News from the Chair

It is with great pleasure that I address the friends of the WCU Philosophy Department as the new Chair. The summer has been quite a learning experience already. I have big shoes to fill, as Dr. Schroepfer has adeptly guided our department through many transitions over the past six years. Thank heavens for Rose Sykes, the backbone of this department! She reminds me of what is on the docket, and calmly explains how Helen would have handled it. I am happy to report that the department remains strong during years of great transition. On Friday, April 21, at 10 a.m. in Emilie K. Asplundh Concert Hall, Dr. Chris Fiorentino was inaugurated as our 15th President.

All our words are but crumbs that fall down from the feast of the mind.
-Kahlil Gibran, Sand and Foam
Our new college, The College of Arts and Humanities, has undergone a slight modification after the reorganization of 2016, as the School of Music becomes independent. The General Education program is undergoing modification, and there has been quite a bit of shuffling in administrative posts. So, yes! It is a great time of transition. And we feel confident that we will continue to strengthen our department’s place in the university and serve our students well as these changes take place.

As you know, we have started our classes this semester during a contentious political time. Partisan politics seems to have divided so many of our fellow Americans, and political discourse seems to plummet to even new lows. At the same time, the embers of civil strife have been stoked more and more with each passing month. Now is time for Philosophy! If we each could only step a little more cautiously, reflect more on our own biases than those of others, and remind ourselves of our principles and that those grand principles serve first to connect us to each other, regardless of our differences. If only...

I hope friends of the department will join with us this coming year, as we explore questions both emergent and perennial. Join with us to allow the wisdom of great philosophers to be refreshed in our distracted minds. Join us in supporting our students, budding philosophers themselves, as they learn who they will become to face the challenges of tomorrow.

-Dr. Matthew Pierlott, Chair

Some Faculty Updates

Dr. Cassie Striblen: This past year Dr. Striblen taught her usual array of courses: logic, political philosophy, and 101. In addition, she taught a capstone course on the special topic of “Responsibility.” The course was structured so that student research papers would contribute to a potential book project, giving them practice with professional writing and with the book proposal process. Outside the classroom, Dr. Striblen stayed busy writing book reviews, article reviews, and evaluation reports--and chasing her toddler.

Dr. Dean Johnson (Dir. of Peace and Conflict Studies): Dr. Johnson continued his work as an activist-scholar over the 2016-2017 academic year, consulting with students and faculty on workshops/trainings in nonviolent social change and hosting speakers on campus, such as David Ragland, Truth Telling Project, and Zoharah Simmons, the human rights movement elder. Johnson has also become a regular contributor.

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to the *Teaching, Religion, Politics* hosted by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion. His post include: “On Being White and Teaching Race, Religion and Theology,” “Teaching About the Politics of Religion and Social Change,” and “Teaching Students About Finding Their Religious Justice Roots.” Over the summer Johnson worked with scholar and activist colleagues on a new introduction to a peace and conflict studies text oriented toward students and community organizations. He also recently published with graduate student Shannon Boyle an entry on “The White Middle Class” in *The American Middle Class: An Economic Encyclopedia of Progress and Poverty*. In the fall semester Johnson will start work on making Peace and Conflict Studies a major, making WCU the only state of PA school offering such a degree.

**Dr. Larry Udell:** Dr. Udell participated in the Summer Workshop for the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl, where he had the opportunity to network with faculty as well as students at other participating schools. He will take WCU’s third Ethics Bowl team to the Northeast Regional in November, and hopes to make it to another National Finals competition in Chicago in February. He continues his work on John Rawls’s theory of justice as it relates to political economy, and spent some time this summer in the John Rawls Archives at Harvard’s Widener Library where he had the opportunity to work with Rawls’s books and papers. He hopes that his work in this area will lead to a new Honor’s College course on Ethics and Economics.

