

# The THINKING DUCK



THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON    SPRING 2008

## The Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology

*A new initiative promises to change the face of feminist philosophy*

by Lori Brown, graduate student

The Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology (SIFP) will host its inaugural institute and public forum over Memorial Day weekend, May 28–31. SIFP is the brainchild of philosophy faculty members Bonnie Mann and Beata Stawarska. Bringing it to fruition, however, has involved the efforts of people and programs from across—and beyond—the university. Bonnie and Beata founded the institute in 2006 with advisory assistance from Sara Heinämaa, senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of Helsinki, and Eva Maria Simms, professor of psychology at Duquesne University. The society's inception was further aided by generous funding from the University of Oregon's Center for the Study of Women in Society, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Wired Humanities Project, the Oregon Humanities Center, and the Department of Philosophy.

Graduate students in the philosophy department also have been integral to the society's success. Sarah LaChance Adams and recent graduate Celia Tagamolila Bardwell-Jones met regularly with Bonnie and Beata during its initial stages and played a significant role in the grant writing. Last year, Amrita Banerjee and Al Frankowski joined the planning process and helped bring the society closer to its realization. This year, Emma Jones and Elena Cuffari collaborated with the Wired Humanities Project to create the society's website and listserv and continue to lend administrative support to the upcoming conference.

During the institute, twelve scholars from Europe, Canada, and the U.S. will gather along with three graduate students chosen from the University of Oregon to discuss the task of feminist phenomenology. What makes this gathering unique is the way in which its structure will be informed by the very philosophical approach it addresses. According to Bonnie, this goal will be ac-



**Seated (left to right): cofounders of SIFP Dr. Beata Stawarska and Dr. Bonnie Mann. Back row (left to right): current administrative graduate teaching fellows and graduate students Caroline Lundquist, Elena Cuffari, Emma Jones, Amrita Banerjee and Sarah LaChance Adams**

complished through a small-group focus, an opportunity for deep engagement with one another's work beforehand, and a commitment to holding the sessions in a beautiful place.

Now, that last point may catch you off guard. How can the *location* be philosophically significant? Bonnie explains: "In a sense, the typical conference is such a *disembodied* experience. You're sitting there in a hard chair in an ugly room with somebody who

*see SIFP, page 2*

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## GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

My bike ride into work is still braving frosty ground, but spring is nevertheless persevering in Eugene. Our third quarter is now underway. Classes are stuffed, as usual, and we are happily processing a very favorable external review of our program.

We are also bracing ourselves for several conferences this term. Enrique Dussel is visiting for two papers, and a handful of other scholars will be assessing and addressing his work. A course is also being offered in conjunction with this conference, which will bring even more visitors to campus. I am greatly excited to be a part of this rush of enthusiasm for work in Latin American philosophy, and I would like to thank Jose Mendoza, Grant Silva, and Beckey Sukovaty, three graduate students who have done a great deal to generate the energy now feeding us. Without them, we wouldn't be hosting such a remarkable series of events. Shortly thereafter, we will partner with the German Studies Program to host an international conference on themes of nature and culture as they arise along and across the border separating Anglo-American and Continental philosophies. And then, at the close of May, the Society for Interdisciplinary Feminist Phenomenology (SIFP) will host its first gathering, which will bring together an international group of scholars working in feminist phenomenology. (Be sure to read the cover story on SIFP.) Finally, just after graduation, we will host "Thinking Through Nature: Philosophy for an Endangered World." (See the calendar of events for details on this gathering.) As you can see, this is a very exciting time to be a student at the University of Oregon. Many thanks to everyone who is organizing all of

this activity, and to Ival McMains for his ongoing support of your many initiatives.

You should know that we are also engaging the local community in a variety of ways. Along with the Lundquist College of Business, we hosted a Community Philosophy Institute that convened community members, including Eugene's mayor, Kitty Piercy, to discuss whether and how we should ethically evaluate the work of businesses and corporations. It was a stimulating afternoon, and several participants are still discussing issues that arose that Saturday. In April, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art will also host three philosophy talks, each concerning the intersection of art and philosophy. Entitled Thinking with Art, the series includes lectures from Mark Johnson, Scott Pratt, and me. We're excited to reach beyond the classroom and pursue collective learning with community members, and look forward to next year, when we will host two Community Philosophy Institutes concerning the role of art in society.

Finally, thanks to everyone who has sent us support this year. It very much helps, and we can use whatever you're able to give. Despite its evident centrality to almost everything we do (after all, almost everyone describes core disagreements in every path of inquiry and action as "philosophical" disagreements), philosophy, and the humanities in general, are usually last in line at the shrinking buffet of support for higher education. In other words, we very much need and appreciate your support.

