From the Chair

Dear Students, Alumni and Friends,

Welcome to the premiere issue of The Good Life: A Newsletter of the Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies and — be forewarned, we have much to say about “The Good Life!” Ours is a department that brings together two distinct disciplines — philosophy and religious studies — that are not often conjoined in one department. Yet at CWU we co-exist because of a shared interest in examining both theoretical and applied issues of life.

Today there are changes on the horizon for our department, forthcoming in response to the place of higher education amidst emerging budgetary priorities. However, what remains a constant since our department was founded in the mid-1960s is a ‘love of wisdom’ through an ongoing process of critical and speculative inquiry into questions that represent man’s deepest concerns. Because of this indissoluble ‘love’ we will persevere!

Our students, alumni and faculty like to think logically and rationally, to contemplate poetically; to write arguments within which perhaps even Socrates (or is it Plato) could find no fallacy; to write essays that touch the heart of religious inquiry. And yes, we like to argue — with our texts, teachers, classmates, and indeed with ourselves. Amidst this dialogue of the mind, the written word and the spoken word, we develop incredible transferable skills. In the pages to follow, you will discover how varied is the application of these skills to career and life paths. The voices behind the words of our students and alumni as well as those of our faculty reveal that no matter what path is chosen, engagement with philosophy and/or religious studies, has led to The Good Life. In this issue you will also meet one of our philosophy majors, Michael “Mac” Brown in our Student Spotlight. Mac’s thoughts on

IN THIS ISSUE: Student Spotlight & Law School & Staff Updates │ A Conversation with Prof. Hood │ Ethics Bowl 2011 │ Alumni Stories │ Faculty 2012 Courses & Events │ From the Archives
pursuing this course of study and his tips for getting into law school reflect both the theoretical and applied dimensions of this discipline. You’ll also read of the pride in our Ethics Bowl team and their joy in such engagement. Last year marked the fifth year that CWU participated in the Ethics Bowl, becoming regionally renowned as an ardent opponent in debate.

Most notable is the focus of this first issue, Alumni Stories. Nearly a dozen alumni share incredible stories reflecting the impact of these disciplines on their lives and where such study has taken them. As you’ll learn from our alumni, The Good Life does not simply mean an easy or affluent life, but a life in which learning does not cease and the skills of our disciplines are an integral part of their everyday life. Many thanks are extended to each of these alumni for their time, efforts and willingness to share their stories. I offer special thanks to Niki Abraham-Cavender, Class of 2003, for her efforts in rallying her cohorts and for her assistance in bringing this newsletter to fruition.

In our brief Faculty & Staff Updates, you’ll discover the recent accomplishments of the educators and staff within our department, the pride they take in crafting their classes, and the inherent humor of professors of philosophy and religious studies.

In the article, “Floating the River,” you’ll delight in a conversation between Professor Emeritus Webster Hood and 2003 Alumna Niki Abraham-Cavender. Prof. Hood shares his knowledge about our department’s history, interspersed with whimsical memories.

In the photos that enrich these pages and the spotlight photo featured in From the Archives, our alumni may find themselves! We’d love to hear from you, about — The Good Life.

Take care,

Heidi M. Szpek, Ph.D.
Department Chair
Student Spotlight

Michael “Mac” Brown, Class of 2012

I found my way into my first philosophy class the way that I expect most students do, by accident. I was taking classes at Yakima Valley Community College and needed general elective credits. I had no idea what was taught in philosophy, but one good piece of advice I received from my Dad about college was “take a bunch of classes you don’t know anything about and you may end up liking them.” Well, that’s what happened to me. I wandered into a Philosophy 101 class with no expectations that it was going to be something that I would enjoy, and here, three years later I am writing a little article on the profound effect that philosophy has had on my undergraduate education.

I believe that I ended up majoring in philosophy for the same reason that most philosophy majors probably cite: it challenges my assumptions about the world and makes me think about things in new and exciting ways. I won’t go into whether it truly was libertarian free will that brought me to the class that day, or whether there is some deterministic force that keeps compelling me to take philosophy courses, but either way, I am happy with my choice in degree.

The Good Life

I am a non-traditional student that took a rather circuitous path towards obtaining an education in the first place. I grew up in Seattle, yet moved to Yakima at the age of 19 because I needed “to get away” and “do things on my own.” Well, a few years and a few unfulfilling jobs later, I learned a valuable life-lesson. I learned exactly what I did not want to do with the rest of my life. Sometimes that’s even more important than knowing what you do want to do with your life. So, I decided to go back to school. Like many college students, I had absolutely no idea what it was that I wanted to do with my life. I contemplated pilot, doctor, lawyer, business owner, etc., and was thoroughly confused before taking my father’s aforementioned advice. I started taking classes that I had no idea I would have interest in, and wound up as a political science and philosophy double major.

After declaring these majors and working towards my degrees, I needed to figure out what sort of career that I wanted to have post-graduation. I knew that I had a fondness and interest in the law in general. Thus began my pursuit of getting into law school — a long and arduous process that, as many Central students have figured out, is pretty difficult to piece together. Thankfully, I had a student in one of my classes [James Moore*] who had gone through the process of applying to schools and let me know how the process works. I then began preparing for the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and was pleasantly surprised how well my classes in philosophy had helped prepare me for the intellectual challenge facing me. The three sections of the LSAT are Logical Reasoning, Reading Comprehension, and Analytical Reasoning. My knowledge in the realms of logic, philosophical reasoning in general, as well as the ability to read and comprehend difficult material (thank you Kant!) was invaluable to me as I prepared for, and eventually took the test.
I am happy to report that I have completed all of my applications to various law schools and have begun hearing back from a majority of them. I have many exciting decisions to choose from and will be attending law school in the fall of this year. I can honestly say that my background in philosophy has better prepared me for the process of getting into law school than any other academic discipline that I have encountered. I encourage those considering a future in law to check out the philosophy department and all that it has to offer.

*See James Moore’s Alumnus Story below

**Mac Brown’s Law School Checklist**

1) **You can never start too early.** The latest that you want to start thinking about preparing for law school is spring of your junior year.

2) **Begin checking into what law school is, and what being a lawyer is.** Being a lawyer is not what it looks like on TV or in movies. Ninety percent of your time will be spent reading and writing legal briefs. If you don’t like reading and writing, you probably won’t like being a lawyer.

3) **Do your own due diligence.** Check into where you think you want to go to school. Websites like www.top-law-schools.com or *US News and World Report* contain rankings of various schools and the 25th-75th percentile numbers for GPA and LSAT.

4) **Law School is very expensive.** Make sure it is really what you want to do before you go severely in debt (more than likely).

5) **Create a Future JD student account** at Law School Admission Council online (www.lsac.org). You’ll register for the LSAT here as well as complete all applications for law school.

6) **Prepare for the LSAT.** The best way to do it is to take a preparation class. They are very expensive. However, it’s an investment in the future; $1,000 - $1,500 now could mean the difference between getting into a school or not, and might result in tens of thousands of dollars in scholarship money.

7) **Take an LSAT prep class.** If you cannot afford, or don’t want to take an LSAT prep class, take some practice tests. Obtain copies of “Actual Official LSATs” through either LSAC or on Amazon.com and take them regularly. The last thing you want to do is take the test “cold” or without knowledge of how the test is constructed. The test is learnable; you can improve your score by learning it.

8) **Take the LSAT at the latest in October** the year before your expected enrollment date (i.e. take in October 2012 for fall 2013 admission). It’s even better to take it in June if possible (as most schools make their applications available October 1), if not sooner. The earlier all your applications are in, the better. If you really like a particular school and you apply early enough you can make a binding Early Decision to that school and it might help you get in if your numbers aren’t as high as the school normally requires.

9) **Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS)** on the LSAC website. It costs about $125 and is essential. You cannot turn in applications to law school without it.

10) **Navigate the LSAC site** and find the areas where you can assign Recommenders and Evaluators, as well as the transcript request areas. You will need your transcripts from every undergrad institution that you have gone to and you will need to print out LSAC’s official request form from their website. Do this and get them sent to LSAC. Update your transcripts every quarter through this same process until your applications have been accepted/denied. LSAC automatically updates the schools that you have applied to. You will need at
least two letters of recommendation. Most law schools prefer that these be from teachers, as they tend to be more objective in their assessment of you than family members, friends, or prominent members of the community. Also, you can add an evaluator as well. This is typically an employer or perhaps your advisor/thesis advisor, who can speak to your abilities in a more knowledgeable way than the typical professor. Not all schools accept evaluations, but it can be helpful at those that do.

