Major in Thinking. Major in Philosophy.
In the Fall of 2014, I devoted this space to a discussion of the place of technology in higher education. I suggested that, rather than jumping on each tech fad or resisting technological change, universities should actively seek to rigorously evaluate new technologies to see if they can help us be better teachers and better scholars. I pointed to an example in the Department, “flipping” Phil 1010, Critical Thinking, and I said that we would test this new technology. Well, we have done that testing, so I thought I would follow up and tell you what we have learned.

In a flipped class, the students watch the lectures at home via the internet. Then they do their “homework” in class. In the case of Phil 1010, Critical Thinking, we decided that they would do their homework in small groups with the instructor assisting them and stopping to discuss common problems with everyone. Does this use of technology help our students learn? The only way to know was to try it and see.

With the help of a great group of graduate students, Dr. Sandra Dwyer and I recorded over seventy ten-minute voice-over PowerPoint presentations that cover the whole course. In the fall of 2014, we taught the course the traditional way. Last fall, we used the flipped format. We surveyed the students to see what they thought of the flipped format. We found that 62% preferred the flipped format and 19% preferred the traditional format (with the remainder having no preference). So the students prefer the flipped format. That is relevant, but it is not as important as whether the students learn more. I can now reveal a deep dark secret. For the first (and last) time the final exam in Fall 2014 was the same as the final in Fall 2015. We found that the percentage of students who earned an A on the final increased by 11 percentage points when we flipped the course. We found that the percentage who earned a B increased by 6 percentage points. In other words, we saw a 17 percentage point increase in the A/B rate. This is an amazing increase. We also found that teaching a flipped class is less work than teaching a traditional class. This is a classic example of technology allowing humans to do more with less effort. Why are students learning more? Causation is always tough to determine. Perhaps it is because they can watch the lectures as many times as they want. Perhaps it is because they can watch the lectures whenever they want and so they watch them when they are alert and ready to learn. We selected good graduate student instructors to do the recordings so perhaps the recorded lectures are better lectures than the average traditional in-class lecturer. I suspect that multiple factors are involved. However, my guess (and it is only a guess) is that something simpler is going on. I suspect that, in the flipped format, many students who previously did not do the homework are now doing it. In the flipped format, they have to come to class and, rather than just sit there, they feel socially obligated to participate in their groups and help their classmates with the homework. Thus I suspect that, at a deeper level, the technology is not really what is causing students to learn more. It is that technology has allowed a more active and social classroom. This active and social classroom is what helps students learn.

An administrator yesterday who asked me if we could expand this success into other philosophy classes. This raises another important feature of technology. Sometimes technology transfers to another domain and sometimes it does not. I told the administrator that I doubted that the flipped class format would improve student learning in other philosophy courses. Critical thinking is class that is teaching a skill (the skill of thinking critically). We try to teach that skill on all our classes, but we are also looking to teach originality. We try to teach our students to teach originality. Papers and class discussion are good for encouraging originality. Papers and class discussion are good for encouraging originality and that is one reason we have lots of class discussion and assign lots of papers in philosophy courses. Of course, I could be wrong. Perhaps a flipped format would improve student learning in other philosophy courses. To know, we would need to try it. That may be a project for the future.
In the spring term of 2016, Dr. Hartley and Dr. Lori Watson (University of San Diego) presented “Sex Equality and Public Reason” at the Eastern Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Hartley also presented their “Feminism, Political Liberalism and Marriage” as the Biever Lecture at Loyola University and as an invited lecture at Furman University. Both of these papers are included in the manuscript Hartley is writing with Watson titled Feminist Political Liberalism. In addition, her book review of Kevin Vallier’s Liberal Politics and Public Faith is forthcoming in Ethics, and Hartley and Watson’s “Political Liberalism and Religious Exemptions” is forthcoming in Vallier and Weber’s Religious Exemptions (Oxford University Press).

Dr. Scarantino has written several articles: “Do Emotions Cause Actions, and If So How?”, forthcoming in Emotion Review; “Voodoo Dolls and Angry Lions How Emotions Explain Arational Actions”, co-authored with Michael Nielsen (MA ’14) in Philosophical Studies; and Information as a Probabilistic Difference Maker” in the Australasian Journal of Philosophy to name a few. Scarantino also gave two major talks this year. He presented “A New Perspective on Basic Emotions: No Selection Without Regulation” at Emory University and “Emotional Expressions and the Evolution of Language” at Humboldt University in Germany.