Best,

**John T. Lysaker** *Department Head*

the dominant philosophical approach is analytic." Their hope is that the society will showcase our department as one that is both supportive of graduate students who wish to work on feminism and feminist phenomenology and innovative in research related to these fields of inquiry. SIFP has already begun to meet the first goal through its active involvement of graduate students in every stage of its development. Bonnie and Beata also plan to involve graduate students in editing a conference anthology, giving them the chance to get involved in that aspect of the work.

As for the students participating in the institute, Sarah LaChance Adams has this to say: "This is a rare opportunity for a graduate student to collaborate with the top scholars in her field. At large conferences it can be difficult to even meet them. The usual conference presentation allows little time for comment or discussion, so it can be difficult to get much constructive feedback on one's research. The paper that I am presenting is part of my dissertation, so I feel especially fortunate to be able to get responses on it from the top scholars in the field." Amrita Banerjee adds, "I really look forward to hearing these scholars that I admire talk about their own work. It will be interesting to listen to some of the complexities and obstacles they experience and the ways in which they resolve these in their own work. I am very excited

about the institute and am grateful to SIFP for providing graduate students with the chance to participate in something like this. It is indeed a unique opportunity!"

There may be more opportunities still for future students and the department. One of the unexpected fruits of the society has been the relationship forged with a circle of feminist phenomenologists in Europe. Bonnie and Beata connected with them through SIFP's international advisor, Sara Heinämaa, and were invited to attend the circle's spring meeting. Beata notes, "Now there is an interest on both the European and American sides to have a live collaboration going." This collaboration may manifest itself through a visiting professorship. Even more exciting is the possibility of an exchange program between the UO and the University of Vienna for graduate students concentrating on feminist philosophy. "Who knows what these connections will bring?" asks Bonnie. "Many possibilities lie ahead." Whatever the outcome, it is clear that SIFP will continue to play a key role in the development of this innovative approach to feminist philosophy.

**To learn more about the society,**  
visit [whp.uoregon.edu/sifp/index.html](http://whp.uoregon.edu/sifp/index.html).





## Faculty Notes

### Erin Cline

*Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies*

This year I have had three articles accepted for publication in refereed journals: an article on the virtue of restrained speech and nameless virtues in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, an essay on the relationship between the right and the good in early Confucian philosophy in the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, and an article based on my ethnographic work, “Female Spirit Mediums and Religious Authority in Contemporary Southeastern China” in *Modern China*. In the coming year I will turn most of my attention to my book manuscript-in-progress and to the revision of a related article. I enjoyed teaching three courses for the Department of Philosophy in the fall and winter and look forward to teaching two for the Department of Religious Studies this spring—Confucian Ethics and Chinese Religions. This year I was enormously gratified by the success of the conference “Confucian Virtues at Work” (March 2–3), which featured speakers from throughout the U.S. and Hong Kong, and I am most grateful to my colleagues in several departments, including philosophy, for their enthusiastic support and participation.

### Mark Johnson

*Phillip H. Knight Professor of Liberal Arts and Sciences*

I just finished a winter term research fellowship at the Oregon Humanities Center. My project focuses on the natural sources of morality, and it draws on recent work in moral theory, cognitive and developmental psychology, evolutionary theory, linguistics, and cognitive neuroscience. During winter quarter I took a two-week “research road trip” to visit philosophers, psychologists, neuroscientists, and linguists in Berkeley, Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, and San Diego to discuss their work in this area of naturalized ethics.

### John Lysaker

*Associate Professor*

In the winter, I taught Ethics (PHIL 102) for the first time. I had a great time reading Aristotle, Plato, Epictetus, Hume, Mill, Kant, Beauvoir, and Gilligan, and the students seemed to really respond to this sequence of texts. This quarter, I am again teaching PHIL 312 and am leading a course in Latin American Philosophy in conjunction with a campus visit from Enrique Dussel, a leading Latin American thinker. I look forward to learning with and from students about this exciting thinker and field of thought. On the research front, my book, *Emerson and Self-Culture*, is now out from Indiana University Press, and my coauthored title, *Schizophrenia and the Fate of the Self*, will appear this August. Other work includes an analysis of the commodification of higher education entitled “Life Takes Visa” and a student-accessible piece on Heidegger’s work on language.