11) Ask your professors early for letters of recommendation. They are busy and just because you need the letter to be done in a week doesn’t mean that they will be able to do this. Give them at least a month.

12) Begin filling out applications as soon as possible. Most of the information is generic, but typically, each school has optional essays or different required essays to fill out. This is a time-consuming process. Take your time and fill out each as accurately, completely, and as best you can in order to make yourself the strongest candidate possible. Remember, you’re marketing yourself against a large pool of other people; you want to be able to distinguish yourself as much as possible from the crowd. You don’t actually have to have your LSAT scores back before applying, but it is nice to know what the numbers are before potentially “wasting” your application fee on a school with entrance requirements you can’t achieve. This is why it is important to take the LSAT in June or October. LSAC takes about three to four weeks to process and release tests scores. If you take the test in June or October you’ll know have results before the early-decision deadlines are up. If you take it in June or October and score badly, you are able to retake it in October or December and still get your applications in before the priority deadline. Many law schools don’t accept scores from the February LSAT for admission in the fall.

13) Don’t forget to build your resume. Involvement in clubs, organizations, and community service always help to make you into a stronger candidate.

14) Submit your applications as soon as you have all the materials ready to submit your applications. Thoroughly review your transcripts and make sure they’ve been sent to LSAC as well as all of your letters of recommendation and evaluations. Be sure to review all personal statements, addenda, optional essays, etc.

If you don’t like your LSAT score or your GPA is a little lower than you would like and you don’t get into the school that you truly want to, there are options. You can always take a year off and become a para-legal. It’s a great way to make sure that you really like the work that a lawyer does, and it gives you good work experience and a potential boost on your application next time around. It also gives you time to do additional studying if you plan to retake the LSAT.

Applying to law school is a long process. Just be ready for the journey and be realistic about your chances. Don’t bank on “long-shots,” but don’t be afraid to apply to “reach” schools as every year thousands of applicants are pleasantly surprised. While waiting for your applications be positive and reflect on the long journey and how far you have come. You have a lot to be proud of.
Ethics Bowl 2011

By Dr. Matthew Altman

On Saturday, November 7, 2011, CWU’s Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB) team traveled to Seattle University for the regional tournament. Coached by Dr. Matt Altman and Dr. Michael Goerger, our students worked hard for weeks, preparing arguments for ten different cases on a number of topics, from attractiveness discrimination in hiring to burning the Qur’an.

The first two rounds were pretty tough for us. We had two hard-fought matches where we narrowly lost to Washington State and perennial powerhouse Montana State. The second match was marred by some lousy judging. In our third match, however, the students beat the University of Montana in a real team effort. Nearly every student contributed to the argument, fending off a strong push from Montana. We won that round convincingly, 140 to 130.

Although the team ended the day with one win and two losses, we all had fun meeting students and faculty from other universities and testing our argumentative skills. Everyone is looking forward to participating again next year, even more polished in our arguments and out for blood.

Thanks to all of the students who participated: Mac Brown, Victoria Frederickson, Peter Gorman, Brian Torres, Dustin Waddle-Ford, and Isaac Wheeler. If you see any of these people around campus, be sure to congratulate them on all their hard work. Put them on your shoulders and sing the CWU fight song.

By the way, I also want to mention that CWU is having a far-reaching impact on the Ethics Bowl in the Northwest. Three of our former students, alumni from CWU and our Ethics Bowl team, are still involved with the IEB. Casie Dunleavy, currently a graduate student at the University of Montana, founded and coached the university’s new Ethics Bowl team. Alyson Radabaugh volunteered as a judge and a moderator for the tournament. And Phillip Downes, who is interning at the Washington State Executive Ethics Board, served as the program coordinator for the event. Soon people won’t be able even to mention the Ethics Bowl without thinking about Central.
Alumni Stories

Niki Abraham-Cavender, Class of 2003
Religious Studies Specialization

Somewhere along the way I picked up the notion that philosophy was for the highly intelligent, set aside for only the most brilliant minds capable of thinking on levels much higher than the average human. If the mind were a skyscraper, philosophy was the penthouse suite: inaccessible save for the masterful elite, the place where commoners look up with awe and envy. It was a private club where men in tweed jackets lounged around sipping brandy from oversized goblets and smoking sweet-smelling cigars, surrounded by marble statues, priceless art and floor-to-ceiling shelves full of worn and dusty books. The space was always well-lit with a breathtaking view from the glass wall of all that lay beneath it – from such heights, even the busy streets and dirty alleys below took on an abstract beauty.

I’m not sure where those ideas came from, but they served to assure me that philosophy was not for me… or, rather, I was not cut out for philosophy.

I suppose my upbringing was somewhat average. Mine was a quasi-Christian home where church was on the bi-weekly agenda. Needless to say, I was member of the “one true church,” several of them actually. Better safe than sorry, right? However, while they were in disagreement with one another, I did pick up one common teaching throughout them all: any religion or practice that did not fall under the umbrella of “Christianity” was evil and should be avoided at all costs. And thus, these ideas assured me that religious studies was not for me either…

…nor was college. I didn’t do well in high school, and never pegged myself for one of those “academic” types – with their brains and their confidence and all that. So for ten years following high school, I got married and divorced, had a few babies, worked odd jobs, and found myself stuck in trailer park life surrounded by thieves, drug dealers, addicts, and creeps. I was desperate. Unable to rely on family, I could live in fear of the outside world no more, I had to go it alone and head-on. Long story short: Pell grants saved my life, and philosophy saved my sanity.

Philosophy and Religious Studies was the furthest option in my mind when I came to Central. It was complete random chance (or perhaps divine providence) that landed me there: an absent advisor for my previously chosen major, a general education requirement, and a need to fill an elective. There I met Dr. Szpek, who instantly took me in and became my mentor and advisor. I took one class, then another… and I never left.

What I found in the Philosophy Department was permission, encouragement, and freedom to inquire, and the ability to analyze every answer
critically and open-mindedly. I also found myself in that penthouse suite at the top of the world fraternizing with Plato, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Lao Tzu, Christ, Buddha, Descartes, Nietzsche… I was truly in awe at how little I had previously known, how much I was learning, and how all these figures and more shaped our current world. Finally, the world was making sense!

Philosophy isn’t just about historical figures long gone – indeed, their legacy continues ad infinitum. Without these free-thinking rebels, we would still be living on a flat earth with the sun revolving around us, in unquestionable servitude to a church-state eager to martyr the opposition. Philosophy has opened the doors for questioning everything from religious and political dogma to scientific theory. Philosophy isn’t dead, and it isn’t history. We see it in every scientific inquiry, every medical breakthrough, every question we will ever ask, every investigation we will ever make, every time we look up to the sky or down through a microscope. We hear it when our toddlers ask “why”, when our teenagers argue, when our politicians debate. We feel it in our longing for something bigger, something better, in our search for Truth and understanding, and in our efforts to make sense of our existence and experiences. Philosophy is in the core of our very being. It teaches us to think critically, to question everything, and to never stop learning. Philosophy is behind all disciplines, yet goes further to tie those disciplines together. From the penthouse view, the philosopher sees the whole city as one working unit, rather than irrelevant bits of random chaos. Philosophy, simply stated, is the basis of all knowledge, the love and pursuit of wisdom, and the be all and end all of everything we can ever know.

