Philosophy and Religious Studies

From the Chair - **Dr. Matt Altman**

Do you have any idea how amazing Philosophy & Religious Studies professors are? If you’re a student, you’re probably most familiar with their incredible teaching. However, there’s a lot going on behind the scenes. Today I want to focus on our high profiles in the profession, specifically on our research and our work in professional organizations.

The faculty in Philosophy & Religious Studies have published extensively and are among some of the most accomplished researchers at Central. Dr. Dippmann’s book, *Riding the Wind with Liezi*, was published in 2011, and he gives invited lectures throughout the country. Dr. Coe and I published *The Fractured Self in Freud and German Philosophy* in 2013. In 2014, I published my fourth book, an anthology titled *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism*. Dr. Coe is currently writing a manuscript on Levinas, I am editing an anthology on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and Dr. Dippmann is working on a book on the history of Western renderings of the *Daodejing*. Dr. Bartlett has published seven peer-reviewed articles since 2007, mostly in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of psychology, and he is continuing to write on those topics. Dr. Goerger has recently authored an article on resentment, and he is now working on a piece on virtue. Dr. Blankenship has a book forthcoming, titled *Christianity, Social Justice and the World War II Japanese American Incarceration*. All of this is in addition to other articles, book reviews, and conference presentations – too many to list.

We are also active in our professional organizations. Many of us our members of American Philosophical Association committees: I am on the Committee on Philosophy and Medicine, Dr. Goerger is on the committee on LGBT Persons in the Profession, and Dr. Coe was formerly on the Committee on the Status of Women. Dr. Dippmann is president of the Association of Regional Centers for Asian Studies. By doing this work, we shape the issues that philosophers and religious studies scholars confront at the national level.

Of course, all of this informs our teaching. We have richer engagement with the material and with our students because we explore these crucial issues outside the classroom. Hopefully, it is clear how committed we are to student learning and to the subjects that we teach.

***What Is the Central Alumni Philosophical Society?***

*By Allison Radabaugh and Phillip Downes*

Students in the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at CWU grow to develop not only a passion for philosophy and religion, but enduring friendships. The Central Alumni Philosophical Society, or CAPS, is an organization dedicated to continuing the education and friendship of philosophy alumni beyond the undergraduate experience.

Over the last year, CAPS members have met on a monthly basis to discuss not only more traditional philosophical readings from authors such as Antonio Gramsci and Niccolò Machiavelli, but also topics such as the ethics of high-altitude mountaineering and the socioeconomic considerations of super-intelligent robots. Topics are chosen by members on a rotational basis, with each monthly meeting being dedicated to a new topic. Members are encouraged to interpret topics by drawing on their knowledge from the classroom and from jobs and other activities. Members come from a variety of occupations, such as education, law, and corporate and non-profit business, and this leads to varied and often opposing perspectives. Providing a fun and respectful space for intellectual discussion is the first and foremost value of CAPS members.

In addition to these regular topic discussions, CAPS strives to offer opportunities for community engagement (such as volunteering at the regional tournament of the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl), members support one another in scholarly activities, and they serve as travel companions to academic and professional conferences. Additionally, organizing members are looking forward to working with the CWU Philosophy and Religious Studies Department to create new opportunities to further engage the Central philosophical community.

Any questions or comments to the group can be directed to centralphilosophyalumni@gmail.com.
A spotlight on . . .

Dr. Jeffrey Dippmann, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Where did you get your degree(s), and when? B.A. with a double major in Comparative Religion and History from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 1987. M.A. in Medieval Christianity from Northwestern University in 1989 and Ph.D. in Chinese Buddhism from Northwestern University in 1997.

Where are you originally from? Wausau, WI. Green Bay Packer country!

Tell us something about yourself. I’m a first generation college graduate from a relatively small city (35,000) in central Wisconsin. After working in a factory for seven years out of high school, I finally decided to head to college to pursue my degree. (I figured it was time when I started teaching myself Greek to fight off the boredom.) My mother had a lifelong fascination with Japan, which was where I probably got my own Asian inclinations. Having cobbled together adjunct teaching positions for ten years in Wisconsin and Minnesota, I got the opportunity to join the department here at Central in 2000, and have loved it ever since. We have four grown children, one presently living in Washington D.C. and the other three in the Minnesota/Wisconsin area. No grandchildren yet, but seven grandkitties and three grandpups!

What classes are you teaching now? Winter term I am teaching Chinese Philosophy (PHIL 345) and Asian Philosophy (PHIL 209). In the spring, I will be offering Buddhist Thought and Practice (RELS 403) and Global Ethics (PHIL 202).

What do you love most about teaching? Challenging my students to engage in ways of thinking and acting that are very different from anything they normally encounter. From Hindu to Buddhist to Chinese and Japanese ways of being, there is a rich variety of unique perspectives on viewing the world and the self. Understanding, engaging and dialoging with these standpoints not only broadens one’s own perspective, but helps to sharpen your own critical thinking skills. I love to see those “aha” moments when students encounter a new way of addressing universal concerns and questions, and realize that alternatives exist that can both complement and supplement their own views. Those are the most rewarding and exciting times to be teaching.

What do you do outside of teaching? First and foremost spend as much time with my family as possible. Love to hike, especially in the Mount Baker area northeast of Bellingham. Alongside the fantastic music and theatre productions here at Central, my wife and I also began taking advantage of the great opportunities to attend performances at the Seattle Symphony and Pacific Northwest Ballet – never thought I would enjoy the latter, but now look forward to every performance. Professionally, international travel through conferences in Hong Kong, Japan and Greece has also been very enriching. In addition to providing forums for discussing my work with scholars from around the world, they have also generated new research and publishing opportunities. Finally, I currently serve as the President of the Association of Regional Centers for Asian Studies, a nationwide consortium of two- and four-year colleges and universities dedicated to expanding the interdisciplinary study of Asia throughout the U.S. undergraduate curriculum.

What’s your most embarrassing moment while teaching? I was introducing one of my very first classes to the rise of American evangelical preaching in the early twentieth century. One of the most prominent figures at the time was Billy Sunday, a former baseball player who loved to charge the crowds up with fiery statements and antics. One of his favorites was to slide across the stage to the pulpit, pretending to slide into home base. While attempting to illustrate (no, I didn’t slide across the room), I brought my hand down a little too forcefully on the wooden podium holding my notes. The podium top broke off, flying into the air, accompanied by 20 pages of notes, assorted pens, and my wounded pride. At least my students will always remember Billy Sunday!

For more information, contact the department at: 509-963-1818 • philo@cwu.edu • www.cwu.edu/philosophy

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