In 2016, Dr. Wilson gave a talk at the bi-annual meeting of the North American Kant Society, and his article “Habitual Desire: On Kant’s Concept of Inclination” was published in Kantian Review (July 2016). He is currently writing an overview of the passions in 18th century philosophy, as well as a new version (as co-author) of the entry “Kant and Hume on Moral Philosophy” for the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
GRANT AWARDED

Dr. Andrew I. Cohen and his colleague Jennifer Samp at the University of Georgia, assisted by Dr. Kathryn McClymond in GSU’s Department of Religious Studies, have been awarded a $180,000 National Endowment for the Humanities Grant for their project, “Reparative Justice and Moral Injury among Post-Deployment Soldiers.” In this project, Drs. Cohen and Samp “draw together a multidisciplinary team of scholars and experts to investigate how the humanities can synthesize the lived experience of soldiers who have endured the discrepant experiences of moral injury.”

PROMOTIONS & RECOGNITION

NEW EDITOR

Dr. Jessica Berry has been named the new editor of The Journal of Nietzsche Studies. This is the premier journal dedicated to publishing research about German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

PROMOTION

Dr. Sandra Dwyer has been promoted to Principal Senior Lecturer. This is a well-deserved recognition for all the hard work she has done for our students.

AWARD RECIPIENT

Dr. Tim O’Keefe is the winner of the 2016 College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Graduate Director Award. This award recognizes Dr. O’Keefe’s hard work to help our graduate students.

PROMOTION

Dr. Andrea Scarantino has been promoted to full professor. This promotion recognizes the excellence of Dr. Scarantino’s teaching and research.
The Jean Beer Blumenfeld Center for Ethics had a great spring and is gearing up for a productive fall. In May, we hosted a major conference in collaboration with the journal *Ethics* to feature noted scholars discussing the lasting impact of John Rawls’s *Political Liberalism* for its upcoming silver anniversary. In August, we also workshoped the manuscript of Sarah Song (Law, Political Science: UC Berkeley), *Immigration and the Limits of Democracy*. Guest discussants included Michael Blake (philosophy, Univ. Washington), Margaret Moore (political studies, Queens Univ.), and Madeline Zavodny (economics, Agnes Scott). The Center also collaborated with the Department of Economics on an interdisciplinary panel about social mobility. The well-attended panel featured Derrick Darby (philosophy, Univ. of Michigan) and John Roemer (economics, Yale), as well as noted local discussants. The Center now gears up for the coming year, including support for one of GSU’s academic teams to compete in the 2016 Ethics Bowl. The Center is also planning a major conference on overcriminalization at GSU in April of 2017 and on punishment in Durham, UK, in June 2017.

Overcriminalization has become a national plague.
-George Will
Chess is eminently and emphatically the philosopher’s game.

-Paul Morphy
What’s happening in Philosophy?

Join the Friends of Philosophy listserv and get announcements about talks, conferences, and social events in the Department.

To join, send an email to:
listserv@listserv.gsu.edu

In the body of the message, include only two words:
subscribe philfriends

SEPTEMBER

1st
The Philosophers’ Guild will be in Hurt Park from 11am - 1pm

5th - Labor Day
University Closed

23rd - Pizza Friday
12pm, Computer Lab
25 Park Place, Rm. 1646

28th - Pizza Friday
12pm, Computer Lab
25 Park Place, Rm. 1646

OCTOBER

24th
SPRING COURSE REGISTRATION
Register for your philosophy courses today!

28th - Pizza Friday
12pm, Computer Lab
25 Park Place, Rm. 1646

NOVEMBER

4th
3pm - Guest Speaker
25 Park Place, Rm. 1618
Judith Lichtenberg,
Georgetown University
Sponsored by the Jean Beer Blumenfeld Center for Ethics

11th
3pm - Guest Speaker
25 Park Place, Rm. 1618
Kevin LaBar,
Duke University

21st - 25th
Thanksgiving Break
University Closed

DECEMBER

2nd - Pizza Friday
12pm, Computer Lab
25 Park Place, Rm. 1646

5th - Semester Ends

IMPORTANT DATES:
Final exams: Dec. 6-13
Fall commencement: Wednesday, December 14 at 12:30 pm - Georgia Dome
Undergraduate Kenneth Herock was awarded the 2016-17 Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges award from GSU based on outstanding academic achievements, co-curricular activity involvement, and community service.

Undergraduate Sidney Prescott was awarded the GSU Trustee Award for Undergraduate Achievement in Research for her paper, “The Cerberus: Parental Licensing and the Equalization of Opportunity.” She is also a 2016-17 Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities & Colleges award recipient from GSU.