In speaking of my tangible self, upon graduation from CWU, I continued my education for a Masters in Teaching. I taught for while - preschool through eighth grade. My most challenging and rewarding position was teaching an art class in a school where gang activity was prevalent… the school rules were strange and foreign to me as far as dress codes and gang symbols. However, in my class we enjoyed freedom from the normal restrictions: exploration and expression of self was encouraged, graffiti was art, music was welcomed instead of banned, and dancing was a daily activity. I left teaching because I felt too much pressure to conform to a mold in which I do not fit (and do not want to fit), although I miss the kids terribly. I married my soul-mate, father of my youngest, and supported him through his own education and career and then took time off to care for our children, one with severe special needs. I’ve worked part-time odd jobs and continue to participate in various volunteer positions, including set-design for Valley Musical Theatre, warehouse work for Fish Food Bank, and most recently have become involved with Habitat for Humanity and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), where I’m training to become a group facilitator. I’m fortunate enough to not have to work full-time, so I can continue caring for my family, as well as get back to my true passions which include art, writing, and continued studies in philosophy and religion. I don’t know what lies around the next corner, but it doesn’t matter. Twelve years ago it would have mattered; twelve years ago I was terrified and lost. But knowing what I know now, with the perspectives I’ve gained through philosophy and religious studies, I have very little fear and great peace of mind. The world, which was once a gloomy dungeon stricken with fear and uncertainty, has become a luminous expanse of adventure and freedom …

“The alchemist in their search for gold discovered many other things of greater value.”
~ Schopenhauer
Studying religion has been a life-long hobby of mine. Although not raised in any kind of religious household, as a child I was fascinated by books of common prayer and iconic images of saints. I would beg my parents to take me to visit churches and synagogues, and I was almost obsessed with Native American religion. Even though I certainly did not realize it at the time, this inherent interest in different belief systems would influence every major decision, and continuously sustain me on a personal, and eventually professional, level.

I graduated from CWU in 2003 with a double major in Philosophy with a specialization in Religious Studies, and Law and Justice, with a prelaw/paralegal emphasis. (I always describe Philosophy as my “fun” major and Law and Justice as my “practical” major.) Knowing that I eventually planned on going to law school, I enrolled in both to satisfy my life-long interest in philosophy and religion while also building a foundation for what I hoped would be my eventual career in the law.

I loved my time in the philosophy department. Whether it was convincing Dr. Dippmann to hold class outside in the spring (which, of course, meant we got absolutely nothing done) or re-creating a Shabbat service in Dr. Szpek’s Judaism, Christianity, and Islam class (I still cannot believe I actually sang in Hebrew in front of people), I enjoyed my time with both faculty and fellow students. There was never a shortage of interesting and challenging conversation!

A few months after graduating from CWU, I headed down to Utah to begin training to serve as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Poland Warsaw Mission. Two months of intensive language and doctrinal study later, and I was on a plane to Europe. I spent the next eighteen months doing what people expect missionaries to do—knocking on doors, performing service work, and exploring a foreign land. But what was unexpected, and eventually life changing, is that I fell deeply in love with both the culture and the people of Poland. And, although I personally have moved away from the LDS church, this love for Poland has endured (and has coincidentally played an ongoing role in my life).

I returned from Poland in 2005, and promptly moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. I began working as a paralegal in a small law firm (invoking that “practical” major of mine) and set about building my life (relying on my “fun” major). Life in Utah was incredible, and most weekends were spent in the mountains—hiking in the summer and skiing in the winter. Professionally, however, I was bored. So, I (somewhat begrudgingly) studied for the LSAT and applied to law school.

Having been away from family for too long, I chose to come home for grad school. I enrolled at Seattle University School of Law in fall of 2007, and began the three most arduous and inexplicable years of my life. All I can say is that everything you’ve heard about law school is probably true—it is ungraciously demanding and changes you more as a person than you realize. But, on the whole, I loved it. Unlike
many of my classmates, who focused on taking classes they thought would benefit them in the “real” world, I packed my schedule with every class remotely relating to philosophy or religion. The opportunity to take classes in which my three main interests (law, philosophy, and religion) intersect was precious to me, and I feel they helped me gain a lasting and grounded perspective. I even wrote my law review article using both philosophical and religious ideas (specifically, the biopolitical philosophy of Michel Foucalt and the place-based character of Native American religion—*Making Live or Letting Die: The Biopolitical Effect of Navajo Nation v. U.S. Forest Service*). Outside of the classroom, I sought opportunities to learn more about the school’s Jesuit heritage, participating in extracurricular events through the School of Theology and Ministry and developing an interest in Ignatian spirituality.

After graduation (and passing the dreaded bar exam) in 2010, I took some time off to recover and reevaluate by indulging my personal interest in religion in various ways, the most compelling of which was a silent ten-day course in Vipassana meditation. In January 2011, I began working as an associate in a plaintiff’s personal injury firm in downtown Seattle. I realized that it was an ideal position for me when I was assigned to my first case. Childhood sexual abuse case against a church brought my study of religion and law together in one case. My practice now mainly focuses on representing victims of childhood sex abuse, often against religious organizations. I often find myself poring over canon law or other internal religious documents in discovery, and I can’t believe I get paid for doing something I love! My philosophical and religious interests have not only vastly improved my legal reasoning; they help keep otherwise boring elements of a daily job interesting. For this I am grateful.

In retrospect, transferring to CWU was one of the best decisions I ever made. At the time, the move was admittedly not a logical one. A lifelong western Washingtonian, I was happily enrolled at WWU, planning to major in History or Political Science. Bellingham was comfortable and similar to my hometown (Olympia). I had never even been to Ellensburg, and it seemed a foreign place. One day while visiting a friend, however, Ellensburg began to feel like home.

Once I saw that Central, unlike Western, had a religious studies program, I was sold. I never once regretted transferring. The academic foundation and friendships I developed through the philosophy department have been invaluable to me. It was there I began learning how to look at religion objectively. I learned how to ask questions and began to be content with knowing that there are not always answers. And, perhaps most important, I began learning how to be myself.

Now briefly returning to my love of Poland: In the summer of 2009, I met my husband-to-be, Eric. Within five minutes, I learned that not only was his family Polish and that he speaks the language, but that he had lived and attended university in Krakow. Of course, it is not for these reasons that we fell in love, but it is a wonderful bonus! I’m blessed to understand my mother-in-law’s native traditions, as well as the many Polish phrases spoken around our house by my stepdaughters. I am in awe of what comes full circle in our lives.
Philip Lindholm, Ph.D., Class of 2003
Religious Studies Specialization

Much of being successful consists in finding that place and those people who make you better. As a Running-Start, first-generation college student with no money, no job, and divorcing parents, that place for me was the philosophy department at CWU.

As an undergrad, I took as many credits as the day had hours, and worked on the side as a computer technician in order to pay for it. Hebrew, medieval philosophy, Latin, music—every class opened my eyes to academic fields rich with ideas and possibility. And then there was outside the classroom. As a 19 year-old with a grocery list more robust than my resume, I threw myself into student activities and received encouragement at every step. From starting a late-night tutoring program to reviving and serving as President for the long-dormant Philosophy and Religious Studies Club, my ambitions were consistently met with staff and faculty who urged me onward.

My advisor, Heidi Szpek, pushed me to the highest of standards. The McNair Program introduced me to the rigors and forms of academic research. The Philosophy Department and Douglas Honors College surrounded me with support when I was recognized as a finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University.

Mine is not a charmed life. What I’ve achieved thus far was carved out of diligence and unlikely circumstances. But I write this essay—after earning three masters degrees and a doctorate from the University of Oxford, composing at Juilliard, directing for the BBC, publishing my second book—to say two things.

First, to those who ask, “What can you do with a philosophy degree?” I answer, “Anything you want.” Second, the principle of hard work will always take you far, but much of being successful consists in finding that place and those people who make you better. As a Running-Start, first-generation college student with no money, no job, and divorcing parents, that place for me was Central Washington University, and those people were found in its faculty and staff. My successes are theirs.

Philip is currently a Seattle-area author and singer/songwriter, soon to publish a book of aphorisms and release his debut album. Following the birth of his baby boy, Declan, Philip aspires one day to get some sleep and is evaluating opportunities to teach philosophy and religion in the Northwest.
Leon Troutman, Class of 2002  
Religious Studies Specialization

I graduated from CWU about nine years ago with a philosophy degree, with a specialization in religious studies. I never worried about whether this would be a productive field to embark on but knew I would do nothing but benefit from it. One thing I do know is that in spite of the concourses life has lead me down never for one moment have I questioned the direction I took in education.

My earlier office life left me with the uncontrollable urge to encourage people to stand up from their cubicles and look outside and see the rain (Seattle, of course). But I wanted them to do this so they would actually notice when the sunshine appeared. This is a life lesson that is simple enough yet it is a lesson so many forget about: there is more to life than the world within our little cubicle.