**Dr. Jea Sophia Oh:** This past year was Dr. Oh’s second year at West Chester University. She taught sections of Introduction to Religious Studies, Philosophy and Religions of India, and Asian Philosophy. She also taught Environmental Ethics and Religion and Ecology. She helped her students from those courses to present their final papers at Yale Graduate Conference of Religion and Ecology and International Environmental Philosophical Association (IEPA). Dr. Oh serves as a board member of University Writing Council (UWC), a Graduate Committee member, and a member of Sustainability Advocacy Council (SAC) at WCUPA. Beyond WCUPA, Dr. Oh serves as the Chair for the “Religion, Gender, and Sexuality” Section and “Comparative Religion and Ecology” sections of the Mid-Atlantic Region division of the American Academy of Religion. At American Philosophical Association (APA), she serves as the Chair for “Society for the Study of Process Philosophy” (SSPP) at both the Central and the Eastern Divisions. She also chaired 7th International Congress on Ecstatic Naturalism (ICEN) at Drew University in April 2017. Since December 2016, Dr. Oh became a Board Member and the Co-Chair of Women’s Caucus at the National American Academy of Religion (AAR). In the summer of 2016, she received a “Research and Creative Activities Award” (RACA) from WCU and made a research trip to Korea and gave lectures at Yonsei University, Ewha University, and Sogang University. As a scholar she presented twelve papers at international and national conferences and published two journal articles, one book review, one book chapter, and an anthology (as the co-editor) during this past academic year.

Yonsei University, in Seoul, is one of the country’s most prestigious institutions.

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Dr. Steven James: As usual, Dr. James split his efforts between teaching and research last year. In the fall, he taught several sections of Intro to Philosophy and a section of Critical Thinking. In the spring, he reprised these classes while making some revisions to the Critical Thinking class. Dr. James was privileged to present his research in a variety of venues in PA, Seattle, and Cologne, Germany. He was also fortunate to be invited to comment on some excellent papers on the nature of belief (in Baltimore), and the epistemic, aesthetic, and moral value of virtual reality (in Boulder). His review of an excellent book called *Mental Time Travel* came out in the journal *Memory Studies* and he continued his work with both the Research and Creative Activities (RACA) review committee and the board of directors for the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium (GPPC). He has agreed to become to new Graduate Coordinator for the department, and he has only adopted one more cat.

Dr. Ronke Oke: This academic year has truly welcomed Dr. Oke to the WCU community. Dr. Oke has seen tremendous success incorporating Service-Learning into her Intro to Ethics courses and teaching two graduate level courses in her specialty: African Philosophy and Critical Philosophy of Race. Additionally, Dr. Oke was part of the inaugural class of the WCU Women in Higher Education Leadership Series and participated in the Committee for Excellence on Learning and Teaching (CELT) Book Club on Student Engagement Techniques. Dr. Oke delivered a paper at Agnes Scott College entitled, “Lines of Descent: Cosmopolitanism, Racial Identity and the Problem of Difference,” with plans to publish. She is also revising a manuscript for publication that analyzes the concept of transnational Blackness in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*. This summer Dr. Oke lead 41 college bound students in an “Adjusting to Academic Life” workshop, sponsored by Chester County Futures and SAP as part of their 2nd Annual Steps 4 Success Bootcamp. Dr. Oke will work directly with Chester County Futures in the Fall 2017 as part of her Service-Learning course (PHI 180: Introduction to Ethics). Other community partners for this course include The Hickman and The Barn at Spring Brook Farms.

This past Spring semester, Dr. Oke taught PHI 201 (Contemporary Issues) as a Critical Philosophy of Race course, the focus of which is the concept of transracialism. This course approached transracialism through an examination of the person who popularized the term: Rachel Dolezal. (Dolezal came to public attention in 2015 when she was “outed” by her parents as a white woman. Prior to this “outing,” Dolezal lived her life as a Black woman.) Dr. Oke also held two student-led and organized public forums (entitled ‘TRANSformations’) in conjunction with this course. Part I of the series included a screening of the controversial episode 7 of FX’s *Atlanta* (“B.A.N”), a discussion of Trans-Identities (transracial and transgender), and a panel of WCU students and invited guest speakers. Part II explored the politics of racial passing through a screening of the movie *Imitations of Life*, followed by a panel discussion on “racial passing,” including Martin Witherspoon (WCU undergrad), Dr. Cherise Pollard (WCU English), and Dr. Oke.
A Word from Our Graduate Coordinator...