### Bonnie Mann

*Assistant Professor*

These days I am stuck between three related projects. On the one hand, I’ve been doing a good deal of work on Simone de Beauvoir, and in that context trying to think hard about her contribution to the practice of phenomenology. I am exploring how Beauvoir revolutionized the practice of the “reduction” in phenomenology. The usual imaginative or meditative exercise is turned into hard work by Beauvoir, and this has all kinds of ramifications for what it means to do phenomenology. Secondly, I am trying to say something different about what feminists should do with “nature.” The association of women with nature makes this a touchy political question for feminist philosophy, yet it seems to me that contemporary feminist philosophy tends to divide over the question in unproductive ways: a strict antiessentialist poststructuralism would like to do away with nature altogether, by collapsing it into culture, while the “difference feminism” that is rooted in psychoanalysis relies on uncritical notions of “nature” to ground the ordinary notions of sexual difference they are committed to. Meanwhile, something we call the “natural world” seems to be undergoing irreparable damage and this has little to do with the feminist debate on the question. If we are committed to engaged philosophy, this debate about nature seems very disengaged from contemporary problems. Hannah Arendt is helpful here, and at the center of these reflections for me. Lastly, I continue to work on the relation between gender and war as an embodied aesthetic relation. The difficulty is to say how this relation is embodied, and what it means for nationalism and patriotism to work in, through, and on the body. While it is clear to me that these three are really the same project, I am not yet able to explain that to anyone else! Maybe by the next *Thinking Duck* I will have made some progress.

## Scott Pratt

*Associate Professor*

*Interim Associate Dean of Humanities, College of Arts and Sciences*

Over the last year, I have completed several projects. At the Eastern and Pacific Division meetings of the American Philosophical Association (APA), I presented a new paper, "On the Politics of Disjunction," on the history of logic and the logical system of Josiah Royce. The paper will be published in the *Transactions of the C. S. Peirce Society* next year. In May, I will present an invited paper to the East European Pragmatist Forum in Brno, Czech Republic. This new work on identity and social change, titled "Mistaken Identity," develops the work of identity theorists such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Linda Alcoff in relation to a logic of boundaries. This spring I will also present two papers on aesthetics and opera. The first, "Damned Opera," I will present at the University of Notre Dame in collaboration with their director of opera, Mark Beudert, as part of a series of lectures and performances on the Faust story. I will present the second paper, on opera and Dewey's aesthetic theory, as part of a conference sponsored by the German Studies Committee of the University of Oregon. Finally, this summer and fall, I will complete work on a new logic text, *Inquiry, Argument, and Order*, to be published next year by Wiley-Blackwell Publishing. I have also served as the associate dean for humanities since summer 2006 and will complete my term in the dean's office in June 2008.

## Beata Stawarska

*Assistant Professor*

I have been getting my book manuscript, tentatively titled *I-You Connectedness: Towards the Multidiscipline of Dialogical Phenomenology*, ready for publication. It is my first book, devoted to a nonegocentric, communicative conception of the self. I drew on the research conducted for the book in my recent seminars on the Dialogic Tradition and Levinas. I have a number of articles forthcoming, such as "Feeling Good Vibrations (in Dialogic Relations)," *Continental Philosophy Review* (2008, in press); "Seeing Faces: Sartre and Imitation Studies," *Sartre Studies International* (2008, in press); and "You and I, Here and Now: Spatial and Social Situatedness in Deixis," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* (2008, in press). I also contributed chapters on "Merleau-Ponty and Psychoanalysis" to *Merleau-Ponty: Key Concepts*, edited by Rosalyn Diprose and Jack Reynolds, Acumen Press (in press) and "Mutual Gaze and Intersubjectivity" for the *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, edited by Daniel Schmicking and Shaun Gallagher, Springer (in press). I am currently co-organizing a feminist phenomenology institute and conference scheduled for May 2008 (see details in this issue).

## Ted Toadvine

*Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies*

Two books that I co-edited have recently appeared: *Nature's Edge: Boundary Explorations in Ecological Theory and Practice*, edited with my former colleague Charles Brown, was published by SUNY Press; and *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, edited with Len Lawlor, was published by Northwestern. The appearance of the latter volume was timely, since 2008 is the centennial of Merleau-Ponty's birth. I am participating in several conferences this year devoted to the French phenomenologist: at Basel in March, Paris in June, Morelia in September, and Lisbon in November. In the area of environmental philosophy, my essay "How Not to Be a Jellyfish: Human Exceptionalism and the Ontology of Reflection," was recently published in a collection entitled *Phenomenology and the Non-Human Animal* (Springer), and I was invited to join the advisory board for the journal *Environmental Ethics*. I am also lead organizer for the summit in environmental humanities that the UO will host in June, "Thinking Through Nature: Philosophy for an Endangered World," which is described in more detail elsewhere in this issue.

## Naomi Zack

*Professor*

I have been on sabbatical leave fall and winter terms and am now back to teach Philosophy of Disaster and a Feminist Theory graduate seminar. I finished a book, *The Specter of Disaster: New Moral Questions in Life and Popular Culture*, which is now out for review. I am working on a 150,000-word *Handy Philosophy Answer* book for Invisible Ink Press, which publishes popular reference tomes. After that I plan to start a feminist philosophy work on motherhood. I gave papers at conferences at Oxford in the United Kingdom (July 2007), in Romania (September 2007), and at the Eastern (December 2007) and Pacific (March 2008) APA meetings. I'm excited to be back after the sabbatical.



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