Possessing the skills to logically analyze numbers and situations is extremely valuable. Even my current bartending job requires me to identify with each of my customers on a daily basis. This often requires my empathetic understanding of their points of view. Without studies in human consciousness and the ways it can drift in and out of focus I wouldn’t be prepared to do my job to its fullest.

I've traveled life through a few different alleys. I've been a cubicle worker, a salesperson, a musician, and a bartender. I've built houses, delivered pizza, and I've coached baseball. Throughout all of these potential trades (and believe me some situations are worth trading) there is no study more valuable than philosophy. Study physics. Study geology. Study education. Study nutrition. But become a student of philosophy. Just remember that philosophy is the love of wisdom, not the love for wisdom!
Paul Charlton, Class of 2005  
Philosophy Major

Early in my time at Central I enrolled in  
Professor Rae Heimbeck’s course on Indian  
philosophy. One day he and I were discussing  
the topic of reincarnation and rebirth, processes  
that underlie many Indian philosophies. I found  
the concepts befuddling and I was now ready for  
the “answer”. I asked him what he thought of  
these ideas, hoping to passively absorb the  
conclusion of a much wiser man. He gave me  
nothing of the sort. Instead, he promptly  
responded, “What I think isn’t so important.  
What do you think about it?”

For me this was the essence of studying  
philosophy at CWU. Rather than being told the  
answer to life’s more difficult questions, I was  
challenged to think deeply for myself. That day  
I had not anticipated being asked my views on  
the subject, and I bumbled through a very  
dissatisfying response. But Dr. Heimbeck  
wasn’t about to let me off the hook. He expected  
me to think.

Beyond being pushed intellectually, this  
encounter was special because it helped me  
recognize what I thought was important. Dr.  
Heimbeck’s humility and warmth conveyed that  
he was listening, that he genuinely wanted to  
hear my views on this topic. It was a personally  
and intellectually enriching feeling that was  
repeated throughout my time at Central.

I graduated from CWU in 2005 with a B.A. in  
Philosophy and completion of the William O.  
Douglas Honors College curriculum. I  
subsequently worked in Pakistan in both  
humanitarian relief and international  
development contexts, first managing a large  
disaster relief program for Save the Children  
and later helping establish a Pakistani NGO  
(non-governmental organizations focused on  
porter protection issues. Pakistan is a  
fascinating battleground of ideas over what to  
believe, how to live, and how to interact with  
those who think differently than you. For those  
who love discussing ideas, it is a wonderful,  
intellectually stimulating environment.

As part of my discussions there, I constantly  
found myself referring to the books and ideas  
I’d encountered in my studies at Central. Over  
and over I have returned to one particular  
question: how should people with competing  
beliefs engage with one another? This is the  
question that had motivated me throughout my  
time at Central, in Pakistan and in graduate  
school. I have yet to reach a satisfactory  
answer. The question still motivates me today.

My experiences in Pakistan fostered a particular  
interest in global health activities in conflict-  
affected settings, specifically in Muslim-  
majority countries like Pakistan and  
Afghanistan. I have found that health is a  
powerful lens for promoting peace and  
examining the detrimental effects of conflict.

The Good Life
My personal interest is to work as a physician at this interface of health and conflict, a role that involves engaging actively on the political dimensions of health. Towards this goal, I completed a master’s degree in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown University and I am currently in medical school at Dartmouth Medical School in New Hampshire.

Studying philosophy has proven outstanding preparation for all of my work, graduate school, and life encounters. I use the skills and awareness gained from my philosophy studies every day. Ethics matter, and competing ideas are the basis for so many of the challenges facing our world. The people I’ve seen excel are the ones who read, write, and speak well; who have developed their critical thinking skills; and who are comfortable operating in the realm of first-principles and big ideas. I couldn’t think of better training for this than studying philosophy. To all of my former professors at Central, thank you for your help along the way!

Tyler Soldat, Class of 2009
Religious Studies Specialization

I really enjoyed my time at Central, and one of the reasons for that was my involvement in Philosophy and Religious Studies. Who knew that being involved in and having fun with one of my majors would pay off in such an meaningful way down the road? I am now working on my Masters in World History at George Mason University just outside of Washington, DC. My concentration is in the history of Islam, a subject I grew a passion for through classes at Central. I was surprised at how prepared I was to participate in graduate level courses, both intellectually and in terms of being able to participate in class.

The great thing about understanding philosophy and religious studies is that it prepares you to contribute intellectually to just about any conversation and any subject.

My favorite memory from the department was participating in the Ethics Bowl my senior year. We got to travel and meet other schools, and tangle in debate for several hours, putting into practice all of the theory we had been learning for years. I will say that the Philosophy and Religious Studies club activities and meetings were also incredibly fun, and it was a great way to meet peers and get feedback on my projects and advice on my future plans. I made friends that I keep in close contact with to this day and I would recommend both to everyone!

Since graduating from Central I have lived in Portland, and now in Virginia, just outside of Washington, DC, with my wonderful wife. I have been lucky to meet great friends who share my interest in religious history. I have given one lecture on Indian history at George Mason University, and have been asked to give two more this coming semester. After this semester I will graduate, and look for places to work on my doctorate. I have always had this goal in mind, but I continue to be amazed at the variety of opportunities I have with my background. Positions at the U.S. Department of State, FBI, CIA, medical companies, universities and community colleges continue to be options for me, and I can directly attribute this to my educational background, which began at Central.

SOURCE 2008 Award Ceremony (l. to r.): Tyler Soldat, Dr. Szpek, Katy Wickersham
Phillip Downes, Class of 2010  
Philosophy Major

Religious and philosophical ethicists, in my opinion, are learning the real meaning of a “marketplace of ideas.” From freshman year to junior year, I bought hotels on Mediterranean and Baltic Avenue and proclaimed, “Monopoly!” Since an internship at Avanade during the summer of my junior year, I have traveled to the other side of the Monopoly board and I engaged in applied ethics in the real world. After reading a book on the economics of trust, I’ve also realized that other fields have “property.” In business ethics, organizational psychologists and sociologists have monopolized the utilities; lawyers control the railroads; economic, political, and business theorist have scattered properties; Slavoj Žižek has occupied free parking; Cornel West and Naomi Wolf landed in jail. Park Place and Boardwalk are still undeveloped, but no educational field has enough knowledge capital to purchase the remaining properties except for philosophy and religious studies.

This is the good news for philosophy and religious studies that are far from bankruptcy, especially with CWU’s ethics minor. Because of the adaptability of these fields, philosophers and religious scholars are capable of uniting different fields to purchase these properties. We will not be the managers of these properties since this would resurrect the old monopoly. Rather, we need to throw out all forms of elitism and, if possible, dangerous power structures. Otherwise, our grandiose illusions will get the luxury tax—and remember our Socratic humility. We can then, and only then, work with the other groups to purchase remaining properties.

I want to be a developer of these remaining properties; I want to be a contemporary applied ethicist. Because of the decentralized nature of the field of business ethics, I have chosen to diversify my efforts to reach this goal. In opposition to those who doubt the knowledge of professional ethicists, I am gaining practical experience, because, as I learned in my Western Philosophy I class, practical wisdom, *phronesis*, is just as valuable as other forms of knowledge. To build on my experience as an intern in Avanade’s ethics and compliance program, I am currently an extern at Washington State Executive Ethics Board. In this position, I have two main projects. I am constructing a broad grading criteria of effective means of diligently preventing ethical misconduct—defined by the *Ethics and Public Service Act*—and will be grading nearly all state agencies. I am also assisting in the construction of performance measures for the Board, including quantifiable gauges of transparency and ethical culture. I am also applying for full-time, ethics and compliance positions to gain more experience.

The Good Life
In addition to being a member of the planning committee and judge of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics’ *Northwest Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl* (NWIEB) last year, I was also a judge and the project manager of this year’s NWIEB. My community service reminds me of my favorite experience at Central—traveling to and competing in the National IEB—and it allows me to network with my peers. I similarly was a judge at the Ethics and Compliance Officer Association’s *Intercollegiate Business Ethics Case Competition*, which is an undergraduate- and graduate-level competition.