With the retirement of Prof. Barb Tournier as our intrepid instructor for Medical Ethics for the last decade, I’m gearing up to step back into that course to attempt to fill the very large shoes of Prof. Tournier. We are already missing her! My once-a-year course for Women’s & Gender Studies (Intellectual Roots of Western Feminism) is going to be offered in both semesters starting this year, and I sincerely thank the department for agreeing to “lend” me out.

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I have been very active in my main professional organization, the North American Society for Social Philosophy [NASSP] for the last few years. This past summer was my second year as Program Committee Chair for the annual conference which means vetting close to 200 abstracts with my committee colleagues. And, then, with the very capable assistance of Graduate Assistant Sarah MacIntosh (both this year and last), we pieced together a program of days of multiple concurrent, somehow coherent, sessions for the 120 or so participants who we accepted. Thanks to Graduate Student Association, Sarah got to join me last year in Ottawa, and this year in Chicago (let’s not talk about the flight out!), to chair sessions and be my IT back-up hero. Thanks, Sarah!

Out of last year’s chairing duties, came the opportunity to co-edit, with NASSP’s archivist Zachary Hoskins of the University of Nottingham (U.K.), volume 33 of the journal *Social Philosophy Today*, which solicits submissions from conference participants for a peer-reviewed selection of the papers given at the 2016 conference, whose theme was “Power and Public Reason” ([https://www.pdcnet.org/socphiltoday](https://www.pdcnet.org/socphiltoday)). This year’s theme was “Justice: Social, Criminal, and Juvenile,” and I will continue on for one more year to co-edit vol. 34. Rewarding work.

I am waiting patiently for the publication of the anthology containing my chapter, “The Virtue of Ambivalence to Maternity”—late 2018/early 2019 I’m told. And, the paper I gave at this year’s NASSP conference, “Contempt: Moral Friend or Foe?” will hopefully be turned into a journal submission in the next few months.

Lastly, please note the role some of the members of the Philosophy and the Women’s & Gender Studies departments are playing in shepherding *Hypatia Reviews Online* ([hypatiareviews.org](http://hypatiareviews.org))—the online book review section of the feminist philosophy journal *Hypatia* on an interim basis for the next several months. An honor to be offered this opportunity; an immense responsibility.

Warm thanks and kind regards,

Dr. Joan Woolfrey
Student and Alumni News

Matt Rupert (who just defended his master’s thesis under Dr. Cassie Striblen) has won a major international essay competition. A $5,000 prize, the Next Systems Project (thenextsystem.org/#about) is a group looking for a way to rethink social, economic and environmental systems. And, they think Matt’s ideas are pretty cool! He won in the graduate student category!

See his essay here: thenextsystem.org/locke-marx-two-theories-labor/

In addition to Matt’s defense, Harvey Greer and Brian Fink both successfully defended their respective theses this summer. Harvey’s thesis was entitled “The Hermeneutic Significance of Big Data,” and his committee was led by Dr. Ruth Porritt. Brian wrote on “Holistic Pragmatism and the Hegelian Dialectic: A synthesis of the realism and anti-realism debate in the philosophy of science,” with Dr. Matt Pierlott as his thesis advisor.

