne, Harvard Medical School, to campus to talk to students and faculty about Tai Chi for improving balance, cognition, and pain — 4/04/2019
Graduate Student News and Updates

Geoff Dargan
This is my second and final year of the MA. I’m really enjoying my coursework this year, which has included independent studies in religious epistemology and philosophy of religion, in addition to the required seminars. I hope to be able to teach when I’m done, so I’ve been applying for jobs, but I’ve also applied to a couple of doctoral programs as well. We’ll see what happens!

Pierce Marks
I’m working in metaethics, trying to figure out whether or not there is a rational foundation for moral and other normative judgements, including aesthetic judgements. Hopefully there is! Ultimately, I want to see if a decent theistic-metaethic can be developed (other than divine command theories). Depending on how this next semester and my research pan out, I’ll either be looking to continue into a PHD program in Philosophy or start teaching secondary education.

Kyle Morgan
Currently I am working on my final report on group virtue. The topic is centered around questions like: when we correctly describe a group as virtuous, does the group itself possess the virtue or merely some combination of its members? How do we judge the virtue (or viciousness) of corporations and other groups with complicated organizational structures, where the motives and actions "at the top" may be relevantly different than those of less influential decision makers? Other research interests include the nature of belief and the structure of science. I remain interested in mathematics education moving forward, and plan to maintain a steady diet of new ideas from philosophy there.

Jess Stuart
As I begin my second semester in the MA program, I’ve discovered how exciting graduate school can be. This semester I’ll be a TA for Professor Trippett, and I’ll begin developing a plan of study. My main areas of interest include Philosophy of Mind, Metaphysics, and Ethics (Natural Law Theory). Being a TA reinforces my love of teaching and I plan to pursue a career in academia. I am grateful to be in a department that values diversity and is welcoming to graduate students.

Congratulations to graduate student Daniel Carr! Daniel’s paper “Counterfeit Indeterminacy and Kane’s Self-Forming Actions” was accepted for presentation at the 80th Annual Meeting of the Southwestern Philosophical Society.
ALUMNI UPDATES

Susanne Claxton

Matt Davis
Matt is currently in the USAF, serving as a section commander in the 311th Training Squadron in Monterey, CA. He has deployed once to Afghanistan. Matt received his Master’s degree in Public Administration from Southern Illinois University—Edwardsville (SIUE). Matt can be reached at mmdavis@okstate.edu

Gene Nichol
Dr. Nichol , class of 1973, is the Boyd Tinsley Distinguished Professor of Law a the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His new book The Faces of Poverty in North Carolina was just published by UNC Press.

Kirk Essary
Kirk Essary received his PhD in Religion in 2014 from Florida State University. From 2015-2018 he was a postdoctoral research fellow with the Australian Research Council Centre for the History of Emotions. His first book, Erasmus and Calvin on the Foolishness of God: Reason and Emotion in the Christian Philosophy, was published with the University of Toronto Press in 2017. In 2018 he was appointed Lecturer in Medieval and Early Modern History at the University of Western Australia.

Calvin Warner
Calvin Warner, class of 2014, just started law school at Vanderbilt University. In 2018 he published an article in Philosophy Now, “Philosophy: A Call to Action.”

Ryan Wellington
Ryan Wellington is currently finishing his Master’s in theology at Ave Maria University with the aim of attending law school or a PhD program next fall. Ryan’s recent paper “Revelation as Propositional” has been accepted for publication in the Journal of Analytic Theology at Notre Dame.

Support

If you would like to donate to the OSU Philosophy Department or the Edward G. Lawry Philosophy Student Fund, please visit the OSU Foundation website at http://www.osugiving.com The Edward G. Lawry Philosophy Student Fund was established in conjunction with OSU’s Branding Success Campaign in honor of Ed Lawry, OSU Professor Emeritus, and founder of the Friends of the Forms with the hope that Dr. Lawry’s enthusiastic teaching, research and service will continue to benefit OSU, its students and alumni for many years to come. The funds are used for undergraduate student support, scholarships, conference travel, hosting undergraduate student conference and colloquia, Friends of the Forms support, lectures, receptions, Phi Sigma Tau support and discussion groups.

Please Keep in Touch! We would love to hear from you!
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