CWU’s Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies gave me a solid foundation in scholarly work, an invaluable skill. I published my first paper, “The Discrimination of Hair-Based Drug Testing”, in the *Pacific Northwest Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities*. I recently presented “The Subordination of Ethic in the Federal Sentencing Guidelines” at the *37th Conference on Value Inquiry: Liberty, Equality, and Business*, a professional-level conference, at Creighton University. I am currently refining this paper and plan on publishing it in a graduate-level journal as well as writing other papers. I have also been attending other conferences and applying to graduate programs.
Casie Dunleavy, MA, Class of 2010  
Philosophy Major

At Central Washington University, the courses I enjoyed taking the most were courses in applied ethics and feminist philosophy. I ended up majoring in philosophy and general studies, and minored in applied ethics and English lit. The best part of my experience in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies was getting involved with the philosophy club. The club was really active, planning trips to the Ethics Bowl, putting on “Philosophy and Pop-Culture” events in the SURC, and even traveling to Oregon in the spring for an undergraduate conference. The club members quickly became some of my closest friends at CWU.

My experience at CWU inspired me to continue in Philosophy. Last year, I worked as a teaching assistant at Washington State University, working towards an M.A. in philosophy with an ethics emphasis. There, I completed a graduate certificate in bioethics. However, since then, I have transferred to the University of Montana’s M.A. program. I’m still working as a teaching assistant, but my focus is now in environmental philosophy. This school allows me to continue in the philosophical traditions that inspired me at CWU: feminism and practical ethics.

I’m 24, and am not sure what the next step is after this. I might want to pursue a Ph.D., or look into a job with the Teach for America program. Whatever I do, I’m grateful for the teachers at CWU, WSU, and UM for teaching me the skill of writing well.

There are many skills that you can take from a degree in philosophy, but for me, writing well is the skill that I value the most. If I do continue in philosophy after Montana, I’d like to get a Ph.D. and teach philosophy somewhere. As a teaching assistant, I get the occasional luxury of lecturing. Every time I get to teach, I enjoy it (although I’m always a bit nervous).

At the graduate level, it’s harder to make friends. Because of this, I’m really close with the graduate students. They’re great, and we usually get together every Friday night to unwind, cook dinner, and watch movies together. If I may take the liberty, my advice to a newly declared philosophy major at CWU would be to get out there and make friends with other philosophy students. Join the philosophy club. If the club is inactive, reinvigorate it. Get to know your teachers. Stop in one day and introduce yourself to the department chair. Participate in departmental events. I had the choice as an early student either to pass through classes or to get involved. Because I chose to get involved, the department wasn’t just an institution that granted me a degree. Rather, the students, faculty, and staff constituted my academic family. Without their support, I wouldn’t be in Montana today.

The Good Life
Sonika Vashist, Class of 2010
Religious Studies Specialization

Just two months after graduating from CWU, in August of 2010, I moved to the East Coast. I knew graduate work in strategic nuclear relations and intelligence analysis would be difficult and a completely different field of study than law and justice and religious studies, the focus of my undergraduate degrees. From being perplexed by the lifestyles of monasticism and indulging in depths of religious scripture, I was now confronted with the policy issues surrounding emerging threats to U.S. security and policy.

I am currently in my second year as a candidate for a master’s degree from the Missouri State University’s Department of Defense and Strategic Studies program located in Fairfax, VA. While I have focused very heavily on defense issues and international relations, my religious studies training has never been sidelined.

What religious studies has taught me is not only the knowledge of actual scripture and various philosophies, but also the need and importance of understanding different viewpoints and perspectives. It has taught me to understand history and internalize that there are always different lenses to a story, from an historical event, to interpretations of text. The lens of an outsider and the lens of an insider will often vary and it is objectivity that is the necessity.

In addition to understanding perspectives, I have encountered various topics from religious studies that I have been able to relate to even today. Recently, for a Nuclear Strategy and Arms Control class, I researched the topic of the Israeli nuclear doctrine. Various perspectives about the creation of Israel and the Nuclear Weapons Program were referenced back to the depths of the Holocaust. This research project led me straight back to the religious studies course I took on the Holocaust. During this research, I was able to tap into what I learned in the Holocaust class. This reference provided me with a better understanding of the realities faced at the time and the current opaque Israeli viewpoint toward its nuclear weapons program.

In addition to studying the religion and philosophies of a given region, the study of religion immensely helps a person gain an understanding of different cultures. Religious scripture, philosophy and rituals outline a cultural behavior that is very much portrayed in a region’s politics and strategic relations with other countries. Understanding philosophy and the way of thought becomes essential in analyzing the priorities of a country. While bolstering economics may be the real driving force of a country’s strategic relations, for another country, it may be the honor and nationalistic pride of its constituents.

Promoting U.S. interests and developing strategies will prove to be ineffective unless the priorities and values of the other state are evaluated. I come across this every day in grad school and religious studies has helped me understand this concept.

After graduation in summer of 2012, I hope to work at an intelligence agency focusing on Intelligence Analysis. It is my dream to work in the Intelligence Community and I plan to make it there!
Kristofer Riedman, Class of 2011
Religious Studies Specialization

Currently, I am at Vandenberg Air Force Base, which is in southern California, undergoing missileer training with my graduation date set for the first of May. After training, I will head up to Minot Air Force Base, North Dakota, and begin four years of crew duty, actually operating the Minuteman 3 weapon system. When I say operate I don't mean launch, Heaven forbid. My main mission is deterrence. In other words if I launch my missile, then I have failed my primary mission.

My job will include coordinating any maintenance to be done on the Launch Control Center, where I will work, and any of the Launch Facilities, where the missiles are housed. Other duties include making sure the missile is ready to fire and dispatching security forces to check a tripped alarm, which I've heard is, most of the time, a bird or rabbit inside the fence.

The time between graduation from CWU and leaving for southern California were filled with a lot of rest. One of the major events that happened during the summer was that I proposed to my girlfriend and we are planning on getting married in June after she graduates from Central herself. After that she will be coming with me to Minot where she plans to set up an internship so that we can both work.

My time at Central has helped me in several ways. First, the textual analysis skills that I picked up from many different Religious Studies classes allows me to pick out key points in the training manuals that I deal with on a day-to-day basis. The ability to identify parts of a system and understand their relation to one another has been particularly useful when learning how to operate the different pieces of equipment that I will be required to use.

As for a favorite experience in the Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies, it would have to be in Dr. Dippmann's Contemporary Religious Thought class. Part of the section on Christianity involved looking at the figure of Jesus and how many different personae he has: Black Jesus, Oriental Jesus, Manly Jesus, and even Vampire Hunter. This last classification while being completely fanciful was made convincing by the independent film titled "Jesus Christ: Vampire Hunter." The film involves Jesus trying to save a lesbian population in the city Quebec from vampires. The film makes several references to New Testament events including the Good Samaritan and the passion narrative.

Class Trip to “Jesus Christ Superstar 2010” (l. to r.): Rebecca Love, Mike Mortellaro, Kris Riedman, Dr. Dippmann, Krista Kilpatrick, Ryan Brill, Billy Larkin IV and guest, Ashley Brumett.

The Good Life
Since graduating from Central in June of ’11, I moved with my wife and two children all the way to Williamsburg, Virginia to study at the College of William & Mary School of Law. Right now and next semester I am taking the same core classes that all first-year students take. The following two years I will be able to choose almost all of my courses. And like almost all first year students, I do not know enough about law and legal practice to have a strong sense of what I want to do with my degree upon graduation.

However, I do have a general sense of direction toward some sort of public service or public interest work. Ethics was my biggest area of interest while I studied philosophy at Central. I chose to go to law school because law seems like a great way to combine ethical theory with real world practice. Attending law school has only reinforced that sense, while allowing me to begin to see ways that I can translate general, personal goals into reality. I feel that the classes, projects, and interaction I had with professors and students at Central really helped me to get a better understanding of ethics both in the abstract as well as in a social sense.

The education I received at Central has been incredibly useful, in the personal sense that I have described, but in class too. Everyone knows that students of philosophy must read and comprehend or relate to difficult texts. The same is true in law school. But just as important is the ability to communicate effectively with clear, concise writing. I feel that the papers I wrote and the feedback I received really stretched my abilities in that regard.