Mark Pennypacker, Sr. (Philosophy and Sociology, ’82) just won the WCU Distinguished Alumni Award. On May 20, 2017, President Christopher Fiorentino presented Mr. Pennypacker with the award. Mr. Pennypacker teaches high school Earth Science and Biology in Virginia, and his outstanding service has earned him many national and international awards. As a coach, he won the 2001 Eastern Regional Girls Youth Coach of the Year, and he has been selected to coach U.S. All Star teams in the Netherlands, Brazil and Austria (where his team won the Bronze). Through his work with People to People International, he was selected to their ISAAC Advisory Council, won their Distinguished Leader Award, and has traveled to 17 countries on 4 continents. Mr. Pennypacker served as the Chairperson for the Winchester Parks and Recreation Board, helping to create the Master Soccer and Parks Plan for the city. Through the Boy Scouts of America, he earned the Statuette and Shenandoah District Cub Scout Leader of the Year. Let us all congratulate Mark Pennypacker, Sr. for his wonderful achievements, and thank him for representing our community so well!
Dr. Samantha Noll earned a position as an Assistant Professor in The School of Politics, Philosophy, and Public Affairs (PPPA) at Washington State University, where she will focus on her work in environmental philosophy, bioethics, and philosophy of science. Congrats, Samantha! You continue to make us all so proud of you!

Student Scholarships

The 2017 Claghorn Award:
Jacob J. Emery

This annual award is intended to reward progress and promise in the study of philosophy at West Chester, normally granted to a graduate student, but may occasionally go to an undergraduate of particular promise.

The 2017 Streveler Research Award:
Elizabeth M. Scianna

This annual award goes to the best paper as judged by a committee of philosophy faculty. The paper must be submitted by a current philosophy major or minor, and must have been written for a West Chester University course.
New Tournier Ethics Research Award

We are proud to announce that we are establishing a new student award: The Tournier Ethics Research Award.

Barbara Tournier has taught in our department for eleven years as a devoted instructor of medical ethics, and decided to retire from her WCU position this past Spring and move onto other joys. Over the years, she carefully prepared her students for the ethical challenges that arise in medical treatment and research settings, bringing a breadth and depth of deliberative experience to her course.

After receiving her Diploma in Nursing and Psychology at Misericordia Hospital School of Nursing, she completed a BS in Professional Arts with concentrations in Nursing and Psychology from St. Joseph’s College, a MS in Nursing from Gwynedd-Mercy College, and a Masters of Bioethics from the University of Pennsylvania. For more than ten years, she has served on UPenn’s IRB Committee for High-Risk Protocols. “We have 2-year renewals for membership. In January I was approved to remain an active member on the Committee through 2018.” The research she has completed with colleagues has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine, the Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease, the Journal of Pharmacology Experimental Therapeutics, and the Annals of Behavioral Medicine.

Barb has been a wonderful friend and colleague, loved by students, and cherished by her fellow faculty members. Always the calm and supportive nurse by training, she has supported many of us through our own medical crises over the years, providing good counsel and wisdom to help us cope with twists and the turns of navigating hospitals and the

"My experience in working in research is deep. Not only 11 years at Penn’s National Institute of Health Research Center (now called the NIH Translational Research Center), but 5 years prior working as a research coordinator in Children’s Hospital’s GI & Nutrition Dept. We partnered with Penn State on a NIH funded study of children from families at high risk of heart attacks or stroke. Then in their Hematology Dept., working in the Comprehensive Sickle Anemia Center, where we worked on the study with the first drug approved to successfully treat that disease in children. Previously at Temple University Hospital I was research coordinator in their Neurology and Neurosurgery Depts.”
ups and downs of navigating illness. She will be sorely missed, although we hope she will be visiting often.

This new award is open to all undergraduate students, and will be awarded to the best research paper in applied ethics, as judged by a panel formed by the department, with a preference for topics in medical and bioethics.

*If you have interest in donating to this new award to honor Barb, help us grow the fund and support our students, please contact either Dr. Pierlott or Mrs. Sykes for more information!*

Along with the awards mentioned above, we offer another opportunity for our upper division or graduate students in Philosophy or Religious Studies here at West Chester University. This award is given for a written essay focusing primarily on Asian philosophy. The essay may be comparative in nature, but should be predominantly focused on the philosophical traditions of South Asia, East Asia or Southeast Asia.

The current award to the recipient is $500, and was last won in 2016 by Jessica Firestone. If you are interested in contributing to this scholarship fund, please contact the department or connect with the WCU Foundation ([www.wcufoundation.org/](http://www.wcufoundation.org/)).

