

Curtis Bridgeman (1996) Receives UAH Alumni of Achievement Award



Since 2013, Curtis Bridgeman has served as Dean and Professor of Law at The Willamette University College of Law (Salem, OR) and is considered a leading scholar in the field of contracts and commercial law. Bridgeman has published numerous journal articles in leading law reviews, and has been an invited speaker at law schools

around the globe. Bridgeman clerked for Judge Gilbert Merritt of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Nashville, TN. A native of Scottsboro, Bridgeman initially intended to major in Business at UAH. But all it took was one required Philosophy class to make him "fall in love" with CAHS. In 2015 he was honored with the

UAH Alumni of Achievement Award. The Alumni of Achievement Award is the highest honor bestowed by the UAH Alumni Association. The award recognizes graduates who have distinguished themselves professionally and personally and who exemplify the high standards of UAH. A committee selects the winners from nominations made by alumni, faculty, and friends.

And to what does Bridgeman attribute his success?

"My experience majoring in philosophy at UAH prepared me extremely well for my career in the law. Lawyers have to be able to read carefully, parse detailed and difficult passages, think clearly, and argue persuasively. Most lawyers are in effect professional writers, and the students who come to law school with excellent writing skills are at a distinct ad-

vantage. My professors at UAH taught me the importance of disciplined attention to detail in both reading and writing, and the students I see as a law professor who lack such ability inevitably struggle. I completely understand why undergraduates want to see a connection between their education and a career. What many do not realize, however, is how risky it can be to choose an educational track that is too narrow, becoming credentialed in one very specific way but missing an opportunity to build a skill set that can be the foundation for an entire career in almost any arena. If someone asks you what you are going to do with your philosophy degree, tell them you will do anything you want."

Adapted in part from original story.
www.uah.edu/news/campus/uah-alumni-return-to-share-personal-professional-accomplishments-with-students

FACULTY

Philosophy Faculty: What We're Up To



Nicholaos Jones Associate Professor, published five articles this past year, on topics such as explanation in systems biology, interpretations of Chinese philosophers, and methods for modeling ethical decision making. He also developed an online course, Critical Thinking for Intelligence Analysis.



Jeremy Fischer, Assistant Professor, Assistant Professor, recently published two articles on topics in the philosophy of emotion and the ethics of character. He also gave presentations in Athens, Greece and to the UAB philosophy department about self-knowledge and emotion.



John Nale, Assistant Professor, has a forthcoming book, *Another Mind-Body Problem: A Study of Racisms from Descartes to Kant*. It presents a genealogy of racism while tracing the relationship of mind and body. He's also working on the logic of anti-Arab genocide and on Leibniz's role in the history of racism.



Andy Cling, Professor, is writing a book on epistemic regress problems. Tentatively titled *Reasons and Tragedy: The Problem of the Criterion and the Meanings of Life*, the book presents a novel interpretation of the problem together with a novel defense of a skeptical response to it.

Student Outreach



Fall 2016

During the Week of Welcome, the Philosophy Department sponsored an Ask Me Anything booth in the Charger Union. Among the questions we were asked: Can God make a boulder so large he couldn't lift it? What is the nature of Sartrean freedom? What determines whether an action is right or wrong? Are numbers real or socially constructed. And, of course, what is the meaning of life?

The answer to the last question? 42!

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings from UAH Philosophy

I am happy to share with you the second Philosophy Department newsletter. And I am most pleased to thank the Sociology Department for sharing their more aesthetically attractive newsletter template with us.

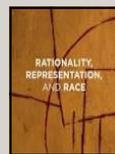
Over the past couple of years, our department has seen a large increase in the number of students taking our introductory classes. The best part of this is we have more opportunities to corrupt more students. The department has a thriving Philosophers' Guild. The Guild is sponsoring weekly discussions on philosophical topics such as: Philosophy in Space and How to Pick a Waifu (I'm told this has something to do with anime).

The two new members of our department, Jeremy Fischer and John Nale, have brought new excitement and research interests. Each of them approaches philosophy in rather unique ways, and

each of them are drawing new students into our little corner of the university. Dr. Fischer continues to work on the topic of emotion and moral psychology. Dr. Nale has brought to the department a serious interest in the problems of continental philosophy, especially with respect to issues of race.

My most recent book came out in April and is called "Rationality, Representation, and Race" (Palgrave Macmillan). I also have an invited paper coming out in the Bloomsbury Companion to Analytic Feminism sometime next year. (You can read about other faculty research on the first page.)

Finally, I wish to extend both departmental and personal gratitude to Curtis Bridgeman, Lewis Edwards, and Noah Todd for returning to campus this past spring



Deborah Heikes
Professor and Chair

to meet with current students. Curtis conducted a mock law class for interested prelaw students. Lewis and Noah spoke to the Philosopher's Guild, specifically about their careers and how philosophy has helped them in those careers. As you all know, the transition from a degree in philosophy to a non-philosophical job is not always easy. But, as you all know, the skills of philosophy are useful and help people succeed.

Any of you who would like to come back to UAH and meet with students are welcomed and encouraged to do so. Our current students need you and the advice you can give.