I should add that the philosophical discussions, both in and out of class, were my favorite element of undergraduate study. The Socratic Method is still the paradigm in law school, and being comfortable with that mode of learning is definitely a perk that comes with having a background in philosophy. But more than that, I feel that the ability to have those conversations, to really work through difficult ideas and material in and out of class, was the best part of school for me. Of course, it was fun driving in the van down to conferences at Pacific University. And I always enjoyed the public presentations that the professors gave. I’m thinking specifically of a photo of Dr. Altman holding a chicken in a KFC bucket. But I think that the opportunity to learn from professors who really cared about the material and wanted to share that with their students was what made studying philosophy at Central so rewarding; everything else is just a bonus.
Matthew Altman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Director, Douglas Honors College

This is a busy and exciting year for me. I’m beginning and ending the year with advanced courses in applied ethics (Environmental Ethics in the fall and Business Ethics in the spring). I’ve taught both classes before, but whenever I teach them, there are new issues that need ethical analyses. This year it’s the Keystone XL Pipeline and Occupy Wall Street, but I have no idea what it will be next time — which is one of the things that makes it so fun to teach applied ethics. This winter I’m teaching a Douglas Honors College course on Punishment (a specific topic in the philosophy of law) and a section of Introduction to Philosophy. It’s always nice to read Plato and Descartes again. It makes me nostalgic for my undergraduate days, when they called me “Evil Genius” and chained me up in a cave.

My second book, Kant and Applied Ethics: The Uses and Limits of Kant’s Practical Philosophy, was published in fall 2011. It’s going to be the subject of an “Author Meets Critics” session at the upcoming meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, which promises to be a no-holds-barred fight to the death. With other conferences, other research projects, and directing the honors college, I still manage to find time to corrupt the youth, both in the classroom and in my own home. Still, I’d love to hear from former students. Come up with an argument that proves the existence of human freedom and I’ll buy you a snow cone.

Gary Bartlett, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

Dr. Bartlett is excited about his Junior Seminar class in spring 2012, which is titled “Worldmaking.” The central question is this: Is there only one way the world is? Is there only one set of facts? Or does each society construct its own facts? And what about individuals within a society? Do we each live in a world of our own making?

Dr. Bartlett’s research continues to focus on conscious experience. His latest paper is titled “Computational Theories of Experience: Between a Rock and a Hard Place,” in the journal Erkenntnis. He is working on several other papers in this area. One of them is about Petri dishes. No, really! (Well, OK, not really. But it does feature Petri dishes in a major supporting role.) He is also trying to understand what occurrent mental states are, because he doesn’t understand them, and he thinks no one else does either, even though they think they do.

Dr. Bartlett also very much wants to start doing philosophy with children in local schools, but he has not yet done so. If he still has not done so by the time the next edition of this newsletter comes out, please write to him and complain.

The Good Life
Cynthia Coe, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Director of Women’s Studies

I am having all kinds of fun teaching a new course, Philosophy of Love. When else do I get to put the *Symposium* into conversation with Teresa of Ávila, Sara Ruddick, and authors representing various sides of the gay marriage debate? (Hopefully my students are having fun, too.) That class is inspiring me to write a paper on the psychoanalytic concept of transference as a failure of love, and translation as Schleiermacher describes it as an antidote for that failure.

I also have a chapter on Plato and maternity in a forthcoming anthology called *Philosophical Essays on Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering*. As director of the Women’s Studies program, I’m working on a series of events for Women’s History Month (April) on the theme of sex education and media literacy: what are we telling young adults and ourselves about sexuality, both in school and through less formal channels like advertising, reality TV, and the lyrics to our favorite songs? And what should sex education look like? For me, this issue is part of the broadest and most urgent of philosophical questions, requiring a deep level of critical reflection on social norms: how should we live?

Jeffrey Dippmann, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Co-Director, Asia/Pacific Studies

This year opened on an exciting note as SUNY Press released a paperback edition of my co-edited volume, *Riding the Wind with Liezi: New Perspectives on the Daoist Classic*. In addition to a couple of upcoming conference presentations on Daoism and comparative philosophy, I am working on spring quarter’s Contemporary Religious Thought course. Spring term should be a very interesting one as we examine the relationship between the body and religion across the world’s traditions. Topics we are exploring include sex, marriage and the family; our relationship to animals; asceticism and fasting; Buddhist meditation on cadavers; and practices of self-immolation and self-flagellation. Along the way we will try to understand how religion reflects our notions of the body, as well as how religion determines our notions.

Gayle Dohrman-Young
Lecturer

In fall quarter 2011, Gayle was invited to serve in a professional business theater event by Hannah Elledge, Student Director of Professional Development, of the CWU Kappa Xi chapter of Alpha Kappa Psi, a professional business fraternity. Ms. Elledge, the organizer and moderator of the event, is working towards a double major in business and philosophy.
The evening was designed to facilitate the professional advancement of more than 25 CWU students. By role-playing in hypothetical business situations with student participants, Gayle helped them to apply knowledge and practice skills they endeavor to learn in their coursework. Student teams were given hypothetical problem situations, asked to devise a plan of action, and then present it to a manager. Students considered ethical, practical, and legal issues as they discussed ideas and worked to devise an effective strategy. The evening was productive and very enjoyable.

Gayle graduated from CWU with her BA in Philosophy with Psychology minor, and holds a MA in Philosophy from Gonzaga University. She has been teaching at CWU since 1999 and is offering Philosophy 101 in spring quarter.

Jan Farrell
Secretary Senior

In January, Jan was recognized as the Employee-of-the-Month. This award, admittedly a bit behind schedule, recognized Jan’s efforts “above and beyond the call of duty” in helping the department transition to the new leadership of Dr. Heidi Szpek in November 2010. Over the preceding decade Dr. Chenyang Li served as Chair, and Dr. Jeffrey Dippmann was Acting Chair three times. Jan’s efforts were recognized at a Recognition Ceremony in January with President Gaudino presenting Jan with a certificate of appreciation and a special pin denoting her designation as employee-of-the-month.

The Good Life

Michael Goerger, Ph.D.
Visiting Assistant Professor

In June 2011 I stopped being a student (my primary occupation since preschool) and took a trip up I-5 from Riverside, CA to start my career as a professor at Central. Fall and winter terms brought courses on Greco-Roman philosophy, Introductory Ethics, and Contemporary Moral Theory. I also co-coached Central's Ethics Bowl team with Prof. Altman. Much fun was had during our Thursday night practices as we talked through a handful of interesting cases. Spring term I'll be teaching Ethics and Film. We'll be watching several of my favorite films by Joel and Ethan Coen including Fargo, The Big Lebowski, and a few others. The focus of the course is the connection between valuing, acting, and agency. I'm looking forward to exploring these themes which get a little complex when they come together—a lotta ins, a lotta outs, a lotta what-have-you's, and a lotta strands to keep in my head, man. Luckily I'm adhering to a pretty strict, uh, regimen to keep my mind limber.

David Newcomer, M.Div.
Lecturer

Teaching is my major focus but teachers must also be lifelong learners. Many seasoned professors notice that current students are more visually-oriented than those textually-oriented people who got degrees decades ago. My students have suggested many times that I learn PowerPoint. I have slowly
been developing presentations on a number of topics and have discovered that they can be powerful teaching tools.

Recently Dick Rentfro, religion writer for the Ellensburg Daily Record, died. Instead of replacing him, the editors invited local people to write guest columns. My recent column summarized my experience teaching "Christianity" last quarter, during which, I invited nine local ministers to provide an "insider" perspective for my students.

Reading this and other columns is an excellent way to learn about religion in Ellensburg and Kittitas County. Visit the Daily Record at www.dailyrecordnews.com

David Smith, Ph.D.
Lecturer

It’s been a good year so far. Recently my “twins” were delivered—very cute too! They are Volumes 2 and 3 of the new *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization* published by Wiley-Blackwell (2011), with the results of a different research project in each volume. I was privileged to write the articles on Fifth Century Christianity (Vol. 2) and Mormonism (Vol. 3). It really is rewarding to see a project through to the end, and to hold the final product in your hand. (The Internet is cool, but there’s nothing like a real book!)

I love all the classes that I teach at Central, but I get to teach *Philosophy of Religion* this quarter. It’s one of my favorites (along with all the others). There really is something special about this course for me. It reflects the way that I think personally about religion. Faith and reason — wouldn’t you love an opportunity to talk about it?