Thank you!

*Please support our students and consider donating to the Claghorn Award, the Streveler Research Award, the newer Hoffman Award for Asian Philosophy, and now the Tournier Ethics Research Award. Heartfelt thanks go out to all those who have contributed over the years to these funds. Our recognition of these individuals is made possible by your very generous support! To date, we have been able to award 25 excellent students with awards.*
Events and Happenings!

2017 Graduate Student Conference. Left to right: Keynote speaker Dr. Chalmers Clark (Drexel), Ben Wilson (Liberty University), Michael Dauber (North Shore University), Sarah MacIntosh (West Chester University), Phil Taylor (West Chester University), Thomas Kiefer (Fordham University), Dr. William Harwood (Missouri State University).

The WCU 12th Annual Philosophy Graduate Student Conference focused on issues in Bioethics, and was held April 22nd in Philips Memorial Hall. Our Keynote Speaker was Dr. Chalmers Clark of Drexel University’s College of Nursing and Health Professions.

Special thanks to conference organizer, the incredible Phil Taylor!! Phil and his team pulled together a great set of presentations, and created a wonderful collaborative atmosphere of discussion and learning. Thanks so much!!
We have had some great speakers this past year!!

**Dr. Vandana Shiva**, “alter”-globalization and environmental scholar/activist, and board member of the International Forum on Globalization, came on March 21, to speak about her work, *Soil, not Oil*. The event was heavily attended and co-sponsored from across the university!

**Dr. Joy DeGruy**, an internationally known researcher and educator, came to speak about “Luxury of Choice,” on March 22. Dr. DeGruy has become well known for her work on the multi-generational trauma experienced by African Americans. We were proud to have her speak to our campus!

**2016-17 Philosophy Forums:**

11/15— **Jea Oh and Josh Mason**: “Asian Philosophy and Religion: Beginning and Ending in the East”

3/7— **Marilynn Lawrence**: “Tension in the Soul: a stoic/platonic concept in Plutarch, Proclus, and Simplicius”

3/30— **Steven James**: “Epistemic Event Remembering”

4/28— **Larry Udell**: “Rawls, Libertarian Issues, and Employment”
The Hypatia controversy and WCU’s role...

This past year saw a controversy emerged in our discipline, centered on the feminist journal *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*. The controversy starts with the publication of “In Defense of Transracialism,” by Rebecca Tuvel of Rhodes College, which sparked heated criticism on social media and led to division in among scholars about the legitimacy of the article or the criticism, and about the appropriate response from the journal. A description of the series of events and official statement Hypatia's board of directors can be found here: [http://dailynous.com/2017/05/18/statement-hypatia-board-regarding-tuvel-controversy/](http://dailynous.com/2017/05/18/statement-hypatia-board-regarding-tuvel-controversy/).

Editor-in-chief, Sally Sholz of Villanova University, decided to step down in July, to allow the journal to reshape its editorial team, as did Hypatia Reviews Online editor, Shelley Wilcox. The Board has announced an interim team for both the journal, and the online review extension of the journal. After consultation with our department and our college dean, Joan Woolfrey and Simon Ruchti (WCU Women’s Studies chair, and former Philosophy department member) have agreed to serve as interim editors for Hypatia Reviews Online through January.

We are proud they were selected, and are sure they will help the journal heal in the aftermath of the controversy. Good luck, Joan and Simon!!
Upcoming Events

Come to the GPPC Board of Governors Public Issues Forum we are hosing!! ==>

And check our website for further information on the following annual events or programs:

GPPC Asian & Comparative Philosophy Discussion Group

WCU Graduate Student Philosophy Conference—hosted by our graduate philosophy students. The Spring 2018 theme will likely be Environmental Ethics.

IAPRS Conference—The Interdisciplinary Association for Philosophy and Religious Studies hosts an annual spring conference. Papers by alumni (as well as PASSHE faculty and students) are welcome at this conference! Please keep an eye out for the Call for Papers!