Speakers

INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT



The Philosophy Department has Internships!

This is old news now, but the Philosophy Department has an internship course. Students who want to take advantage of this option find opportunities where philosophical skills can be used in real life applications, then work with Philosophy faculty to articulate the connection over the course of a semester.

If you are interested in earning credit for an internship, contact nick.jones@uah.edu for more information.

Philosophers Who Came to Speak at UAH



Scott Aikin Vanderbilt University

During a fall visit to campus, **Scott Aikin** (Vanderbilt University) considered a tension between demanding that democratic deliberation invoke reasons accessible to all parties and the idea that good deliberations often invoke reasons accessible only to experts.



Kristie Dotson Michigan State

Kristie Dotson (Michigan State) visited campus in February to discuss anti-racist strategies for women of color. She argued that the denial of one's right to be seen or heard, is a precondition for violence. She then advanced several strategies to increase the visibility of Black women.



Robert Bernasconi Penn State

Robert Bernasconi (Penn State) spoke during the 25th Anniversary celebration for the UAH Humanities Center. His topic concerned a genealogical approach to race and racism, arguing that the ways in which we think of and talk about race generate many of the problems we encounter.

Curriculum



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UAH Philosophy News

is a publication of the Department of Philosophy at The University of Alabama in Huntsville. It is published at least once a year and sent to alumni and other interested parties.

Want to share your successes with other departmental alum?

Want to come back to UAH and share your experience with current students?

Contact any of the faculty listed above and let us know. We very much want to hear from you.

What are Philosophy faculty teaching?



From Dr. Fischer: In Ancient Philosophy we are discussing many ancient Greek views on topics in ethics, moral psychology, political philosophy, epistemology, and metaphysics. Topics include whether there is such a thing as free will (and if so, what it amounts to), whether the mind has independent parts, how emotion relates to reason, whether we should be skeptical of everything people say they know, whether the universe consists of anything more than a bunch of particles in space and time, what exactly time is, how we should live, and how our gov-

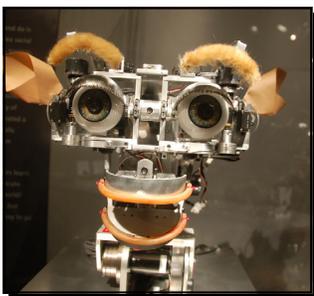
ernment should be structured. In addition to the pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle, we are also reading fascinating poets and historians, such as Homer, Euripides, Lucien, and Herodotus, and later philosophers, such as Seneca, Epictetus, and Sextus Empiricus.

From Dr. Jones: I'm leading the Research Seminar. We're focusing on skills for engaging with contemporary philosophical literature and techniques for communicating that engagement. This involves reconstructing arguments from others, critiquing those arguments, and developing one's own so that their structure reflects a depth of dialectical engagement. The topic is choose-your-own-adventure, including philosophy of education (on the goals education should aim to achieve), comparative philosophy (on relations between Buddhists and Pragmatists), philosophy of science (on relations between spirituality and neurobiolo-

gy), and political philosophy (on human rights and abortion law).

From Dr. Nale: The Contemporary Philosophy class is reading some essays by Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty on the question of how things present themselves to us. Where common sense might hold that things are already given for us 'ready-made', these thinkers argue that things are actively constituted by language and vision. Moreover, this tradition argues that because we are also beings in the world, we too are actively constituted by these processes. The second half of the class looks at the political consequences of these ideas by taking up some canonical writings in contemporary feminism. Authors such as Judith Butler and Kelly Oliver agree that changing the ways in which people come to presence for each other through language and vision is a key element in combating sexism.

Robot Ethics, Here and Now



From Dr. Jones: I'm teaching an interdisciplinary seminar called Robot Ethics for the Honors College. Our goal is to better understand how people are trying to "give ethics" to social robots. This isn't a science fiction course. We're not imagining future technology. We're thinking about robots that exist now, robots capable of interacting with living people, robots one can buy and sell. Exam-

ples include Tico, who helps teachers in schools; Savione, who delivers items to hotel guests; Jibo, a personal assistant; Kaspar, who interacts with autistic children; Nadine, a conversational partner with emotional intelligence.

The Robot Ethics course explores concerns more mundane than, say, robot revolutions. Rather, we ask: At what speed and angles ought social robots approach people? Ought robots obey commands to stop helping? How ought robots act in dilemma situations, when available options permit disobeying some ethical norms but disobeying others? Who ought to determine ethical settings for social robots—owners, manufacturers, government regulators, ethics committees? How ought relevant parties

decide between competing ethical settings? What is the best way to encode such settings—explicit programming, or machine learning techniques?

We're reading authors from a range of disciplines—philosophy, computer science and AI, engineering, psychology. The readings examine three general approaches for giving ethics to social robots: top-down approaches, which use philosophy to determine moral norms and programming to encode those norms into robots; bottom-up approaches, which use empirical research on good human-robot interaction to guide robot programming; and middle-out approaches, which try to combine strengths of other approaches by doing both simultaneously.



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