Heidi M. Szpek, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department Chair

From Ancient Babylon to Elephantine Island to Tunisia, from Prague onwards to the shetlech of Eastern Europe, from K’aifeng to Shanghai to Libya, from Qumran to Fustat/Old Cairo, this winter my students and I have journeyed through time and location as we explored Jewish Literature in Diaspora. My students have come to realize how incredibly diverse Judaism is as reflected in the voices of over two thousand years of literature. Together we have also discovered both an exquisite and melancholic legacy of Jewish literature in Diaspora.

In my most recent publication, “Jewish epitaphs from Białystok, 1905–6: towards mending the torn thread of memory”, *East European Jewish Affairs*, 41:1-2 (2011): 1-23, I continue to advocate for Jewish epitaphs as another evidentiary source by which Jewish history can be written. My teaching and research has furthered my desire for travel and the study of dead languages. Intense study of Yiddish is in the works; I’m excited. Białystok, Vilnius, and Riga are on my summer travel itinerary! My courses next year will be imbued with the findings of my research, — and no doubt, as my students often comment, “another story of Dr. Szpek’s travels to places no one can pronounce!”
Karen Turcotte, M.A.
Senior Lecturer

I have been teaching in the Department of Philosophy since spring quarter, 2000. I have seen the department undergo some significant changes, not only in faculty, but in course offerings and programs. I have taught a variety of classes over the years but Religious Studies and Ethics are my mainstays. Recently, I have received funding to develop two courses: one course for the Philosophy department on Women and Religion and one course for the Douglas Honors College on Humor and Religion. My interest in these topics has led to further research. Currently I am researching and writing a paper for presentation at the Pacific Northwest Regional American Academy of Religion Conference in May. The topic of this research is the nineteenth century Relief Society of the Mormon Church. In addition to teaching and writing I am also working out the details and itinerary for a spring quarter religious studies trip to western Washington to visit some beautiful places of worship. My hope is that this trip will be a fun, informative, and enlightening extension of the classroom experience.
In an engaging interview with Dr. Webster Hood, I had the pleasure of hearing for the first time about the founding of Central Washington University’s Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies, and the individuals who made it what it is today. Dr. Hood’s stories delved into the lives of these pioneers, providing a rare glimpse of their lives beyond the classroom and, ultimately, the friendships they shared.

**Dr. Chester Keller** was the first to teach philosophy at Central within what was then the Department of Psychology and Education. Hired in 1960, Keller taught Philosophy of Education, Ethics, and Introduction to Philosophy as teacher preparation courses while the school was still the Central Washington College of Education. A visionary and pioneer, Keller helped establish the Department of Philosophy. He was supportive of his staff and ran the department democratically, gaining the continued respect and admiration of his colleagues and students alike. According to Dr. Hood: “There was no bitterness in our department. Chester could always balance things. He created an environment in which the liberal arts and philosophy flourished. He was department chair most of his entire career and when the department came to be, he helped manage it; he was a strong supporter of my work off campus, and he represented each and every one of us.” Hood said that Keller particularly enjoyed teaching mysticism. “That was a favorite [course] of his … It was very popular, students were very attracted to it.”

Hood said that Dr. Keller lived “two lives” as his love for nature and ecology took him every summer to Yellowstone National Park to serve as Park Ranger. “He held a real affinity for nature. Of course, coming from Pennsylvania, his parents were farmers,” said Hood. “Chester also taught ecology. He was the first to focus on ecological studies. I’d say he was a pioneer in that [field].”

Dr. Hood wanted to give credit to others who played a crucial role in the development of the Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies. **Dr. James Brooks** was one of those people. During Central’s transition in 1961 from the College of Education (focused on teacher preparation) to Central Washington State College (focused on Liberal Arts), Dr. Brooks became president. Hood said Brooks was “very much in favor of the Arts and Humanities.” Brooks remained president through the turbulent and exciting 60s and into the early 70s when he saw the college through controversial demonstrations during the Vietnam War and the rising political activism of the time in which the desire and demand for the philosophy department saw its highest peak.
“We owe Dr. Charles McCann a lot too,” said Hood, adding that, as Dean of Faculty beginning in 1966, Dr. McCann was “very instrumental” in supporting the growth and development of what became the Department of Philosophy. His passion for the liberal arts also served him well when he was appointed the first president of Evergreen State College in Olympia.

In 1963, Dr. John Utzinger was the second professor to be hired to teach philosophy. With considerable expertise on critical thinking, Hood said, “he made a major contribution to our logic students. He excelled in getting students interested in Political Philosophy as well.” Dr. Utzinger was also an avid mountain climber in his younger years. The same year he began his career at Central, his good friend Jim Whitaker became the first American to reach the summit of Mount Everest. “John was also one of my best friends,” Hood said.

Dr. Peter Burkholder came to CWU in 1965 with a rich educational background in philosophy from Harvard College and Tulane University. I asked Dr. Hood to share what he could about Dr. Burkholder. It was clear to me that this was a difficult topic considering Dr. Burkholder’s recent passing. “He was my best friend,” said Hood. “Throughout the years we tried to take care of each other; we were very close.”

As our discussion turned to the topic of Dr. Burkholder’s logic class, and his notoriety on campus for being a brilliant instructor, Dr. Hood commented that “he was a very good teacher; he was our best logic teacher, he left no stone unturned. Peter earned his Ph.D. at Tulane; he was one of their most brilliant students.”

Dr. Hood, the fourth to be hired for philosophy, arrived at Central in 1966. “When I came, there was no one to teach Kant; no one to teach 19th Century Philosophy,” said Hood. “Many of the classes I taught were the first to be taught in philosophy.” Dr. Hood didn’t begin his education with philosophy, however. He actually began his undergraduate work in a pre-medical program. “I thought maybe I’d go into medicine or dentistry. But I found that I really didn’t want to become a medical doctor or a dentist,” Hood said. “I was noted for blowing things up in the laboratory. I blew up a generator once …” After an interesting pig dissection incident in the lab, Dr. Hood realized that dentistry or surgery required special skills in the use of one’s hands that he didn’t quite possess at the time. He went into the liberal arts program, and elected sociology and psychology, but he became very interested in philosophy.

Dr. Hood began taking philosophy courses as part of his liberal arts requirements, and he loved it. But the nature of the program would not allow him to change majors. So he finished his undergraduate studies in sociology. Then one day he received a phone call from Pennsylvania State University offering him an assistantship in philosophy. He later received a National Defense scholarship and ultimately earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Philosophy.

Admittedly mischievous, Dr. Hood charmed me with many stories from a well-lived, adventurous life. Dr. Hood laughed as he recounted one story from his years before Central at an unnamed institution where the educational priority was making sure blackboards were cleaned and students changed their socks. Hood laughed, “When I came here [CWU], I said, ‘My God, this is paradise!’ We have students that are interested, I can’t find any
crazy people, and there’s respect for learning. It’s wonderful.”

Dr. Jay Bachrach came to Central in 1967 to teach Aesthetics and Philosophy of Science. He became Director of Religious Studies after he and Dr. Heimbeck developed the program. “Jay and I used to hike; we had many pleasant conversations hiking into the hills,” said Hood. “We were friends; I’m sorry he’s gone now.” Dr. Hood recalled times spent with the Bachrachs when all their children were young, having dinners together, snowboarding, and hiking.

Dr. Raeburne Heimbeck was hired in 1967. His specialty was philosophy and religions of China and India. Said Hood, “When Dr. Heimbeck first came he was the Professor of Humanities and the Director of the Honors Program, which later became the Douglas Honors College. But he was housed with us.” Hood added that Dr. Heimbeck was an instrumental part in starting the Religious Studies Program, which was officially added to the Philosophy Department in 1973. “Some money had been appropriated and the question was how we can use it,” said Hood. Dr. Keller suggested Religious Studies, and it was agreed. As it turned out, “Chester was very wise, without that [Religious Studies], I don’t know what would have happened [to our department],” commented Hood.

“Our high point was in the 70’s when there were nine tenured and tenure-track faculty. We were viewed — and maybe this was self-congratulatory — as the core of the arts and humanities,” declared Hood. “We were turning people away then; we had so many majors. At that time philosophy was very much in demand. This was the time of the hippies. We were all pretty much against being in Vietnam, very much against it. John Utzinger and I were activists. Others supported us too, Chester did. But as time went on, we were down to just a few philosophy professors. Our enrollments were always good, but they said you don’t have enough majors. Well philosophy is not a subject that most people are attracted to or major in. I think people should, but before people go to college they’ve heard of accounting, and business, and marketing but philosophy, to them it’s just a word.”