Sam Elalouf was awarded the 2016 Outstanding Graduate Student Teaching Award. This award is given to one or more graduate students for excellence in teaching, including (but not limited to) faculty teaching reviews, student evaluations, student performance, and innovative course design.

Mara McGuire was awarded the 2016 Ralf F. Munster Fellowship. This fellowship is awarded to a graduate student on the basis of academic excellence, including (but not limited to) course grades, courses taken, and participation in academically-oriented departmental activities.

Jeff Carroll (MA ’16) and Razia Sahi are winners of the 2016 Outstanding Graduate Student Research Award. This award is given to one or more graduate students completing their MA thesis in the academic year of the award, for excellence in research, including (but not limited to) MA thesis work, research papers, conference presentations, and participation in faculty-led research projects.
Anthony Carreras (MA ’05) is an assistant professor at Lone Star College in Houston, Texas. He received a conditional acceptance from Phil Papers. Additionally, Dr. Carreras and his wife have two daughters, Helena and Sophia.

Candace Delmas’s (MA ’06) article “That Lonesome Whistle” appeared in the Boston Review. Dr. Delmas is an assistant professor of philosophy at Northeastern University.

Matt Duncan (MA ’10) is now an assistant professor of Philosophy at Rhode Island College.

Katy Fulfer (MA ’08) is an Assistant Professor of philosophy at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Canada; Fulfer was formerly the Sophia M. Libman Professor of Philosophy of the Humanities at Hood College in Maryland.

Mark Gilbert (MA ’15) is an editorial assistant at UpToDate, the premier evidence-based clinical decision support resource for healthcare practitioners.

Sajay Lal’s (MA ’99) post, “Gandhi’s Synthesis of Liberal Communitarian Values” appeared in the Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research. Dr. Lal is currently a lecturer at Clayton State University.

Reuben Stern (MA ’11) accepted a postdoc position at the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy.

Morgon Thompson (MA ’13) posted on the Daily Nous and was also featured on Feminist Philosophers.

Nathan Ward (BA ’16) received an internship at the law firm of Burrough, Keen, Paulk, & Von Schuch in Atlanta.

Maj. Robert E. Underwood, III (MA ’09) was accepted into the DPhil program at Oxford University. He is working with Jeff McMahan.

Want to be featured in the next edition of the newsletter? Send your updates and photos to Felicia Thomas at fthomas@gsu.edu
The Philosophers’ Guild is the undergraduate student organization for all majors and those interested in philosophy. The Guild has two monthly meetings: one here in the Department and the other at one of the local restaurants in the general area of campus. Follow the Department of Philosophy’s Facebook page for information on upcoming events. In addition, you may also email Danyell Little to inquire about membership at dlittle8@student.gsu.edu.

The GSU chapter of holds an annual conference which showcases not only the work of graduate students, but also invites a well-regarded professional philosopher to be the keynote speaker. Additionally, PST hopes to host other activities this year including a stress management group for the Department, as well as a “meet your professors night.” We are always open to suggestions from members and non-members alike. If you would like to know more, stop by the Department to find out more information.

The Center for Ethics Student Forum is a student organization affiliated with the Department of Philosophy and the Jean Beer Blumenfeld Center for Ethics. Our mission is to nurture conversation on campus and in the community about pertinent ethical matters facing people today. We do this by providing an interactive learning environment for professors, staff and students from all departments. We host events based around ethical themes that are open to all students and faculty, as well as to members of the broader Atlanta community. The Forum’s student leadership council and advisor arrange activities, contact speakers, and publicize events. Any student is welcome to make suggestions regarding the Forum’s activities and to participate in the planning process. For more information, stop by the Department.
Interested in lending your support? You can!

GSU's Department sponsors several special funds that are used to pay for departmental events and activities. They’re an excellent way to express your support.

Our faculty are receiving national recognition for the quality of their research and the excellence of their teaching. Our students are taking their place on the national stage – presenting papers at national conference, receiving prestigious scholarships, and finding new ways to connect their learning with the world around them.

Your generosity makes this vital work possible. Alumni and friends support every aspect of Department life, making it possible for us to deal with present needs, and to plan for the future. You can help us: build our program; attract and retain outstanding students and faculty; enhance quality teaching and research; bring distinguished speakers to campus.

If you would like to give to the Department of Philosophy, visit our website at www.gsu.edu/philosophy and click the “Giving” tab.