Dr. Hood (at left). Campus Crier, 1967.
“When people ask [me] what is your philosophy, well as a professor I say I’m a student of philosophy, I have no philosophy. The original meaning of the word philosophy is the ‘love of wisdom.’ As such it represents not a body of doctrines to be learned, but an ongoing process of critical and speculative inquiry into questions which represent man’s deepest concerns, such as the meaning of human existence, nature of reality, justification of human knowledge, and the search for the grounds of human conduct,” said Hood, whose definition of philosophy remains part of the department’s mission statement to this day.

Dr. Robert Goedecke, the last of the founding faculty, was hired in 1970. Although his specialties were History of Philosophy and Meaning of Life, Dr. Goedecke introduced Philosophy of Law to Central. “We hired him because we wanted him to teach Philosophy of Law and he did for a while,” said Hood, adding that Goedecke attended law school, although did not complete it. “He did a fair amount of work in law” and did his doctoral dissertation on the Philosophy of Law. “Many philosophy majors have gone on to be very successful lawyers. Philosophy gave them a great edge over those who just majored in political science. It teaches you how to think, to reason, to argue, rhetoric, logic, creativity, analytic thinking. These are very important cognitive skills, they’re useful everywhere.”

I asked Dr. Hood how he was spending his retirement, and he informed me, “I’m free now to read whatever I like to read. I’ve just been learning how to make my retirement more interesting and tolerable. I don’t like the idea of being retired. But, it was time for me to leave. I spend my time reading philosophy, and economics — very much an interest to me — and finance.”

Dr. Hood shared many of his memories over the years, his adventures and trials, the happy times as well as the sad. He told stories of his entire life, from his shenanigans as a young man in Pennsylvania to his activism during the Vietnam War. A pioneer in his own right, Dr. Hood also spent many years of his career teaching, consulting, recruiting and developing programs around Puget Sound for CWU. Yet, out of his varied and rich experiences, Dr. Hood noted that his happiest years were the first eight years he was on campus at CWU. Reminiscences of those years favored the perils and excitement of floating the Yakima River.

“John[Utzinger] and I used to like to float the river, and Bob Goedecke and I, too. I almost drowned a couple times. Boy I respect that river,” grinned Hood. “I finally talked my wife into going on the river. She couldn’t swim though. I said, ‘Oh, nothing to worry about.’ So we got her in a tube, we get to the rapids, and she became hysterical. We quickly got her out of the river. I remember John and me pulling her out. She said, ‘You damn fool! You’re trying to get rid of me aren’t you?’”

“I saved another woman once, she lost her tube and she almost drowned,” said Hood. It always seemed to happen when we weren’t drunk! She fell out of her tube and she was splashing around. I grabbed her and got her to hang on to my tube. She was very heavy and we were almost sinking my tube. There was a log not far out – I said if we can just get there, we have a chance. We paddled. She was getting hysterical. I tried to keep her calm, and keep myself calm.
Then we got there and I got up on the log. Now the trick was to get her up.

“Finally, I got her up, and I said, ‘Now what do we do? The bank’s over there and we’re over here. What do we do? We can wait until the sheriff maybe comes out. We’re freezing to death though sitting there.’ I said, ‘I think we can make it to the bank.’ She said ‘No, no, I have to sit here on the log.’ I said ‘No, we can do it. We’ll get a running start. You get in the tube and I’ll give you a good push and then I’ll jump in the tube as you move over.’ I did, she was moving and I got in, and somehow we got to shore. Never would I go down that river again. I have a very healthy respect for rivers.”

Hood went on, “Yet – there was another time. I tried to save this crazy Italian woman, Adrianna. So she’s going down the river, [singing] ‘Tralala,’ on the tube. And she’s heading for a snag. She’s gonna go right under it [I thought]. So Don Quixote [aka Webster Hood] comes along and ‘whoosh’ pushes her away from the snag, and guess who takes her place? I do. Bang! Crash! No tube! Down under I go. I can’t get out!’, I said. ‘I’m gonna die. I can’t get out of here.’ I start to panic. I said, ‘This is it.’ Well, somehow there was a little opening, and the water pushed me through. And there’s Adrianna going on, [singing] ‘Tralalala’ as though I didn’t exist! So I said ‘I’ve got to stay away from crazy women and don’t go down the river with them!’”

“So … I’ve had a nice life.”
Spring 2012 Courses

In addition to our standard repertoire of lower division courses in philosophy and religious studies (available at www.cwu.edu/~philo), our faculty are offering the following upper division courses:

Graphic Design Courtesy of Taylor Baker, Philosophy Major, Class of 2013

The Good Life
Events 2011-2012

Fall 2011 opened with an extraordinarily well-attended presentation, entitled "Physician-aided Dying and Newer Medical Challenges at the End of Life", with James W. Green, Emeritus Senior Lecturer in Anthropology from the University of Washington.

On October 26, 2011, Dr. Green explained that modern medical technology and specialized end of life care promise both longer life and a better quality of life in our final days. Yet that technology and the practices associated with it also generate new medical and moral dilemmas. This presentation looked at three instances of that: problems in the clinical management of dying; occasions when the line between death and life is medically unclear; and the rise of physician aided dying as a controversial response to those challenges. Each was illustrated with case studies, some of which in their notoriety have caused Americans to rethink what they will someday want for themselves.

Thanks are extended to Dr. David Smith, Lecturer in Philosophy & Religious Studies, for his efforts in bringing Dr. Green to campus in conjunction with his classes on Current Ethical Issues.

Winter 2012 featured three Philosophy & Religious Studies Colloquia, in conjunction with our departmental search for a new tenure-track professor of Ethics and Ancient Philosophy:

Monday, Jan. 23
Jeremy Bell (DePaul University)
"No Mean Art: A Genealogy of Sleep in Ancient Greek Thought"

Wednesday, Jan. 25
Michael Goerger (Central Washington University)
"Cultivating a Limitless Heart: Stoic Oikeiosis and Metta Meditation"

Monday, Feb. 6
Jennifer Ingle (Clemson University)
"Theaetetus: A Virtuous Knower"

Thanks are extended to Dr. Gary Bartlett and Dr. Cynthia Coe for making these arrangements.
Spring 2012 will bring undergraduate presentations at SOURCE, Alumni Day, the College of Arts & Humanities Awards Banquet and more.

In conjunction with Holocaust Remembrance Day, please join us on Monday, April 23, 6:30pm, in the concert hall of the McIntyre Music Building for the fourth in-residency concert with Seattle’s Music of Remembrance (www.musicofremembrance.org). This year’s concert is entitled “Far is My Home.”

Writes MOR Artistic Director Mina Miller about this upcoming program: “Works by composers imprisoned in concentration camps create a program suffused with a longing to be elsewhere. The Nazi propaganda machine attempted to portray Terezin as a model ghetto that demonstrated the Third Reich's humane treatment of the Jews. In reality, inmates passed through Terezin on their way to the death camps or succumbed there to starvation or disease. Remarkably, the musicians and composers imprisoned there never ceased creating. You'll hear Gideon Klein's elegiac Fantasy and Fugue for string quartet, written during his imprisonment in Terezin, and the wit and satire of Terezin's cabaret songs. The audaciously original Erwin Schulhoff was sent not to Terezin but to a camp in Bavaria, where he perished in 1942. Banned as “degenerate” by the Nazi regime, Schulhoff’s Five Pieces for String Quartet is inflected with elements of jazz, folk music and dance.

Internationally and regionally renowned featured artists performing are Mikhail Shmidt, violin; Leonid Keylin, violin, Susan Gulkis Assadi, viola; Mara Finkelstein, cello; Erich Parce, baritone; and Mina Miller, piano.
From the Archives

Can you identify these alumni at the Phi Sigma Tau Honor Society Induction, spring 2005? Dr. Peter Burkholder is seated in the front row; Dr. Heidi Szpek, back row at right. Are you one of these alumni? We’d love to hear from and about you! Send us your story or just a blurb for our next newsletter!

Contact us at: philo@cwu.edu or Dr. Heidi Szpek (szpekh@cwu.edu) or visit us on Facebook at Cwu Phil-Religiousstudies